

# Planning for Agriculture

—Resource Materials



Provincial Agricultural Land Commission

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Planning  
for  
Agriculture  
Resource Materials

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1998

Prepared by  
**Barry E. Smith**  
Policy Planner, ALC



Provincial Agricultural Land Commission



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## ACRONYMS

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AAC	Agricultural Advisory Committee
AAP	Agricultural Area Plan
AAPWG	Agricultural Area Plan Working Group
ALC	Agricultural Land Commission
ALC Act /ALCA	Agricultural Land Commission Act
ALR	Agricultural Land Reserve
APC	Advisory Planning Commission
BCAC	British Columbia Agricultural Council
BCLI	British Columbia Land Inventory
CLI	Canada Land Inventory
CORE	Commission on Resources and Environment
EDC	Economic Development Commission
FPPA	Farm Practices Protection (Right-to-Farm) Act
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
IAC	Intergovernmental Advisory Committee (Regional Growth Strategies)
LRMP	Land and Resources Management Planning
LTA	Land Title Act
LUCO	Land Use Coordination Office
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Food
MELP	Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks
MLS	Minimum Lot Size
MOTH	Ministry of Transportation and Highways
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
OCP	Official Community Plan
PALC	Provincial Agricultural Land Commission (same as ALC)
RLUB	Rural Land Use Bylaw
WTO	World Trade Organization

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## Acknowledgments

*Planning for Agriculture* is the result of a collaborative effort of many individuals. Jim Plotnikoff, Director of Strategic Planning & Corporate Policy, has been with the Commission since its first year of operation. Drawing upon this experience, Jim was instrumental in developing the concept of building an “idea package” that would encourage more focused and progressive planning for agriculture. Subsequently, Jim has overseen the project, providing advice and direction.

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Lastly, *Planning for Agriculture* has drawn on the experiences of many local governments in their efforts, over the years, to grapple with agricultural issues. Many of these experiences are directly used as examples throughout the work. Of particular importance was the Township of Langley’s “Rural Plan” developed principally by Paul Crawford and Kurt Alberts. This planning effort, which focused largely on the Township’s agricultural lands, was an initial inspiration in developing *Planning for Agriculture*.

The Agricultural Land Commission, April 1998

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## CREATING A SHARED VISION

Rural areas evoke a multitude of values and perspectives. For 25 years the Agricultural Land Commission has had the opportunity to view and develop insights into the changing uses, varied perspectives and planning of the agricultural portion of B.C.'s rural lands.

Naturally the Commission's focus has been on those areas either in agricultural use or reserved for food production - the Agricultural Land Reserve. Maintaining the best of the Province's scarce farmland and supporting the activities of farming and ranching in the face of rapid population growth and associated urbanization has been a constant challenge. To suggest that our rural areas can be locked away and shielded from change would be naive at best. Rural areas in many parts of the Province are under tremendous pressure and the Commission has been in a position to view this phenomenon better than most.

Even within active agricultural areas there is a diverse range of human and natural activities taking place which tend only to heighten the challenges facing agriculture. Yet, while the use of these lands is evolving, we have several critical land, water, environmental and human settlement issues to address if we are to work towards achieving economic and environmental sustainability for future generations.

The consideration of land use impacts, so common in the management of complex urban issues, is no less important in the countryside. A starting point in addressing land use complexities and competing demands within farming areas is to ensure a far better understanding and appreciation of that portion of the working land base with the ability to produce food and other agricultural products.

All too often, decision making works at cross purposes - effectively solving one problem, only to create another. To meet the challenges being placed on our rural lands we must direct a greater part of our energies to the development of joint policies that are at the same time locally, regionally and provincially sensitive - policies adopted and implemented jointly with common ownership and mutual respect. Achieving greater coordination may demand new approaches and working arrangements. It will require working from the point of view that our resources can be better sustained in an atmosphere and appreciation of shared, rather than competing values.

The ALR is the provincially designated home for agriculture.

While agriculture is obviously not the only activity embraced by the ALR, it is *the* "use of priority" within the Reserve. Agriculture is the looking glass through which we should view this part of B.C.'s land base when land use decisions are being made.

Too often the business of farming and preservation of agricultural land have been portrayed as impediments to urban development and, at times environmentally destructive. However, there is growing evidence that the preservation of farmland is having a far more positive effect on urban form than previously considered. The ALR has influenced the development of more compact and efficient urban areas with consequential benefits. Far from being a distraction from the many other important land use and social issues, planning for agriculture should be regarded as a central ingredient in the planning of complete communities. In recent years there have been numerous initiatives coming from within and supported by the farm sector to advance the cause of stewardship, adjust farm practices and build links with environmental interests. Undoubtedly this process will continue.

There are many persons, agencies and programmes making contributions to the well-being of B.C. agriculture - none more important than those of the producers themselves. However, traveling to almost every corner of the Province and talking about agriculture with local councils and regional boards, the Agricultural Land Commission has often heard a common refrain, "What can we do to help agriculture in our area?" Local initiatives designed to meet local challenges and support local farm communities clearly have an important role.

