

Appendix A - Regional Food Land Access Improvement Feasibility Study and Business Case

Terms of Reference

January 2018

Background

On December 14, 2016 the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board approved the Regional Food and Agriculture Strategy and appointed the Regional Food and Agriculture Task Force (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”.

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. A food and farmlands trust also aligns with the Board’s strategic priority to build stronger relationships with First Nations. The RFAS recommendation 9 is to increase access to agricultural and food lands in order to protect and steward existing farmland. The RFAS recommendation 8 is to support Aboriginal food and agriculture –related activities, projects and events and note that 95% ¹ of the land based Indigenous food system in southern Vancouver Island is no longer accessible.

The Province of BC through the Agricultural Land Commission manages the Agricultural Land Reserve which is an assembled collection of protected land for the purpose of long term (permanent) agricultural use. Ministry of Agriculture staff are represented on the RFATF and will be a major stakeholder in the development of the feasibility strategy/business case.

On September 13, 2017 the Board, supported 2018 funding of a feasibility strategy/business case. The Committee and Board discussion referenced a food and farmland trust in addition to other initiatives that could assist agriculture in the region.

Objective

To provide the CRD Planning and Protective Services Committee and CRD Board with information to support a decision on whether the CRD should expand its role in assisting agriculture, and if so, how that could best be accomplished.

Purpose

The purpose of the feasibility study/business case is to identify and assess options for increasing food production, by enhancing access to farmland as a community asset for the public good.

¹ Bryce and Cornthassle, 2012

Assumptions:

This study has been scoped with the intent of coming up with recommendations that are:

- Cost-effective – actions/approach will have low or reasonable financial implications
- Timely – actions/approach will quickly result in greater access or improvements to farming
- Implementable without land acquisition – actions/approaches should not consider the purchase of lands, rather utilization of existing publicly owned lands, donated lands, land linking opportunities and other options that do not incur purchase costs

Scope

The feasibility study will:

1. Identify alternative approaches to a Regional Food and Farmland Trust (RFFLT) (e.g., land linking services, etc.) that could increase food production through access to farmland (addressing tenure and affordability) and maintain/enhance farmland productivity (based on land/soil evaluation criteria) in the Capital Regional District in a cost-effectively and in a timely manner (approx. 5 years).
2. Examine and evaluate whether a RFFLT could, in the Capital Regional District, cost-effectively and in a timely manner (approx. 5 years) increase access to publically owned farmland (addressing tenure and affordability) in the region and maintain/enhance farmland productivity (subject to the availability, condition and suitability of farmland). Identify ways to include First Nations in improving Indigenous food production as part of a food and farmlands trust. There is an opportunity to work with interested First Nations in restoring traditional food practices as well as integrating Indigenous food production into local food farming practices.
3. Compare any cost-effective and timely approaches identified in #1 and #2 above and identify key differences in both benefits and costs.
 - a. Evaluation should include assessment of the potential impact of each approach on the region's food and agriculture sector (i.e., competitiveness, sustainable practices and farm growth enabled by tenure security, support for new entrants, employment, and ancillary benefits²).
4. Identify potential operating models for all cost-effective and timely approaches (both those covered in #1 and #2 above) and identify costs and benefits associated with each *operating model*.
5. Recommend an approach and operating model and identify the expertise, capacity, partnerships, funding and timeline required to implement (business case).

² *Soil studies, test crops, knowledge sharing, demonstration sites for sustainable farming practices) and CRD residents (i.e., more habitat that supports biodiversity, on-farm community involvement and volunteer programs, more local food, public workshops and hands-on educational opportunities, and partnerships with food banks).

Consultant Requirements/Qualifications

Those undertaking this work must have: previous experience developing feasibility strategies and business cases; knowledge and experience in agricultural economics, agrology and farm related finance; experience in identifying operating structures or delivery mechanisms (e.g., government v. non-profit, etc.); experience or knowledge of food and farmland trust models; local knowledge; understanding and knowledge of local First Nations and concerns around access to traditional foods and medicines, as well as non-traditional healthful and affordable food sources.

Deliverables

- A draft written report responding to the identified scope of work.
- A presentation of the draft feasibility study to the RFTAF.
- A revised written report responding to RFTAF and staff input.
- A presentation of the revised written report to the Planning and Protective Services Committee to summarize key findings and answer questions.
- A final written report reflecting any direction from the Planning and Protective Services Committee.

Budget and Sources of Funding

\$30,000 from the CRD Regional Information operating budget (subject to 2018 budget approval).

Timeline/Milestones

The feasibility strategy process will be initiated in early 2018 and presented to the Planning and Protective Services Committee by November 2018.

Project Organization

Regional Planning Services will provide project direction with input and review from the RFATF.

Resources

A list of background documentation, examples and research completed to date will be made available.

Stakeholders

In addition to the above-referenced reports, it is expected that the consultant also seek out input from CRD staff, municipal staff, local First Nations, local farmers seeking land, established local farmers, new entrants/farmers, Ministry of Agriculture, Peninsula and Area Agriculture Commission, local government agriculture advisory committees, Foodlands Co-op (farmfolk/city folk), Land Acquisition Trust, CRFair, CRD residents, farmer groups, educational institutions, and other agencies with agricultural infrastructure (e.g., Federal Centre for Plant Health in North Saanich), landowners looking to donate their lands and ensure ongoing agricultural production. The Regional Food and Agricultural Task Force could be used as a conduit for information/input/feedback between stakeholders and the consultant. The consultant would be responsible for providing the information to be disseminated and for analyzing/synthesizing and reporting out on feedback provided.