



Regional District of Fraser Fort George Regional Agriculture Strategy 2022

Prepared for:
Regional District of Fraser Fort-George



Prepared by:
Urban Food Strategies
In association with Upland Agricultural Consulting



Project Acknowledgements

The RDFFG respectfully acknowledges this project is taking place on the traditional territories of the Lheidli T'enneh, McLeod Lake Indian Band, and the Simpcw First Nation.

The Regional District extends from the Rocky Mountains in the East to beyond the Fraser River in the West, covering a land mass of over 50,500 km²... Approximately 100,000 residents call the region their home. It encompasses four municipalities – the City of Prince George (Prince George), the District of Mackenzie (Mackenzie), the Village of McBride (McBride), the Village of Valemount (Valemount) – and seven electoral areas – Electoral Areas A, C, D, E, F, G, and H.

Regional Agriculture Strategy Working Group Members

Agricultural Land Commission	Michael McBurnie
District 'C' Farmers' Institute	Michelle Miller
Eaglet Lake Farmers' Institute	Catherine Kendell
Everyone at the Table	Alex Rowan
McBride Farmers' Institute	Mark Roth
Ministry of Agriculture and Food	Karen Tabe
Punchaw Cattlemen's Association	Lynn Poole
Robson Valley Beekeepers Association	Lyn Smith
University of Northern BC	Serena Black
Downtown PG (Food Retail Association)	Warren Sunstrum
Local Food PG	Del Meyers
Community Futures Fraser Fort George	Shona Thorne

Project team

RDFFG Staff Team

Kenna Jonkman, General Manager of Development Services and Heather Meier, Planning Leader

Consulting Team

Urban Food Strategies: Janine de la Salle, Principal and Julie Bull, Planning Assistant in association with Upland Agricultural Consulting: Ione Smith, Principal, Kazlyn Bonnor, Agrologist, and Sydney Hnatiuk, Agroecologist And Debbie Evans, Agrologist

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Acronyms

ACARN	BC Agricultural Climate Adaptation Research Network
ALC	Agricultural Land Commission
ALR	Agricultural Land Reserve
ASC	Agriculture Standing Committee
BCCA	BC Cattlemen’s Association
BNFFG	Bulkley Nechako- Fraser-Fort George
CF FFG	Community Futures Fraser Fort George
CNC	College of New Caledonia
EAT	Everyone At the Table
IAF	Investment Agriculture Foundation
MAF	BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food
NDIT	Northern Development Initiatives Trust
OCP	Official Community Plan
RAS	Regional Agriculture Strategy
RASWG	Regional Agriculture Strategy Working Group
RDBN	Regional District of Bulkley Nechako
RDFFG	Regional District of Fraser Fort George
SSFPA	Small Scale Food Processors Association
SSMPA	Small Scale Meat Producers Association
UNBC	University of Northern British Columbia

Executive Summary

Overview

A Regional Agriculture Strategy (RAS) is a non-statutory plan that develops a shared vision, goals, and actions for supporting food and agriculture systems amongst producers, the public, local government, Indigenous governments and other key players within the Regional District. A Regional Agriculture Strategy focuses on a region's farm sector to discover practical solutions to challenges, identify opportunities to strengthen farming and ultimately contribute to agriculture and the community's long-term sustainability.

The RAS is the first-ever of its kind for the Regional District of Fraser Fort George (RDFFG). The purpose of the RAS is to guide and support agriculture and farming for all seven electoral areas within the region. The RAS provides a 20-year vision for agriculture with short, medium and long-term actions identified to strengthen and grow the food and agriculture sector.

RAS Objectives

The key objectives guiding the RAS development process are to:

- 1) Engage the agricultural community, external organizations, local governments and provincial agencies to in identifying a vision, goals, recommendations, and implementation actions that will strengthen and support the agriculture sector.
- 2) Connect with Indigenous governments to understand the regional Indigenous history surrounding agriculture, and to identify potential opportunities for strengthening relationships through meaningful partnerships.
- 3) Encourage collaboration between the Regional District and the agriculture community, industry associations, member municipalities, external organizations and provincial agencies to advance agriculture in the region.
- 4) Develop an implementation plan that contributes to the long-term environmental, social, and economic sustainability of agriculture within the region.

Why develop a RAS?

There are three main reasons for developing the RAS and establishing a regional role and approach to food and agriculture systems.

1. Help ensure that food and agriculture systems are strong for current and future generations.
2. Capture new and emerging market opportunities that the RD can work to support.
3. Provide additional linkages and ways to support the implementation of the BNFFG Climate Adaptation Strategy and other RDFFG initiatives.

How we got here

The development of the RAS occurred between April and December 2022. Within this timeline, research and engagement conducted by the project team led to the creation of the *Foundations Report*, which forms the technical basis for RAS recommendations. Key players were engaged, involved, and informed through multiple means including the RAS Working Group, one-on-one interviews, local government workshops, online input and conversations with Indigenous representatives. This input, in addition to the assessment of technical information, informs the RAS recommendations.

RAS Vision

Food and agriculture systems in the RDFFG are resilient, prosperous, and connected.

Key elements of this desired future state include:

- Ranchers, farmers, food producers, food harvesters, and food processors have successful businesses.
- Food system and agricultural knowledge is transferred to the next generation.
- Farming and ranching is diversified and operations are responsive to changing economic and climatic conditions.
- Regional collaborative networks create conditions in which agriculture can thrive.
- Understanding and sharing Indigenous history, traditional food systems, and relationship to land enables greater collaboration towards common goals.
- Farmers and ranchers are prepared for emergencies.
- Farming and ranching is regenerative: healthy soils, beneficial insects, and water conservation practices are common place and increase resiliency of producers.
- Regional food processing and distribution infrastructure adds value to raw goods.
- Regional foods are celebrated and marketed throughout the region and beyond.