The planning, zoning and service delivery functions of municipalities and regional districts and the initiatives of other locally based groups will play a central and indeed an enhanced role, in implementing a shared vision of our working land base. It is for this reason that the Commission has developed *Planning for Agriculture*, to examine new approaches and suggest solutions in the spirit of building lasting partnerships to help sustain agriculture's place in B.C.

An important starting point is developing a shared vision - a vision founded on resource stewardship, the need to ensure that the business of agriculture has a secure home and by forging strong alliances among land use decision-makers, the Province's agricultural producers and others in the agri-food sector.



K. B. Miller

Chair, Agricultural Land Commission



## PLANNING FOR AGRICULTURE-PURPOSE

*Planning for Agriculture highlights practical means that can be undertaken largely, but not exclusively, at the local level to help sustain and strengthen agriculture in B.C.*

Historically, planning and agriculture have not been strong examples of cross-over disciplines. Few planners feel completely at home dealing with agricultural issues and few agricultural specialists are fully comfortable within the realm of community plans and bylaws. *Planning for Agriculture* is a resource document intended to act as a bridge between the world of land use planning and agriculture.

*Planning for Agriculture* will be most relevant for those persons associated with the development and adoption of planning policies and regulation affecting agriculture. It will be of particular significance to planners, decision makers and other persons participating in planning processes involving agricultural areas and issues important to the farm community. This should increasingly include farmers\*, ranchers and others involved in agriculture who have traditionally not been as involved in the development of land use plans and regulation.

Planning for the health of our agricultural sector can happen in many ways. The day-to-day, season-by-season management decisions of B.C.'s farmers are clearly one form - indeed a very direct form - of planning for agriculture. The federal and provincial agricultural initiatives and programmes constitute another form of planning for agriculture.

This document, however, focuses most directly on the contribution at the local level that is being made, and can be made, to ensure agriculture's sustainable future. Local governments and other groups have an important role to play in ensuring agriculture's place in their communities.

The Agricultural Land Commission has reviewed several hundred local government official plans and regulatory bylaws. In some cases official community and regional plans, like the now defunct 1980 Plan for the Lower Mainland, are committed to farming and the preservation of agricultural land. On the other hand there are examples of local land use policy that are clearly directed at agriculture's demise in favour of alternative land uses. However, more often than not local policy has tended to reflect an indifference to agriculture. There are several reasons for this historic policy lethargy or disinterest.

As a society, generation by generation, most of us are gradually becoming removed from any direct link to primary agricultural production. Thus, a lack of awareness of the complexities of the agri-food sector - from farm field to table - is to be expected.

*For a variety of reasons, planning for agriculture has not been high on public agendas*

The population of B.C. has grown rapidly. Most of this growth has been directed to urban areas. Consequently the pressures of urbanization - the many important settlement questions and challenges - have tended to capture the public agenda. As a result agriculture has too often been placed in a sort of policy vacuum - this despite food being a basic need for human existence.

In Canada, the trend towards increasing urbanization has been ongoing for most of this century. However, following World War II, as the single family home and its ally the private automobile joined forces, urbanization was transformed into the far more land consumptive suburbanization. The land in question was

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\* Within *Planning for Agriculture* the words farmer and farming will generally be used as all encompassing references to all forms of primary agricultural producers and production including orchardists, ranchers, growers and horticulturists, etc.



most often farmland. Over time it became viewed as an inevitable or normal process to compromise agricultural land for urban purposes.

Land stewardship has also been affected in Canada and B.C. by a false sense of land abundance. In British Columbia, in reality, our farmland resource is a study of scarcity. All prime agricultural land within the ALR (our best crop land) accounts for only about 1% of the B.C. land base.

Also, the abundance of food, (*for most, but not all*) and the ability to readily import from abroad, have also affected our sense of food security. Historically Canadians have never experienced serious food shortages or have had to suffer through a blockade of goods as has been or is the case in other countries.

Finally, farmland, as a commodity, remains largely unshielded from the vagaries of the market place and is susceptible to speculative forces, forces that in turn exert pressure on public policy.

Singularly, or in combination, these are some of the reasons why farmland is often under threat, or the needs of agriculture have not been understood or high on policy agendas. One of the key purposes of Planning for Agriculture is to create a reversal in which the farmland base and the business of farming gain a prominent and positive place within local planning processes and policy formulation.

*Planning for Agriculture* also considers linkages between local and provincial programmes that are required to ensure local actions are not frustrated. Considered also are a wide variety of values placed, and at times misplaced, upon our foodlands along with the key actors who are involved in and shape agricultural policy.

