

What we can do to strengthen our regional food supply



Sustainability and food



The definition of 'sustainability', one of the key goals of a sustainability plan is to increase the resilience of a community, where 'resilience' means the ability to withstand shocks or shortages. We are starting to see sharply rising food prices worldwide, and experts believe that these are the result of global warming, rising costs of fossil fuels, and the government-subsidized shift to corn and other crop-based ethanol. We live on an island, and at least 90% of our food arrives via ferries, air and long-distance trucking. Any prudent sustainability plan will place a high priority on strengthening the local food economy, by increasing our capacity to grow what we eat, and by making it possible for everyone to eat well.

Increasing the food supply

Many people who live in our valley are concerned that a disruption to the incoming food supply could lead to real hardship, especially among our more vulnerable residents: the elderly, people on social assistance, and children. True valley sustainability requires that we work on many fronts to build up our capacity to produce as much of the food we eat as possible. Until as recently as the 1980's, we grew 80% of our own food now we grow less than 10%. If we did it then, we can do it again!



Helping everyone to eat well



We are seeing the price of staple food crops start to rise, and this is beginning to have an effect on our grocery bills. As the price of crude oil continues to go up, we can expect to see further increases in food prices, since the global food industry relies heavily on fossil fuels for cultivation, fertilization, processing, and transportation. As a community, we need to work harder to help our more vulnerable neighbours gain access to healthy food at the lowest possible prices. We need to help everyone become more self-reliant in growing and preserving food, supporting their local farmers and knowing how to eat well for less money.

Food and community



The LUSH Valley Food Action Society believes that grassroots community involvement is an essential part of building an abundant valley-wide food supply and a self-reliant valley population. We are excited that all of our civic governments are giving the whole community a chance to speak and be heard. We need an ongoing dialogue that reaches out to all of our friends and neighbours. We need more people to take control over their own food choices. We need more people growing more food, teaching others how to do so, and finding imaginative ways of distributing the excess to people in need. We need to involve young people, old people, and everyone in between. Securing our food supply is a challenge for the entire region, and requires a broad based set of solutions. We'll have participation from regular folks, fisher folk, farmers, politicians, churches, kids, chiefs, seniors, and we need you!

What you can do



Find where your passion lies, and gets cracking! Your friends and neighbours are working to make this region more self-reliant, but we need more heads, hands, and hearts. If any of these ideas appeals to you, please drop by the HUB on the first Thursday of every month at 4:00 PM for brainstorming, and action. For more information contact Sue Moen at lvfas@telus.net or (250) 337-5948
www.lushcomoxvalley.org - keep informed of what is *happening, volunteer, and donate, share ideas, become involved.*

1. Valley-wide composting

Let's stop throwing away perfectly good organic waste, and start getting it back into food production where it belongs. Fill your bags for pickup, drop off at the Demonstration Composting site on Headquarters Rd., or start your own.



funded by VIHA, Comox Regional District; Courtenay Rotary Club; Vancouver Real Estate Foundation; Supported by: 3 D Contracting; Baxandall Ford; Central Builders; Cumberland Concrete; Hyland Ready Mix Concrete; Jennifer Charles Designs; Panda Gas; Panoramic Homes; Slegg Lumber.

2. Community kitchens

People want to reconnect with good food, to work with their neighbours on canning and preserving, to help folks who are struggling to make ends meet. Let's create more opportunities for cooking and eating together, to teach and learn and share.

3. Education

We need more workshops; a demonstration garden; more food education in the schools; training programs at the high-school and college level; and opportunities for people to learn how to grow, preserve, and store food.



4. Community gardens



We need more places where people can grow food for themselves and for others. And community gardening is about much more than just food: it's about building a strong and resilient community; it's about sharing and connecting with our friends and neighbours.

5. Home-grown food



If we started balcony container growing or converting lawns to gardens, and encouraging more people to use their space for productive food growing, we could go a long way towards self-reliance in food. We have the climate, we have the land, and we have the expertise...let's do it!

6. More farms! More farmers!

We need more farmers, so we need to find creative ways to attract and support small-scale farmers to the region. There are emerging models for reducing the startup costs and getting young people growing food. It's time to start putting a higher priority on building up our regional food production. We need to put our ALR land into production! The average age of our island farmers is 65 we need more young farmers to keep our farms productive.



7. Agritourism

This is a biggie, but why not? This region could be a wonderful destination for folks looking for a quiet setting in which to visit organic farms & sample local foods. We'll need more farms, more B&B's, and more restaurants... and cultural opportunities for people to participate in while here.



8. Farmers' markets



Locally-produced food should be easily available to anyone who wants to find it, all year round. How about more small markets all through the valley?

9. Eat Local



This is something that we can all do. Ask for more local food everywhere you shop. Support your local markets. Educate yourself about the local food scene. Hug a farmer.

10. Share the Harvest *[More about self reliance- less about charity]*

If you're already growing food, great! Now maybe we can find ways to grow a little more food than we can use, and get that food distributed to those in need. Every year tons of fruit and nuts go to waste in the valley: how about getting involved with the Fruit Tree Project? Take some home and share the rest.

We wish to thank and acknowledge David Parkinson of the Powell River Food Security Project at fsp@prepsociety.org for the basis of this promotion.