RAS Goals



RAS Recommendations

Goal 1: Local government policies and plans support the food and agriculture sector

- 1.1 Maintain and enhance policies and bylaws to protect agricultural land in the RDFFG.
- 1.2 During plan and bylaw update processes, ensure that best practices for modernizing bylaws are considered and integrated, where appropriate.
- 1.3 During plan and bylaw update processes, ensure that food and agriculture are fully addressed.
- 1.4 Build understanding and acknowledgment of traditional and modern Indigenous food systems.
- 1.5 Work with Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, McLeod Lake Indian Band, and Simpcw First Nation to support the identification and protection of agriculture lands within their traditional territories.
- 1.6 Keep the Regional Agriculture Strategy as well as related policies up-to date.

Goal 2: Stability and diversity characterize regional food and agriculture sectors

- 2.1 Continue to work with agriculture entities to improve meat slaughter and processing capacity in the RDFFG.
- 2.2 Support efforts to improve labour stability in the agriculture sector.

- 2.3 Support farm succession planning programs.
- 2.4 Support the diversification of agriculture in the RDFFG.
- 2.5 Continue to support and pilot agricultural plastic waste recycling.

Goal 3: Robust education and marketing programs enhance regional food and agriculture

- 3.1 Building on existing information, support the promotion of regional agriculture to regional buyers including both household and wholesale.
- 3.2 Building on existing efforts, develop and maintain a food and agriculture resource list for producers and processors.
- 3.3 Support the promotion of RDFFG agriculture to buyers and prospective farmers.
- 3.4 Support an inventory of available farmland and food processing facilities in the Regional District including member municipalities to help connect food and agriculture businesses to regional assets.
- 3.5 Support food and agriculture education for children, youth and adults in the region.
- 3.6 Support training and skill building programs for producers and processors.

Goal 4: Agriculture is regenerative and producers are prepared for emergencies

- 4.1 Support producers in being prepared for emergencies.
- 4.2 Support regenerative agriculture as a way to reduce dependency on farm inputs.
- 4.3 Promote water conservation practices and water licencing within the agricultural community.
- 4.4 Support the protection of ecological services on farmland.
- 4.5 Manage and eliminate invasive plant species.
- 4.6 Work to implement regional climate adaptation strategies.

Goal 5: Strong networks and capacity help to sustain the regional food and agriculture sector

- 5.1 Establish the delivery of the Regional Agriculture Strategy as a service within the governance structure of the RDFFG and identify staff and other resources needed for implementation.
- 5.2 Consider establishing a multi-regional fund to support extension services for producers and processors.
- 5.3 Facilitate knowledge sharing and regional collaboration through forming a Regional Food and Agriculture Roundtable.
- 5.4 Strengthen relationships with Indigenous governments to increase potential for meaningful partnerships.
- 5.5 Engage in and support food security initiatives in the region.
- 5.6 Advocate on behalf of producers and food and agriculture actors.
- 5.7 Continue to engage with the food and agriculture sector.

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1. Introduction

A Regional Agriculture Strategy (RAS) is a non-statutory plan that develops a shared vision, goals, and actions for supporting food and agriculture systems amongst producers, the public, local government, and other key players within the Regional District. A Regional Agriculture Strategy focuses on a region's farm sector to discover practical solutions to challenges, identify opportunities to strengthen farming and ultimately contribute to agriculture and the community's long-term sustainability.

The RAS is the first-ever of its kind for the RDFFG. The purpose of the RAS is to guide and support agriculture and farming for all seven electoral areas within the region. The RAS provides a 20-year vision for agriculture with short, medium and long-term actions identified to strengthen and grow the food and agriculture sector.

1.1 Why develop a RAS?

The RAS is a tool to help ensure that food and agriculture systems are strong for current and future generations. With factors such as increased climate variability associated with global warming, global disruptions to value-chains, and the knowledge of experienced farmers not being passed-on, among other factors, there is more reason than ever to create a long-range plan for how to strengthen and create resiliency in the interest and investment in local food and agriculture products within BC. There are new and emerging market opportunities for farmers in the region and the RDFFG can become a significant partner in enabling their success. The RAS also provides a way to support the continued implementation of the Bulkley-Nechako- Fraser-Fort George (BNFFG) Climate Adaptation Strategy and other current RDFFG initiatives.

The RDFFG is situated on the traditional territories of:

Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, McLeod Lake Indian Band, and Simpcw First Nation

- Electoral Areas and Member Municipalities in the RDFFG:**
- Electoral Area A**
Salmon River-Lakes
 - Electoral Area C**
Chilako River-Nechako
 - Electoral Area D**
Tabor Lake-Stone Creek
 - Electoral Area E**
Woodpecker-Hixon
 - Electoral Area F**
Willow River-Upper Fraser Valley
 - Electoral Area G**
Crooked River-Parsnip
 - Electoral Area H**
Robson Valley-Canoe
 - City of Prince George**
 - District of Mackenzie**
 - Village of McBride**
 - Village of Valemount**

1.2 RAS Process Objectives

The key objectives guiding the RAS development process are to:

- 1) Engage the agricultural community, external organizations, local governments and provincial agencies to in identifying a vision, goals, recommendations, and implementation actions that will strengthen and support the agriculture sector.
- 2) Connect with Indigenous governments to understand the regional Indigenous history surrounding agriculture, and to identify potential opportunities for strengthening relationships through meaningful partnerships.
- 3) Encourage collaboration between the Regional District and the agriculture community, industry associations, member municipalities, external organizations and provincial agencies to advance agriculture in the region.
- 4) Develop an implementation plan that contributes to the long-term environmental, social, and economic sustainability of agriculture within the region.

1.3 RAS Process Phases

The development of the RAS had three main phases. The process involved

- 1) Initiating the project by striking the RAS Working Group and identifying project timelines,
- 2) Conducting research, engaging key players in identifying issues and opportunities for agriculture in the region, and
- 3) Bringing research and engagement findings into preparing and finalizing the RAS.



The RAS involved the agricultural community, external organizations, member municipalities, provincial agencies and Indigenous governments in the following ways.

- **RAS Working Group:** The RASWG working group was formed at the outset of the project to guide the process and includes members from a wide-range of food and agriculture key players. The RASWG met a total of four times during the project. The

RASWG provided key input and advice on engagement as well as the development and review of the Foundations Report and the RAS.