### **Key elements - *Planning for Agriculture* :**

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*policy integration*

*building stronger partnerships*

*enhanced awareness of agriculture*

*improved inventory work & ongoing monitoring*

*agricultural area plans*

*cross jurisdictional planning*

*edge planning*

*inclusive planning processes*

- i. encourage policy integration between levels of government;
  - ii. build stronger partnerships with and between locally-based groups that affect and support agriculture;
  - iii. foster an enhanced awareness of agriculture's importance and contribution to the overall well-being of communities and the province;
  - iv. enhance land use inventory work to ensure a better understanding of land use relationships, how agriculture functions and the issues important to the farm community;
  - v. undertake ongoing monitoring to ensure the effectiveness of plans and bylaws;
  - vi. develop within several key farming areas, focused agricultural area plans at the local level;
  - vii. encourage, where appropriate, cross jurisdictional planning efforts that encompass single identifiable agricultural communities;
  - viii. develop policies aimed at greater land use compatibility along agriculture's interface through detailed edge planning;
  - ix. ensure inclusive planning processes that involve members of the agricultural community.
-

*With very few exceptions, the recommendations and suggested approaches within "Planning for Agriculture" can be achieved within the context of current legislation.*

*An objective:  
... providing the largest possible number of agricultural opportunities over the broadest possible extent of our agricultural land base.*

How can agriculture best fit into local plan and bylaw delivery systems? What new opportunities are provided by legislative initiatives such as the *Farm Practices Protection (Right-to-Farm) Act* and the *Growth Strategies Act*? Each of these, and many other questions are explored. As well, several key issues facing agriculture are considered along with opportunities and recommended solutions that may be achieved through both local and provincial initiatives.

Given agriculture's diversity, recommended approaches and solutions will not be equally applicable in all parts of the Province. Unlike a jigsaw puzzle in which all the pieces are required to complete the puzzle, only those pieces needed to enhance agriculture's working environment in a given area will be appropriate.

*Planning for Agriculture*, as a resource document, will demand periodic review and update to ensure an appropriate fit with other emerging rural resource objectives, growth strategies and new concepts required to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

British Columbians have been facing - and meeting - the serious challenge of agricultural land preservation for nearly a quarter century. While this effort must continue, it is time to get inside the Agricultural Land Reserve and pay far greater attention to planning for the long term agricultural use of agricultural land. *Planning for Agriculture* is aimed at fostering enduring partnerships that will help improve the security of B.C.'s foodlands in a way that preserves not only our working land base, but also the farmers on the land.

It is important that farm issues are considered in a way that clearly recognizes agriculture as the highest and best use of our farmland resource. This means ensuring that our regulatory imprint on the landscape does not disadvantage, but rather, actively supports agricultural enterprise. We need to provide for a working land base conducive to agricultural production - one that allows for the largest possible number of agricultural opportunities over the broadest possible extent of our agricultural land base. And finally we must work collectively to achieve sustainable agriculture - to reconcile environmental imperatives with economic viability.

## USING PLANNING FOR AGRICULTURE

Planning for Agriculture comprises two documents. A condensed version, *Planning for Agriculture* and the larger, resource guide entitled *Planning for Agriculture Resource Materials*

*Planning for Agriculture Resource Materials* comprises 9 chapters and extensive appendices:

- |                          |                   |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| (i) BACKGROUND           | - Chapters 1 to 4 |
| (ii) PLANNING APPROACHES | - Chapters 5 to 8 |
| (iii) ISSUES             | - Chapter 9       |
| (iv) APPENDICES          | - 1 to 20         |



**BACKGROUND**

**Chapt. 1 Background**

(A brief overview of the Province's diverse agricultural industry and land base.)

**Chapt. 2 Differing Perspectives on Farmland**

(A variety of differing views and perspectives of agriculture and its land base are identified.)

**Chapt. 3 Why Plan For Agriculture ?**

(The importance of planning for agriculture is considered within broader contexts and the local importance of agriculture.)

**Chapt. 4 Provincial & Local Government Roles**

(The Provincial role in agriculture is reviewed along with the range of local government functions and linkages to the ALR and Agricultural Land Commission Act. A summary is provided of legislative opportunities to plan for agriculture.)

**PLANNING APPROACHES**

**Chapt. 5 Agriculture: Taking Its Place in the Planning Process**

(Setting the Stage: An overview of current planning approaches and the need for more focused planning for agriculture and an overview of agriculture's linkages within the provincial and local planning structures )

**Chapt. 6 Making Agricultural Connections**

(Methods of connecting with the farm community are explored.)

**Chapt. 7 Agricultural Area Plans**

(Agricultural Area Plans are considered in detail including development of the plan; inventory work and monitoring, plan content, and resolving policy inconsistencies)

**Chapt. 8 Planning Along Agriculture's Edge**

(While specific buffering techniques are not provided, an approach to planning along the edge is outlined along with the means to implement interface policies.)

**ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES**

**Chapt. 9 Agricultural Issues & Opportunities**

(Several (but not all) individual issues important to the agriculture community and further opportunities to plan for agriculture's future and enhance agricultural awareness are reviewed.)

