



**REPORT TO PLANNING AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE  
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2017**

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**SUBJECT**     **Regional Food and Agriculture Strategy Recommendations Update**

**ISSUE**

To report on Regional Food and Agriculture Task Force (RFATF) recommendations for Regional Food and Agriculture Strategy (RFAS) implementation and obtain direction regarding next steps.

**BACKGROUND**

On December 14, 2016 the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board approved the RFAS and appointed the RFATF.

On April 12, 2017 the CRD Board directed the Task Force to “continue to examine a range of options for assisting agriculture in the region together with the potential costs and report back with recommendations for the Planning and Protective Services Committee’s consideration”.

The Board’s Strategic Plan Priorities dashboard calls for a report on prioritization of RFAS recommendations to be presented to the Board this quarter.

The intent of this report is to fulfill both of the above directions.

**DISCUSSION**

Appendix 1 provides information on the current status of RFAS actions. Sixteen of the 33 recommended actions are currently underway or complete. An additional two actions will be initiated later in 2018, and 11 will be continued from 2017. The Task Force recommends that the following seven actions be prioritized:

1. Initiate a process to establish a regional food and farmland trust;
2. Provide wildlife information and tools;
3. Identify CRD divisions that would benefit from agricultural expertise;
4. Build an understanding of links to public health;
5. Solicit input, support and partnerships;
6. Facilitate First Nations access to wild game; and
7. Expand wildlife programs to adjacent electoral areas.

At the March 22, 2017 Planning and Protective Services Committee meeting, there was considerable discussion of a Regional Food and Farm Land Trust (RFFLT). Many questions were raised both by directors and through a delegate presentation. The RFATF has prepared responses to those points/questions (Appendix 2).

In addition to the RFAS recommendations, the 2015-2018 Board Strategic Plan prioritizes that the CRD “work with partners to find a solution to lack of abattoir, and other related farming infrastructure, in the region or on the island”. In response, the Regional and Strategic Planning 4-year Service Plan provided for 2018 funding of up to \$50,000 to fund Farm Infrastructure

Research. There are many players involved in discussions around farm infrastructure (Ministry of Agriculture, meat inspectors, livestock producers, consumers, etc.). Staff will be looking for Committee direction on the CRD's role in this initiative during the Service Plan discussion.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

1. That this staff report be received for information and 2018 funding of a feasibility study/business case be supported.
2. That the report be referred back to staff and the Regional Food and Agriculture Task Force for further information.
3. That the report be received for information and direct that no further efforts be undertaken to investigate the feasibility of Regional Food and Farm Land Trust or other potential options.

### **IMPLICATIONS**

#### **Implementation Implications**

The RFATF has examined the remaining RFAS actions and suggests that pursuit of a RFFLT would have the greatest impact and that now would be a good time to initiate action (see Appendix 2, sections 1.1, 4.1 and 4.2 for details). The RFATF, however, recognizes that the Board will likely want further details regarding management options (i.e., Is the CRD the entity best positioned to take this on?) and costs as well as other potential options. Although the Task Force has taken a high level look at the issue (Appendix 2), it is not in a position to provide an exhaustive analysis. If the Committee wants more detailed information, then the Task Force recommends undertaking a feasibility study/business case.

#### **Intergovernmental Implications**

Four municipalities (Districts of Central Saanich, Sidney, Saanich and North Saanich) and the Peninsula and Area Agriculture Commission have expressed interest in a RFFLT (see Appendix 3). A feasibility study/business case could identify whether it is viable to proceed with a service on a regional or sub-regional basis.

#### **Strategic Implications**

A Regional Food and Farmland Trust relates to the Board's Strategic Priority of Agricultural Land and Food Security, specifically the following action: Develop a regional agricultural land banking solution.

#### **Financial Implications**

The majority of the RFATF's recommended priorities can be advanced within existing divisional mandates and budgets. The exception to this is the recommendation relating to establishment of a regional food and farmland trust, which would, as a first step, involve funding a feasibility strategy to further explore this option and other potential options.

If the CRD were to take on a RFFLT, then that would be a new service. Assessment of the viability of a new service is typically funded through a budget set aside specifically for that purpose. Should the service go ahead, then service participants are requisitioned to repay the costs of the feasibility study. It is anticipated that a study would cost \$30,000. It is possible that grants could be obtained to help offset the cost.

**CONCLUSION**

Action has commenced on many RFAS recommendations and further action is planned for 2018. The RFATF recommends that priority attention be given to determining the best way to deliver on a RFFLT. The Task Force recommends that the Committee support completion of a CRD-led feasibility study/business case in 2018 to further explore the RFFT.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That this staff report be received for information and 2018 funding of a feasibility study/business case be supported.

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Attachments: Appendix 1 - 2017 RFAS Recommendation Progress  
Appendix 2 - Regional Food and Farmland Trust Research and Responses  
Appendix 3 - Letters and Motions of Support for Regional Food and Farmland Trust