- **Interviews:** The project team interviewed 17 people in the food and agriculture sector, with a focus on prioritizing regional producers and processors.
- **Member Municipality workshops:** The project team facilitated two workshops with representatives from member municipalities including City of Prince George, District of Mackenzie, Village of McBride, and Village of Valemount.
- **Online input:** A mini-survey was posted on the RDFFG website and received input from 24 respondents.
- **Conversations with Indigenous Representatives:** The Indigenous governments whose territory the RDFFG exists within were invited to contribute to the development of the RAS. The project team held a total of five meetings with Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, McLeod Lake Indian Band, and Simpcw First Nation. Through these initial conversations, learning has begun about the the regional Indigenous history surrounding agriculture and facilitated discussions regarding opportunities to strengthen relationships through meaningful partnerships.

1.4 How to use this document

The RAS includes four main sections:

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Vision, Goals, Recommendations and Actions
- 3) Implementation Plan and
- 4) Core concepts and definitions.

The *RAS Foundations Report* provides the technical background for the RAS and is a companion document to this Strategy. Please find the *Foundations Report* [here](#).



2. Vision, Goals, and Actions

The RAS contains five key elements:

- 1) A vision for food and agriculture 20 years from now;
- 2) Goals for food and agriculture systems in RDFFG;
- 3) Recommendations for how to achieve the goals;
- 4) Implementation actions for how to realize the recommendations, goals, and vision; and
- 5) Responsibilities in implementation to indicate lead and support roles for the RDFFG as well as identify potential collaborations and partnerships.

Together these elements provide a broad-to-specific strategy that will help to enable regional collaboration towards the RAS vision.

2.1 Vision for food and agriculture in RDFFG

The vision described below is based on the input and perspectives provided by the RAS Working Group, Indigenous representatives, as well as key players including producers, processors, industry associations, local governments, non-profits and industry associations.

RAS Vision

Food and agriculture systems in the RDFFG are resilient, prosperous, and connected.

Key elements of this desired future state include:

- Ranchers, farmers, food producers, food harvesters, and food processors have successful businesses.
- Food system and agricultural knowledge is transferred to the next generation.
- Farming and ranching is diversified and operations are responsive to changing economic and climatic conditions.
- Regional collaborative networks create conditions in which agriculture can thrive.
- Understanding and sharing Indigenous history, traditional food systems, and relationship to land enables greater collaboration towards common goals.
- Farmers and ranchers are prepared for emergencies.
- Farming and ranching is regenerative: healthy soils, beneficial insects, and water conservation practices are common place and increase resiliency of producers.
- Regional food processing and distribution infrastructure adds value to raw goods.
- Regional foods are celebrated and marketed throughout the region and beyond.

2.2 Goals and actions for food and agriculture in RDIFFG

The RAS has five goal areas with multiple recommendations and implementation actions associated with each. These goals present what the recommendations and actions are striving to achieve.



Goal 1: Local government policies and plans support the food and agriculture sector

Local government plans and bylaws change over time in order to respond to shifts in the community, economy, and environment. Updating plans and bylaws represents an opportunity to integrate food and agriculture in a meaningful way. While there are already strong food and agriculture policies within the RDFFG, City of Prince George, District of Mackenzie, Village of Valemount and Village of McBride, changes in regulations, economy, and environment create a good reason for updating Official Community Plans (OCPs) and Zoning Bylaws (ZBLs), as well as other plans and strategies related to agriculture (e.g. climate action).

Goal 1: Local government policies and plans support the food and agriculture sector		
Recommendation	Implementation actions	Responsibilities
<p>1.1 Maintain and enhance policies and bylaws to protect agricultural land in the RDFFG.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit subdivision within residential areas that are adjacent to lands within the ALR in order to support long-term farm viability of adjacent ALR lands. • Limit subdivision of lands outside the ALR that have agriculture viability. • Discourage subdivision and non-farm uses for lands within the ALR. • Consider ALR boundary realignments that make better use of farm land or resolve building encroachments. 	<p>RDFFG and member municipalities to lead within their respective jurisdictions. RDFFG to support regional consistency.</p>
<p>1.2 During plan and bylaw update processes, ensure that best practices for modernizing bylaws are considered and integrated, where appropriate.</p> <p><i>Please refer to RAS Foundations Report for full description of best practices</i></p>	<p>When updating OCPs and ZBLs, consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizing ALC jurisdiction up-front and using an agriculture land designation for lands within the ALR • Updating permitted residential uses, siting, and sizing on agricultural lands to be consistent with changes to the ALC Act and Regulations and MAF Guide for Bylaw Development • Connecting climate change, environment, and emergency planning policies directly to food and agriculture systems 	<p>RDFFG and member municipalities to implement in their respective policies and bylaws.</p>

Goal 1: Local government policies and plans support the food and agriculture sector		
Recommendation	Implementation actions	Responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising the profile of compliance and enforcement on agricultural land • Addressing and differentiating urban and rural agriculture • Including provisions for temporary farm worker housing, where appropriate • Adopting a consistent size limit for structures associated with home-based business • Ensuring farmgate sales are permitted in the ALR • Ensuring tourism and agriculture activities are consistent with ALC regulations • Ensuring zoning is provided to allow for the establishment of abattoirs/slaughterhouses outside of the ALR • Restricting livestock buildings around watercourses, wetlands, lakes, and riparian areas • Encouraging larger-scale processing, storage, and distribution facilities on non-agricultural lands • Allowing limited agriculture (e.g. hens and bees, community gardens, rooftop gardens, urban greenhouses etc.) in all areas outside of the ALR. • Discouraging transportation infrastructure that may have an impact on farmland. 	
<p>1.3 During plan and bylaw update processes, ensure that food and agriculture are fully addressed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a food systems approach that considers primary production/harvesting in addition to processing, storage, and distribution as well as food culture, economy, and environment 	<p>RDDFG and member municipalities to lead within their respective jurisdictions. RDDFG to support regional consistency.</p>