**APPENDICIES**

**Appendices**

(The 20 different sections of the appendix range from statistical information to discussion papers to several contact lists of key farm organizations and agricultural offices.)



Note:

*Planning for Agriculture calls on local governments to give greater priority to agricultural issues. While the document contains several recommendations, none are of course binding, nor actions necessitated by any parties that may be mentioned. However, recommendations are presented for the purpose of encouraging action, as appropriate, and to stimulate dialogue.*

*One of the cornerstones of the document is its encouragement of consultation with local governments directly or through the Union of British Columbia Municipalities in the spirit of cooperation under the Protocol of Recognition (1996), which commits the Province and the UBCM to work together on matters of common interest.*

*Planning for Agriculture* has been designed to act as:

- a stand alone document and useful resource in its own right;
- a source for all major recommendations and concepts contained in *Planning for Agriculture*; and
- a “road map” to *Planning for Agriculture Resource Materials* by providing easy access to the larger document both in its hard and electronic forms.

It is anticipated that *Planning for Agriculture* will be the introductory and prime document to quickly gain an acquaintance with the topics, concepts and recommendations of *Planning for Agriculture*. For persons requiring more detail or local government planners, consultants, or groups working specifically on agricultural area planning projects, inventory work or issue evaluation, the larger resource document will provide far greater insight and detail.

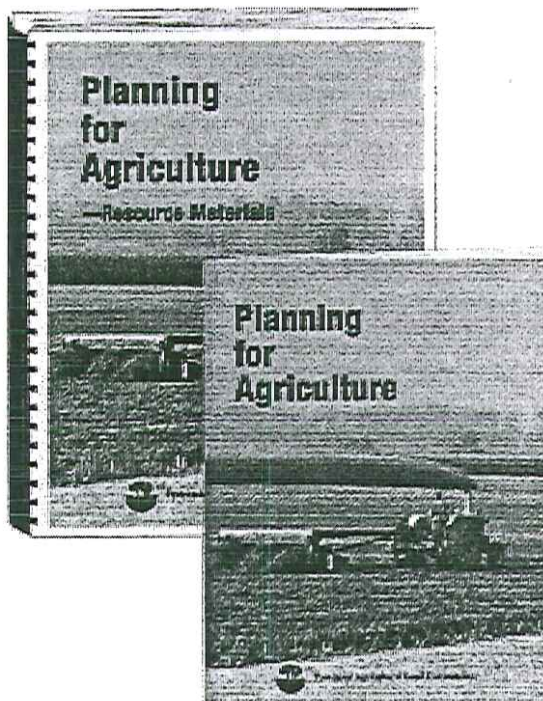
### Linkages Between Documents

To provide linkages between *Planning for Agriculture* and *Planning for Agriculture Resource Materials* numerous cross-references are provided. If you are using *Planning for Agriculture* the *italicized* chapter and page number references will lead the reader to the similar, but more detailed, section in the hard copy version of *Planning for Agriculture Resource Materials*.

Reference to greater detail in *Planning for Agriculture Resource Materials*

Example:

**2. Planning Studies and Inventory** (*Chapt. 6, p. 20*)



# 1

## BACKGROUND

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## INTRODUCTION

*Agriculture.... the highest and best use of our farmland resource*

British Columbians have been facing - and meeting - the serious challenge of agricultural land preservation for almost 25 years. While this effort must continue, it is time to get inside the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) and pay far greater attention to planning for the long term agricultural use of agricultural land. We must approach agricultural land use issues in a way that clearly recognizes agriculture as the highest and best use of our farmland resource. This means ensuring that our regulatory imprint on the landscape does not disadvantage, but rather, actively supports agricultural enterprise. We need to provide for a working environment conducive to agricultural production - one that allows for the broadest possible number of agricultural opportunities over the broadest possible extent of our agricultural landscape. And finally we must work collectively to achieve sustainable agriculture - to reconcile long range environmental imperatives with economic viability.

Agriculture, if anything, is complex. From the site specific attributes of the land base to tomorrow's weather, each can have a direct impact on an agricultural operation. At the other end of the spectrum there are several global factors that directly affect B.C. agriculture. The free trade agreement between Canada and the United States, the more recent North American Free Trade Agreement and the World Trade Organization (WTO) each has an effect on the agricultural sector. There are also a host of Provincial and Federal statutes and regulations that can directly affect the day-to-day operation of a farm. These broader issues are, however, not the subject of this report.

*Making a positive contribution to agriculture.*

Standing somewhere between the daily decisions of the producer and these global and national issues is the decision-making role of local governments, particularly associated with the development of planning policy and land use regulation. This too, along with the actions of other local groups, has important implications for farm operators. It will be these latter factors and the means to positively contribute to agriculture at the local level that are the central focus of this report.

*...working together with a shared vision of agriculture's future.*

While local governments and other groups can play an important role in ensuring agriculture's place in their communities, it is not to suggest that this effort should be undertaken alone. An important aspect of *Planning for Agriculture* is to highlight practical means that can be taken at the local level but to also emphasize the linkages and supportive actions that should be taken at the Provincial level. Indeed a common theme of *Planning for Agriculture* is to underscore the need to build bridges and work in a mutually supportive fashion and to do so from the foundation of a shared vision of agriculture's place and importance in our communities and planning processes.



## B.C. AGRICULTURE - FINDING ITS PLACE

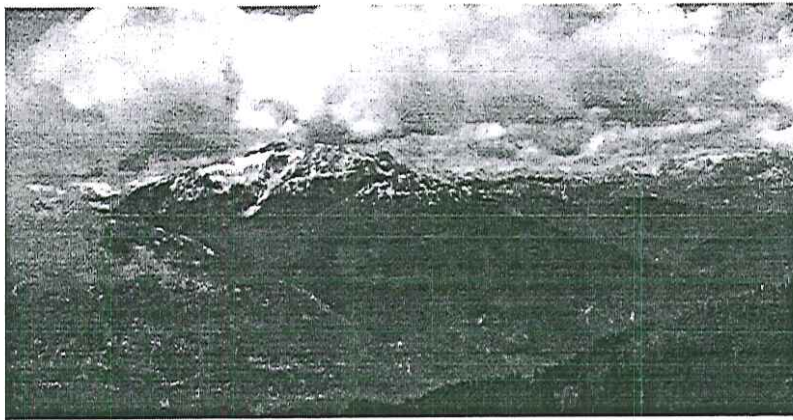
*British Columbia ...  
aesthetically rich but  
agriculturally  
deficient*

Furuseh, & Pierce,  
*Agricultural Land  
In An Urban  
Society*, p. 71

B.C.'s foodlands have had a long history - from providing for the needs of its indigenous peoples long before European contact, to helping fur trading posts, mining camps and early settlements to subsist. Today B.C. agriculture supplies nearly 60% of the food needs of British Columbians, competing on world markets and leading the country in a number of specialty products. The physical setting, within which agriculture has had to find its place, has posed a continual challenge.

### 1. A Challenging Geography

For British Columbians, the landscape of their Province has always held a special significance. Living in a physical setting that can be both more beautiful and more harsh than most settled places on earth has always been a challenge but it has never lessened its attraction. However, the Province's physiography



*Mountains - the dominant land form for much of British Columbia*

has rendered it one of Canada's richest and most diverse provinces but a have-not province agriculturally. Over 90% of the province is covered by mountains or has an elevation over 1,000 metres.<sup>1</sup>

Evidence exists that present day British Columbia was inhabited by peoples at least as early as 7,000 BC.<sup>2</sup> At the time of European contact, in the 1700's, the indigenous population of the area is estimated have numbered nearly 100,000.<sup>3</sup>

*B.C. has had a long  
history of providing  
for its local food  
needs.*

Following early exploration, European settlement was strongly influenced by a desire to pursue the abundant resources of the region. This was initially in association with the trade in furs with trading posts being established in the early 1800's. One example, Fort Langley, was established in 1827. The Fort operated a large farm, influenced the growth of agriculture in the immediate area, initiated fish packing and became a commercial centre for the colony of British Columbia.<sup>4</sup>

In 1842 the Hudson Bay Company surveyed the southern end of Vancouver Island and decided upon the site of Victoria for the building of a fort. This may represent one of the earliest examples of planning for the use of land within British Columbia in a relatively structured manner.<sup>5</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> Furuseh, O.J. & J.T. Pierce; *Agricultural Land In An Urban Society*, Ass. of American Geographers, 1982, p. 71.
- <sup>2</sup> Harris, R.C., *Historical Atlas of Canada Volume 1: From the Beginning to 1800*, University of Toronto Press, 1987, Plate 6.
- <sup>3</sup> Woodland, M.B. *Land of Dreams*, Altitude Publishing, 1993, p. 7.
- <sup>4</sup> Taylor, C.J., article on Fort Langley in the *Canadian Encyclopedia*, 2nd Ed., Hurtig Publishers, 1988, p. 821.
- <sup>5</sup> Nader, G.A.; *Cities of Canada, Vol. 1*; Macmillan of Canada, 1975, p. 198.

*Many urban centres were originally built on or near the best agricultural land in the region.*

Along with the establishment of more permanent settlements came the need for local forest and farm products and improved transportation links to far flung settlements. Local agriculture was a necessity of subsistence for these early communities. The growing cities of Vancouver and Victoria stimulated agricultural expansion in the Fraser Valley and on Vancouver Island. In the 1890's fruit and vegetable production were established in the Okanagan, and beef ranching in the Cariboo.<sup>6</sup> This relationship between settlement patterns and the need for land suitable to provide for locally grown food resulted in many of our modern centres being built on the best agricultural land in the region. The urban portion of the City of Richmond, built on the rich farm lands of the western half of Lulu Island, serves as a clear example.<sup>7</sup>