Goal 1: Local government policies and plans support the food and agriculture sector		
Recommendation	Implementation actions	Responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage representatives from across the food system including other levels of government, businesses and the private sector, industry associations, post-secondary institutions and non-profit organizations in food and agriculture planning and policy development. 	Other entities, such as regional Farmers Institutes, BCCA, UNBC, and EAT can support updates to policies and plans by sharing information and participating in the update process.
1.4 Build understanding and acknowledgment of traditional and modern Indigenous food systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to engage with the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, McLeod Lake Indian Band and Simpcw First Nation to determine the best way to represent Indigenous values, history, and realities in food and agriculture systems in decision-making frameworks. Engage with the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, McLeod Lake Indian Band and Simpcw First Nation to explore education and awareness opportunities regarding traditional food systems, cultural values and practices around food, impacts of colonization on food systems and people, among other topics. Support Indigenous-led food and agriculture initiatives. 	RDDFG to continue a conversation with the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, McLeod Lake Indian Band and Simpcw First Nation , to discuss possibilities and establish a process.
1.5 Work with Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, McLeod Lake Indian Band, and Simpcw First Nation to support the identification and protection of agricultural lands within their traditional territories.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, McLeod Lake Indian Band, and Simpcw First Nation to determine potential partnership in mapping areas and locations of lands within their traditional territories that are suitable for agriculture and have good agricultural capabilities (e.g. soil, water access, road access, compatible surrounding uses.) 	RDDFG to initiate conversations with Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, McLeod Lake Indian Band and Simpcw First Nation to determine level of interest in partnership.

Goal 1: Local government policies and plans support the food and agriculture sector		
Recommendation	Implementation actions	Responsibilities
<p>1.6 Keep the Regional Agriculture Strategy as well as related policies up-to date.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with agriculture entities to keep RAS and policies up to date and inclusive of shifts in culture, environment, and economy. 	<p>RDDFG to lead the updating of RDDFG RAS and related policies and support the updating of other’s plans and policies (e.g. member municipalities, Post-Secondary Institutions)</p> <p>Other agriculture entities, such as regional Farmers Institutes, BCCA, UNBC, MAF and EAT can support updates to strategy by sharing information and participating in the update process.</p>

Goal 2: Stability and diversity characterize regional food and agriculture sectors

Agriculture in all shapes and sizes is facing new and persistent challenges to long-term viability. One key issue for ranchers in the RDFFG, as well as other areas of BC, is the significant challenge of regulations that limit slaughtering and processing meat within the region, either for local purchasing or selling to buyers outside of the region. Although there have been changes to the regulations to try and ease this condition, there are still bottlenecks in the supply chain, such as labour shortages, that can become a hinderance to the long-term viability of ranchers. There are also emerging forms of agriculture such as produce, berries, and others that are relatively new to the region and may require new foundations to ensure long-term stability. While there have been many successful initiatives focused on expanding the market for regional producers, there is still a need to stay vigilant and continually improve and strengthen agriculture foundations for sector-wide stability and diversity.

Goal 2: Stability and diversity characterize regional food and agriculture sectors		
Recommendation	Implementation actions	Responsibilities
<p>2.1 Continue to work with agriculture entities to improve meat slaughter and processing capacity in the RDFFG.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support efforts to establish a regional abattoir to include beef as well as poultry/rabbit, sheep/goat processing. • Support the establishment of a value chain for meat production (beef, bison, sheep, goat, poultry, and other specialties) and a marketing support role for the meat industry. • Support the BCBeef initiative that sought to establish a beef processing plant in Prince George. Identify an entity to take a lead role in reusing past work to continue efforts to strengthen the foundations for the meat industry in RDFFG. • Ensure zoning is provided to allow for the establishment of abattoirs/slaughterhouses outside of the ALR. • Ensure zoning is provided to allow for the establishment of cold storage, dry storage, 	<p>RDFFG to support organization and agriculture entities undertaking this work, including; CF FFG, NDIT, MAF, as well as BCCA , SSMPA and SSFPA, among others.</p> <p>RDFFG and member municipalities to lead within their respective jurisdictions. RDFFG to support regional consistency.</p>

Goal 2: Stability and diversity characterize regional food and agriculture sectors		
Recommendation	Implementation actions	Responsibilities
	aggregation and distribution facilities outside of the ALR.	
2.2 Support efforts to improve labour stability in the agriculture sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support northern meat facility worker training and retention programs. • Help existing meat processors to reach needed capacity to provide services year-round. This could help the meat processing businesses to retain employees by providing year-round employment. • Work with education institutions, agriculture entities and non-profit organizations to identify strategies for training and retaining labour in other agriculture sectors such as greenhouse, field crops, food processing and others. • Engage with Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, McLeod Lake Indian Band, and Simpcw First Nation to explore interest and support in food and agriculture job training and placement programs. 	RDFFG to support CNC and others active in delivering training programs as well as regional meat processors and produce growers to identify other strategies for improving labour stability. RDFFG could also support MAF on program development, promotion, and delivery.
2.3 Support farm succession planning programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support initiatives and help to connect producers with resources for farm succession planning. 	RDFFG to support farm succession initiatives and programs led by Young Agrarians, CF FFG, MAF and others.
2.4 Support the diversification of agriculture in the RDFFG.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore growing the greenhouse industry in RDFFG as a way to extend the season and increase market potential for producers. 	RDFFG to support initiatives taken by CNC, UNBC, BC Forage Council, MAF, ACARN BC and other agriculture entities.

Goal 2: Stability and diversity characterize regional food and agriculture sectors		
Recommendation	Implementation actions	Responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore opportunities to use the CNC greenhouse for teaching, testing, and skill building. • Support for new crop trials as growing season is increasing with climate change and opportunities to add new varieties or new crops (e.g. Siberian and Aronia berries). • Advocate for hemp utilization study. • Engage with Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, McLeod Lake Indian Band and Simpcw First Nation to explore how they may support agriculture diversification. 	
2.5 Continue to support and pilot agricultural plastic waste recycling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to involve producers in the Agricultural Plastics Recycling Pilot Program with Cleanfarms BC to recycle plastics from the dairy and livestock industries. • Use the information collected during the pilot to advocate for the inclusion of agricultural plastics in the Provincial Extended Producer Recycling program across the province. 	RDFFG to support Cleanfarms.