*B.C.'s population is highly urbanized and geographically concentrated.*

By 1911 British Columbia was the only province in Canada to have more persons living in an urban rather than rural setting.<sup>8</sup> Today over 82% of all British Columbians make their home in an urban area.<sup>9</sup> The Province's population, partially in response to geography, has shown a clear tendency towards concentration and is today focused largely in two relatively small portions of the Province. 79% of B.C.'s 1996 population<sup>10</sup> resides within two triangular areas, one, in the Interior, centred on Kelowna and bounded by Osoyoos, Sicamous and Kamloops and a second, in the Southwest, centred on Vancouver and bounded by Hope, Victoria and Parksville. Yet, these two areas encompass only about 25,300 square kilometres or 2.7 % of the Province. (See Map 1)

Found within these same two areas are several of B.C.'s most important agricultural communities, containing some of Canada's most unique and productive agricultural land. The Lower Mainland, aided by the longest frost free period in Canada and the Okanagan Valley, one of only three main fruit and one of only two main grape growing areas in Canada, are considered to be agriculturally of national significance.<sup>11</sup> Together this 2.7% of B. C. accounts for over \$1.4 billion or 78% of the Province's total gross farm receipts (1995).<sup>12</sup>

This concentration of both human settlement and agricultural production has resulted in an obvious competition for a very limited supply of land in which human activities can reasonably be undertaken. Moreover, both of these two small triangles of the Province have been experiencing unprecedented population growth which will continue to be one of the underlying challenges for those engaged in issues related to land use and its allocation

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<sup>6</sup> Robinson, J.L., article on British Columbia, in the Canadian Encyclopedia, 2nd Ed., Hurtig Publishers, 1988, p. 276

<sup>7</sup> See - Ewert, H., The Story of the B.C. Electric, Whitecap Books, 1986, pp. 59 & 60.

<sup>8</sup> Department of the Interior, Atlas of Canada, page 4 (Statistics of Population of Canada in Census Year 1911)

<sup>9</sup> Statistics Canada, A National Overview - Population and Dwelling Counts, 1996, Cat. No. 93-357-XPB, Table 18, page 240.

<sup>10</sup> Statistics Canada, April 15, 1997 (From the GVRD Strategic Planning Department.).

<sup>11</sup> Moore, K.E.; Urbanization in the Lower Fraser Valley, 1980-1987, Technical Report Series No. 120; Environment Canada, December 1990, p. 2.

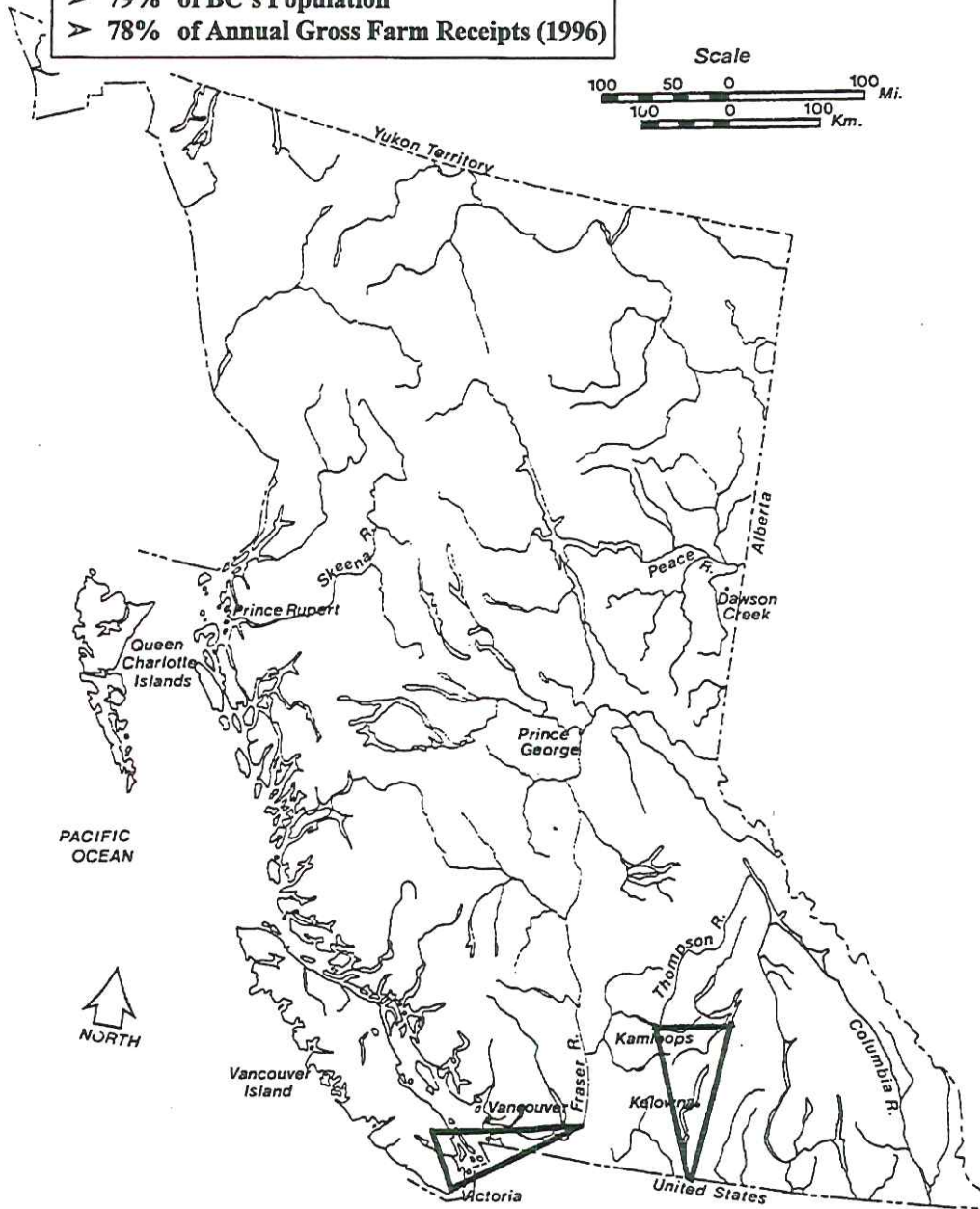
<sup>12</sup> Statistics Canada, 1996 Census of Agriculture Profile Data - British Columbia, Table 6.