Goal 3: Robust education and marketing programs enhance regional food and agriculture

Getting the word out on a wide-range of food and agriculture topics can help connect relevant information to producers and processors, help regional residents to find local products, and promote food and agriculture business in the region and beyond. Local governments, including the RDFFG can play a role in leading and supporting initiatives that promote regional food and agriculture. Apart from pure economic development, it is also an opportunity to build community understanding, knowledge, and capacity in food and agriculture. Programs that create learning environments that include culinary and gardening skills, learning about agriculture, and other topics, help to connect people to food, from an early age. This can help to improve health outcomes later in life by creating healthy relationships to food and food skills.

Goal 3: Robust education and marketing programs enhance regional food and agriculture		
Recommendation	Implementation actions	Responsibilities
3.1 Building on existing information, support the promotion of regional agriculture to regional buyers including both household and wholesale.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working from existing inventories of regional food system assets such as the one developed by EAT and CF FFG, develop, update, and disseminate a guide that helps to connect household and commercial food buyers with regional suppliers. Support promotional activities of agriculture entities, such as, Farmers Institutes, Farmers Markets, and others. Support events that bring together regional commercial buyers and producers. 	<p>RDFFG to lead and/or support the development of a guide with partners such as District C Farmers Institute, Farmers Markets and other industry associations.</p> <p>RDFFG to initiate conversations with EAT and CF FFG in order to leverage existing regional food system asset inventory and mapping information.</p> <p>RDFFG to support agriculture entities hosting events and outreach activities.</p>
3.2 Building on existing efforts, develop and maintain a food and agriculture resource list for producers and processors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using existing RDFFG communication systems such as the website, pull together resource links on a diverse range of topics of interest to producers and processors (e.g. rules and regulations on farmland, registering wells, how to apply for building permits on farmland to emergency 	<p>RDFFG to work with ALC, MAF, CF FFG and other agriculture entities to develop and maintain a resource list for producers and processors.</p>

Goal 3: Robust education and marketing programs enhance regional food and agriculture		
Recommendation	Implementation actions	Responsibilities
	preparedness and adapting to climate change).	
3.3 Support the promotion of RDFFG agriculture to buyers and prospective farmers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support economic development organizations and initiatives aimed at creating a brand and marketing position for products being produced and processed in the region. Develop an information package that could be used to attract farmers, food processors, and distributors to locate in the region. 	<p>RDFFG to support regional organizations like CF FFG, Chambers of Commerce, member municipalities and others to promote agriculture outside of the region.</p> <p>RDFFG to support organizations like Young Agrarians that deliver land matching programs.</p> <p>RDFFG to support the Robson Valley Region Program in partnership with the Village of McBride and Village of Valemount.</p>
3.4 Support an inventory of available farmland and food processing facilities in the Regional District including member municipalities to help connect food and agriculture businesses to regional assets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify farmland that is available for lease or purchase within the region Identify commercial kitchens, food manufacturing facilities, and commercial processing facilities within the region. Keep the inventories up to date and shared with appropriate organizations. 	RDFFG to lead the development of an inventory, working with member municipalities, Young Agrarians, CF FFG, EAT, Northern Health, Chambers of Commerce and other agriculture entities.
3.5 Support food and agriculture education for children, youth and adults in the region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for opportunities to provide food and agriculture education programs for children, youth and adults (e.g. Expand 4H, BC Agriculture in the Classroom, culinary skill, basic food skills, gardening skills) 	RDFFG to support organizations that are providing community-wide education such as 4H clubs, Farm2School, BC Agriculture in the Classroom, and Northern Health, UNBC and CNC .

Goal 3: Robust education and marketing programs enhance regional food and agriculture		
Recommendation	Implementation actions	Responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore feasibility of reinvigorating an experimental farm model. 	
<p>3.6 Support training and skill building programs for producers and processors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support training workshops for producers and processors on becoming wholesale-ready and positioned to supply independent and chain grocers. • Support small scale growers by working with organizations such as The Good Food Box that specialize in localized product distribution models. • Support training for how producers can extend their growing season to provide early or late season produce (See 2.4). • Support events that bring experienced and new producers together to share knowledge and discuss farm succession strategies. 	<p>RDFFG to support education organizations like Young Agrarians, Northern Health, MAF, UNBC, and CNC.</p> <p>RDFFG to support business development organizations like CF FFG and NDIT.</p> <p>RDFFG to initiate discussion with Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, McLeod Lake Indian Band, and Simpcw First Nation to explore Interest and opportunities for development of workshops for training in Indigenous agriculture practices.</p>

Goal 4: Agriculture is regenerative and producers are prepared for emergencies

With recent fires and floods in BC, the COVID pandemic, and vulnerability in global markets and supply chains, the desire to become more self-reliant as a region is strong in RDFFG. In addition, climate models indicate warmer, drier conditions will impact agriculture. Becoming less dependent on outside source for goods and services that can be provided within the region is one way to increase self-reliance. Preparing for emergencies, managing invasive plants and insects, increasing soil health, conserving water, enhancing ecological goods and services on farmland, and the controlled use of technology can all play a role in the region becoming more resilient in the face of change.

Goal 4: Agriculture is regenerative and producers are prepared for emergencies		
Recommendation	Implementation actions	Responsibilities
4.1 Support producers in being prepared for emergencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support producers to become prepared for emergencies, including supporting the development of individual farm risk assessment plans, Environmental Farm Plans, emergency farm plans and becoming FireSmart and Bear Aware. 	RDFFG Emergency Management to facilitate outreach to producers and dissemination of relevant and consistent emergency preparedness, response, and recovery information based on the Regional District Board approved emergency management program and associated response plans. e.g. ACARN BC .
4.2 Support regenerative agriculture as a way to reduce dependency on farm inputs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support agriculture entities to create networking and skill building opportunities for how to reduce the need for fertilizer by using on-farm composting, growing your own feed, and preparing Environmental Farm Plans as well other strategies. <i>Consider the Kootenay and Boundary Farm Advisors program as a good model.</i> Identify ways to meet growing irrigation demands while also considering water conservation, on farm water storage, and other watershed management strategies 	RDFFG to support Farmers Institutes, BCCA and other agriculture entities that work directly with producers.