# MAP 1

Two Areas of B.C. as Outlined Contain:

- 2.7% of the Provincial Land Area
- 79% of BC's Population
- 78% of Annual Gross Farm Receipts (1996)



Provincial Agricultural Land Commission 1995



## 2. B.C. Agriculture - A Study In Diversity

*The diversity of B.C. agriculture is a reflection of the province's varied climate and geography.*

The diversity of British Columbia agriculture is a reflection of very different agricultural land forms and climate. The province has five major physiographic regions. The land base of B.C. has been described as infinite in its variety with nine major soil orders. It contains many different minerals and vegetation types ranging from rain-forest to sage brush and cactus.<sup>13</sup> The Coast has a moderate climate with the mildest temperatures in Canada. In contrast, the Interior normally has cold winters but very hot summers. Kamloops, Penticton and Kelowna have the distinction of having the warmest average daytime summer temperatures in Canada. The considerable variability in the Province's climate, physiography, geology and vegetation have interacted in the landscape to produce a soil base that has had obvious impacts on the agricultural use of land.

*Agricultural capability...a good, but not the only, indicator of agricultural potential.*

B.C. benefits from having nearly all its arable land classified under the British Columbia Land Inventory (BCLI), a variation of the Canada Land Inventory. Through the Inventory, agricultural land has been classified into seven categories according to the range of crops that can be grown.<sup>14</sup> The classification system considers both climate and soil conditions of an area and is based on a *range* of crops. As a result it is not uncommon for some lands to be highly productive but only for a single or narrow range of specialty crops and have a relatively low rating. Cranberry production is an example. Cranberry bogs normally have a relatively small range of cropping possibilities. The result is a poor agricultural capability rating but highly productive for this particular crop.

Thus, the BCLI provides an important indication of an area's general agricultural potential but one must consider other indicators beyond agricultural capability to understand an area's true agricultural potential. In fact, many important forms of agriculture production have only a marginal, if any, relationship to the land base's inherent agricultural capability. It is for this reason that there are lands in the ALR with low agricultural capability ratings but which make a strong contribution to B.C. agriculture.

However, British Columbia does have some of the highest quality agricultural land in Canada - in very limited quantities. Despite having a vast land base, the physiography of the Province renders most of B.C. unsuitable for agriculture. How much is a matter of definition. It has been estimated that as much as 15% to 16% of British Columbia's land base is considered capable of some form of agricultural use. This includes most land with a Class 1 to 6 agricultural capability rating. However, most of this land is, at best, suitable only for rough grazing or the production of perennial forage crops.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Valentine, Sprout, Baker, and Lavkulich (editors); The Soil Landscapes of British Columbia, The Resource Analysis Branch, Ministry of the Environment, Victoria, British Columbia, 1978 (pp. 47,67, and 97) .

<sup>14</sup> Class 1 has the broadest range with little or no limitations for the production of common agricultural crops and Class 7 has no capability for arable culture or sustained natural grazing.

<sup>15</sup> Agriculture Canada; Development of the Agri-Food Sector in British Columbia: A Provincial Profile, Regional Development Branch, Victoria, B.C., 1983; p. 28.

Table 1 serves to illustrate the relative scarcity of B.C.'s agricultural land in relation to the Province as a whole.<sup>16</sup> While the amount of the Province represented by prime agricultural land in the ALR is only 1.1%, this compares to 17% of Alberta's land base that is prime agricultural land. Despite obvious physical constraints over much of the Province and a scarcity of agricultural land, B.C. is blessed with a farmland base high in both capability and diversity. To appreciate this diversity one need only compare a small vegetable farm in Burnaby's Big Bend with Douglas Lake Ranch east of Nicola Lake, stretching some 96 kilometres from corner to corner. Each is an example of B.C. agriculture.