Goal 4: Agriculture is regenerative and producers are prepared for emergencies		
Recommendation	Implementation actions	Responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support programs for building soil health on-farms. 	
4.3 Promote water conservation practices and water licencing within the agricultural community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate agricultural landowners on the water licence process through FrontCounterBC. Using existing RDFFG communication systems such as the website, educate agricultural landowners by pulling together resource links to water stewardship and conservation. Promote on-farm water collection and storage systems for farms. 	<p>RDFFG to support Farmers Institutes, BCCA and other agriculture entities that work directly with producers.</p> <p>RDFFG to work with MAF and other agriculture entities to develop and maintain water stewardship and conservation resources.</p>
4.4 Support the protection of ecological services on farmland.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider a regional approach to identifying ecosystem (e.g. water storage, beneficial insect habitat, grassland set asides) services that are stewarded on farmland in the RDFFG and explore opportunities to better protect these natural assets. Promote existing payment for ecosystem services initiatives such as Investment Agriculture Foundation’s Farmland Advantage program. 	RDFFG to support programs delivered by IAF .
4.5 Manage and eliminate invasive plant species.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support existing invasive plant species management programs and initiatives. 	RDFFG to support existing programs and initiatives delivered by MAF and Northwest Invasive Plant Council .

Goal 4: Agriculture is regenerative and producers are prepared for emergencies		
Recommendation	Implementation actions	Responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that invasive species management practices do not do more environmental damage than the invasive species. • Establish an invasive plant species management program to ensure RDFFG lands are free of invasive plants. 	<p>RDFFG to work with Northwest Invasive Plant Council to develop a management program for RDFFG lands.</p>
<p>4.6 Work to implement regional climate adaptation strategies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the implementation of the Bulkley-Nechako and Fraser-Fort George BC Agriculture & Climate Change Regional Adaptation Strategies. • 	<p>RDFFG to work with the RDBN and MAF in implementing strategies and actions identified in the Regional Adaptation Strategies.</p>

Goal 5: Strong networks and capacity help to sustain the regional food and agriculture sector

As the RAS is the first of its kind that the RDFFG has prepared, consideration of how it will fit into the governance and administration of services provided by the Regional District is critical for strategic implementation. Further, the RDFFG is one of many entities who can work to establish strong foundations for the long-term success of the food and agriculture sector and, as such, collaboration and partnership for effective implementation is also key for backing-up the sector. In particular, opportunities to develop and deepen relationships with Indigenous governments is a relatively unexplored area with great potential.

Goal 5: Strong networks and capacity help to sustain the regional food and agriculture sector		
Recommendation	Implementation actions	Responsibilities
5.1 Establish the delivery of the Regional Agriculture Strategy as a service within the governance structure of the RDFFG and identify staff and other resources needed for implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional District Board to support the delivery of the Regional Agriculture Strategy. Determine financial resources required for the delivery of the Regional Agriculture Strategy. Determine the benefits of increasing staff capacity vs. creating a granting program for organizations working in food and agriculture. Determine the benefits of piloting a full or part-time food and agriculture coordinator. 	RDFFG to lead with potential funding support from NDIT .
5.2 Consider establishing a multi-regional fund to support extension services for producers and processors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold discussions with neighbouring Regional Districts to discuss the potential for an inter-regional agriculture extension service. Hold discussions with MAF and other agriculture entities to identify how to build-in offerings from the Province and others into the extension service. 	RDFFG to connect with MAF other Regional Districts such as RDBN and Cariboo Regional District to discuss the possibility of establishing a multi-regional fund to support an extension service for farmers.
5.3 Facilitate knowledge sharing and regional collaboration through forming a Regional Food and Agriculture Roundtable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the development of a Regional Food and Agriculture Roundtable. The Roundtable would support the region by providing a forum for agriculture entities to meet and discuss 	RDFFG to lead with support from agriculture entities such as Farmers Institutes, BCCA, EAT and others.

Goal 5: Strong networks and capacity help to sustain the regional food and agriculture sector		
Recommendation	Implementation actions	Responsibilities
	<p>knowledge sharing, event promotion and opportunities for regional collaboration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the role of the Agriculture Standing Committee (ASC) of the Regional District and update the Terms of Reference. • Host a regular (annual or biennial) forum on food and agriculture in the region that is designed to enable the ASC and agriculture entities to share information, network, and report on the implementation progress of the RAS. 	<p>RDDFG to lead with support from the Regional Food and Agriculture Roundtable.</p>
<p>5.4 Strengthen relationships with Indigenous governments to increase potential for meaningful partnerships.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue discussions with the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, McLeod Lake Indian Band, and Simpcw First Nation to determine interest in education and awareness opportunities to better understand Indigenous history, including history of food systems and relationship to the land. • Continue engaging with the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, McLeod Lake Indian Band, and Simpcw First Nation to determine potential partnership on the development of visual and written narrative to describe Indigenous food system history including traditional practices as well as the realities of colonization. • Be open to potential partnerships regarding food and agriculture initiatives with Lheidli 	<p>RDDFG to invite a discussion with Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, McLeod Lake Indian Band, and Simpcw First Nation to establish a process for strengthening relationships and potential partnerships.</p>

Goal 5: Strong networks and capacity help to sustain the regional food and agriculture sector		
Recommendation	Implementation actions	Responsibilities
	T'enneh First Nation, McLeod Lake Indian Band and Simpcw First Nation.	
5.5 Engage in and support agriculture and food security initiatives in the region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in regional food security dialogue and programs, where appropriate. 	RDFFG to support initiatives by Farmers Institutes, BCCA, EAT, UNBC, CFFFG and other agriculture entities.
5.6 Advocate on behalf of producers and food and agriculture actors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In areas outside of the jurisdiction or capacities of the RDFFG, advocate on issues to senior levels of government and other entities. Where possible, join forces with other Regional Districts. 	RDFFG to support and lead advocacy efforts.
5.7 Continue to engage with the food and agriculture sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to build trust and reach producers. Continue to engage agriculture entities. Strive to elevate food producer and processor voices. 	RDFFG to support and lead.

3. RAS Implementation Plan

3.1 Implementation planning tool

This implementation planning tool provides a method to prioritize goals, objectives and actions as developed as part of the RAS. This tool is applied to the goals and recommendations presented in the previous section in order to identify a phased implementation plan. This tool considers readiness, cost, priority, and phase for each of goals, and recommendations in the RAS. While the RAS presents a 20-year vision, action planning is limited to 10-years as actions beyond this timeline would be difficult to establish with any certainty as conditions can change dramatically in a 10-year timeline.

<p>Readiness Estimate <i>The level that resources (\$ or other required assets) and partnerships needed for implementing actions are in-place or are reasonably obtainable.</i></p>	<p>NR</p>	<p>GR</p>	<p>R</p>
	<p>Not ready</p>	<p>Getting ready</p>	<p>Almost ready/ Ready-to-go</p>

<p>Resource Estimate <i>The high-level assessment of resources needed for implementing actions</i></p>	<p>\$</p>	<p>\$\$</p>	<p>\$\$\$</p>
	<p>Under \$10k/ Existing \$</p>	<p>11k-\$50k</p>	<p>\$51k +</p>

<p>Priority Level <i>On a scale of 1-3, the degree of priority based on consideration of impact, urgency, and measurability.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact / benefit-The strategy/action has the greatest impact and/or benefit Urgency-The strategy/action is targeted at the areas of most need Measurability- The strategy is specific, measurable, agreed upon, realistic and time-based 	<p>L</p>	<p>M</p>	<p>H</p>
	<p>Lower</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>High</p>

<p>Phase Estimate <i>The estimated length of time needed to implementing actions</i></p>	<p>O Ongoing</p>	<p>P1 Phase 1 1-2 years</p>	<p>P2 Phase 2 3-5 years</p>	<p>P3 Phase 3 5-10 years</p>
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3.2 RAS Implementation Plan

The table below presents a phased plan for implementing the RAS. Ongoing, and phase 1-3 activities are described for the next 10 years. High-level readiness, resource assessment and priority level assessments for each recommendation are provided. This RAS implementation plan is offered here as a way to help bridge planning and implementation. However, it is anticipated that priorities and phasing of activities will change over-time to adapt to available resources, progress made towards goals, and new actions and priorities that emerge.

Recommendations have been sorted by phase, priority level, and by recommendation identifying numbers.

RDFFG RAS Implementation Plan 2023-2033				
Recommendation		Readiness	Resource Assessment	Priority Level
		NR- Not ready GR- Getting ready R- Ready	\$ \$\$ \$\$\$	High Med Lower
ONGOING				
1.1	Maintain and enhance policies and bylaws to protect agricultural land in the RDFFG.	R	\$	H
1.2	During plan and bylaw update processes, ensure that best practices for modernizing bylaws are considered and integrated, where appropriate.	GR	\$\$	H
1.3	During plan and bylaw update processes, ensure that food and agriculture are fully addressed.	GR	\$\$	H
5.4	Strengthen relationships with Indigenous governments to increase potential for meaningful partnerships.	GR	\$\$	H
5.5	Engage in and support food security initiatives in the region.	R	\$\$	H
2.2	Support efforts to improve labour stability in the agriculture sector.	NR	\$\$	M
3.6.	Support training and skill building programs for producers and processors	R	\$	M

RDFFG RAS Implementation Plan 2023-2033				
Recommendation		Readiness	Resource Assessment	Priority Level
		NR- Not ready GR- Getting ready R- Ready	\$ \$\$ \$\$\$	High Med Lower
5.6	Advocate on behalf of producers and food and agriculture actors.	NR	\$	M
5.7	Continue to engage with the food and agriculture sector.	R	\$	M
1.6	Keep the Regional Agriculture Strategy as well as related policies up-to date.	R	\$	L
PHASE 1				
1.4	Build understanding and acknowledgment of traditional and modern Indigenous food systems.	GR	\$\$	H
2.1	Continue to work with agriculture entities to improve meat slaughter and processing capacity in the RDFFG.	GR	\$\$	H
4.1	Support producers in being prepared for emergencies.	GR	\$	H
5.1	Establish the delivery of the Regional Agriculture Strategy as a service within the governance structure of the RDFFG and identify staff and other resources needed for implementation.	GR	\$	H
5.3	Facilitate knowledge sharing and regional collaboration through forming a Regional Food and Agriculture Roundtable.	NR	\$	H
1.5	Work with Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, McLeod Lake Indian Band, and Simpcw First Nation to support the identification and protection of agricultural lands within their traditional territories.	R	\$	M
2.5	Continue to support and pilot agricultural plastic waste recycling.	R	\$	L
3.2	Building on existing efforts, develop and maintain a food and agriculture resource list for producers and processors.	NR	\$\$	L
PHASE 2				

RDFFG RAS Implementation Plan 2023-2033				
Recommendation		Readiness	Resource Assessment	Priority Level
		NR- Not ready	\$	High
		GR- Getting ready	\$\$	Med
		R- Ready	\$\$\$	Lower
4.6	Work to implement regional climate adaptation strategies.	R	\$\$\$	H
2.4	Support the diversification of agriculture in the RDFFG.	NR	\$\$	M
3.4	Support an inventory of available farmland and food processing facilities in the Regional District.	NR	\$	M
4.3	Promote water conservation practices and water licencing within the agricultural community.	GR	\$	M
4.4	Support the protection of ecological services on farmland.	GR	\$	M
2.3	Support farm succession planning programs.	NR	\$\$	L
3.1	Building on existing information, support the promotion of regional agriculture to regional buyers including both household and wholesale.	GR	\$\$	L
4.5	Manage and eliminate invasive plant species.	NR	unknown	L
PHASE 3				
5.2	Consider establishing a multi-regional fund to support extensions services for producers and processors.	NR	\$\$\$	H
4.2	Support regenerative agriculture as a way to reduce dependency on farm inputs.	NR	\$	M
3.3	Support the promotion of RDFFG agriculture to buyers and prospective farmers.	NR	\$\$	L
3.5	Support food and agriculture education for children, youth and adults in the region.	GR	\$	L

4. Core Concepts and Definitions

Community Food Security¹ When everyone in a community has the ability to obtain a safe, culturally acceptable variety of foods to eat. Community food security comes from a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice.

Household Food Insecurity² Household food insecurity is the inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints.

Food System: A food system is all the steps of growing, harvesting, processing, packaging, transporting, distributing, preparing, marketing, and consuming food.

A food system consists of the inter-related stages that food goes through from the natural soil, water, and air resources that enable us to grow/raise/hunt/fish/forage food to the personal and commercial practices of harvesting, processing, storing, distributing, buying, selling, eating, celebrating, and recovering waste. These stages make up the basic elements of a food system. Education, governance and capacity building are key supports for the food system. Food systems exist at multiple scales including local, regional, provincial, national, and international.

Figure 1 depicts a simplified view of a food system. There are many food system diagrams and models that describe the elements somewhat differently, but the core ideas are largely consistent.



¹ Derived from: Hamm, M., & Bellows, A. (2003). Community Food Security and Nutrition Educators. Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior, 35(1), 37–43.

² <https://proof.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Household-Food-Insecurity-in-Canada-2017-2018-Full-Reportpdf.pdf>

A sustainable food system ³ furthers the ecological, social, and economic health of a community, region, province, country, and world and can be reproduced over multiple generations. Characteristics of a sustainable food system include, but are not limited to the list below. A sustainable food system:

- Is **secure**, and therefore reliable and resilient to change (including climate change, rising energy prices, etc.) and accessible to all members of society;
- Is energy efficient;
- Is an **economic generator** for farmers, whole communities, and regions;
- Is environmentally regenerative or benign;
- Uses creative **water reclamation and conservation** strategies for agricultural uses;
- **Balances** food imports with local capacity;
- Adopts **regionally-appropriate** agricultural practices and crop choices;
- Contributes to both community and ecological health;
- Builds soil quality and farmland through the **recycling of organic waste**;
- Supports multiple forms of **urban as well as rural food** production;
- Ensures that food **processing facilities** are available to farmers and processors of all scales;
- Is **celebrated** through community events, markets, restaurants etc;
- **Preserves biodiversity** in agro-ecosystems as well as in the crop selection;
- Has a strong **educational focus** to create awareness of food and agricultural issues; and
- Is **socially just** and **fairly traded** by providing a fair wage to producers and processors locally and abroad.

Figure 1: Food and Agriculture System.

Indigenous Food Systems⁴ The vast myriad of rivers, watersheds, landforms, vegetation and climatic zones have worked together for thousands of years to shape and form Indigenous land and food systems. Consisting of a multitude of natural communities, Indigenous food systems include all of the land, air, water, soil and culturally important plant, animal and fungi species that have sustained Indigenous peoples over thousands of years. All parts of Indigenous food systems are inseparable and ideally function in healthy interdependent relationships.

Resilient food system⁵: A food system that has capacity to absorb disturbances by a crisis including natural disasters or epidemic diseases and to recover food security in subsequent periods of stability.

Regional Agriculture Strategy A regional agriculture strategy is a non-statutory plan that develops a shared vision, goals, and actions for supporting food and agriculture systems

³ de la Salle, J (2008). City of Edmonton Policy Set. Some sustainable food system characteristics drawn from: Pothukuchi, K. and Kaufman, J.L. (1999) Placing the Food System on the Urban Agenda. The Role of Municipal Institutions in Food Systems Planning.

⁴ Indigenous Food System Network. <https://www.indigenousfoodsystems.org>

⁵ Pingali, P., Alinovi, L., and Sutton, J. (2005). Food security in complex emergencies: enhancing food system resilience. *Disasters*, 29, 5-24.

amongst producers, the public, local government, and other key players within the Regional District. A Regional Agriculture Strategy focuses on a region's farm sector to discover practical solutions to challenges, identify opportunities to strengthen farming and ultimately contribute to agriculture and the community's long-term sustainability.

Governance in food and agriculture systems. There are many distinct and overlapping roles in planning for food and agriculture systems. This complex web is somewhat simplified by focusing food and agriculture plans within appropriate levels of jurisdiction. This helps to ensure a through-line to effective implementation. Often times, food and agriculture plans are developed at the local government level, including regional and municipal governments. However, there are many other roles that can become an important part in plan creation and implementation. These roles are briefly described below.

Federal and Provincial Levels of Government. The federal government has jurisdiction over trade agreements, health inspection and food regulation, among other things. The activities of Agriculture and Agri-food Canada: *range from the farmer to the consumer, from the farm to global markets, through all phases of producing, processing and marketing of farm, food and bio-based products.*

The Provincial Government in BC also has jurisdiction on regulating farming and passes legislation that regulates land use in the Agricultural Land Reserve. The Province of BC is also involved with economic development initiatives.

Indigenous Government: Indigenous Governments and communities create rules and regulations for land use and community development, which can include food and agriculture. Community food security and food sovereignty plans can also contribute to governance in food and agriculture systems.

Health Authorities. There are six Health Authorities in BC. Increasingly, Medical Health Officers are engaging in community planning exercises like creating Official Community Plans, which can support food and agriculture system planning. Community nutritionists are also working with communities on increasing community food security through creating plans and supporting programs.

Community Sector, Schools, and Post-Secondary Institutions. Volunteers and staff in the community and non-profit sector are critical partners in developing and implementing food system plans. Schools and post-secondary institutions can also be part of providing food system education in the classroom and program development.

Industry Associations and Business Sector. There are many industry associations and business sector interest groups that are also a key part of creating and implementing food system plans. The BC Cattleman's Association, the Small-Scale Processors Association, Business Improvement Associations, Community Futures, Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development agencies are all examples of resources and stakeholders in food and agriculture system planning.

Local Government. Often local governments will be the primary facilitator for and lead on food and agriculture system planning processes. Legally, Agriculture Plans are non-statutory and considered at the same level as a Local Area Plan in the Local Government Act. Food and agriculture systems can also be addressed in statutory plans like Official Community Plans and Zoning Bylaws. While local governments have many ways to increase community food security and interact with many dimensions of the food system, they are limited in their ability to directly address some of the core drivers of household and community food insecurity such as poverty, climate change, macro-economics, and supply chain issues. In areas that are outside of the jurisdiction of local government, advocating on behalf of producers and others in the food and agriculture sectors is an important role for local government.