**TABLE 1**  
**COMPARISON OF**  
**AGRICULTURAL CAPABILITY INDICATORS**  
**AND B.C.'s LAND BASE**

<u>Capability Indicator</u>	<u>Percentage of B.C.'s Land Base</u>
Land in the Agricultural Land Reserve*	5.00%
Land Capable of a Range of Crops ( BCLI Class 1-4)	2.70%
Prime Agricultural Land (BCLI Class 1-3)	1.10%
Class 1 Agricultural Capability	0.06%
Land Suitable for Tree Fruit Production in the ALR**	0.04%

\* Agricultural Land Reserve Statistics, Jan. 1, 1997, Table A-2)

\*\* Correspondence, OVTF, Oct. 19, 1995 (Total ALR area in the Okanagan and Similkameen Valleys suitable for tree fruit production = 35,492 hectares.)  
Okanagan and Similkameen Valleys suitable for tree fruit production = 35,492 hectares.

*Almost 22,000 farms and 600 food processing firms producing more than 200 agricultural commodities.*

*Every region of the Province contributes to B.C.'s agriculture.*

With over 200 different agricultural commodities, there isn't much that can be grown in Canada that can't be grown on B.C.'s 21,835 farms.<sup>17</sup> In certain commodities B.C. not only leads the nation but has an international reputation. Dairy products, beef, poultry and a wide variety of vegetables from green peas to spinach are produced. The Province accounts for over 90% of Canadian production in cranberries and the south-west of the Province - centred in Abbotsford - is one of the world's most important areas for raspberry production.<sup>18</sup> The Okanagan's soil / climate combination, and over 100 years of agricultural experience, have made it renowned for tree fruit and grape production. Ginseng production has been rapidly growing in the Interior as have greenhouse vegetable and flower production in the Lower Mainland. Langley accounts for half of all the mushroom bed area in B.C.<sup>19</sup> and the Fraser Valley Regional District is the centre of the Province's filbert production. Almost every part of the Province makes a contribution to B.C.'s overall agri-food sector.

<sup>16</sup> See: Development of the Agri-Food Sector in British Columbia - A Provincial Profile, p. 22. and Berry, J. Agriculture and Food in British Columbia, Agriculture Canada, 1988, p. 25

<sup>17</sup> Statistics Canada, 1996 Census of Agriculture Profile Data - British Columbia, Table 1.

<sup>18</sup> Marsh, James, H., (Ed.) The Canadian Encyclopedia, 2nd Ed. Hurtig Publishers, Edmonton, 1988, p. 207.

<sup>19</sup> Statistics Canada, 1996 Census of Agriculture Profile Data - British Columbia, Table 12.



*Okanagan-Kootenay*

The Okanagan-Kootenay region contains the major part of the Province's tree fruit and grape production. Large cattle ranches are located in the Cranbrook and Similkameen Valley areas and grain, forage and dairy production are important in the Salmon Arm, Vernon and Creston areas.

*South Coastal*

The South Coastal region of the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island accounts for a major proportion of the Province's dairy, poultry, swine, horticulture and floriculture production. Approximately 64% of B.C.'s total annual gross farm receipts are generated in this region.<sup>20</sup>

*Thompson-Cariboo*

The Thompson-Cariboo region is the principal cattle ranching area of British Columbia with some of the largest ranches in North America. Alfalfa and other forages are grown in abundance to supply winter feed for cattle which range over extensive areas during grazing season.

*North-Central*

Agriculture in the North-Central region is based largely on forage and livestock production - mainly beef cattle. Some vegetables and other specialty crops are also produced.

*Peace River*

The Peace River region produces most of the cereal grains, oil seeds and forage seeds in B.C. as well as a significant amount of livestock, particularly beef cattle. The Peace represents the single largest agricultural area of the Province with over 33% of all land in farm use.<sup>21</sup> The Region also contains considerable potential for future agricultural development with approximately 45% of the ALR in the Region not yet in production.<sup>22</sup>

*For more information about the importance of B.C. Agriculture - by area, regional district and municipality - see the Ministry of Agriculture and Food's Web Page at:*

*<http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca>*

Besides providing one of the basic needs of human beings, the agricultural sector makes an important contribution to the economy of British Columbia. Over the past 25 years the amount of land in farm use in the Province has increased and only B.C. amongst all other provinces, has had an increase in the number of farms during this period.<sup>23</sup> During downturns in the economy, communities with a strong agricultural sector have been afforded a measure of resistance to recessionary forces.

**B.C is not self-supporting in food products, resulting in a dependence on imports from other parts of Canada, the U.S. and Mexico**

Food Imports

1946	=	3%
1955	=	29%
1970's	=	60%
1990's	=	40%

See: Furuseth & Pierce, *Agricultural Land In An Urban Society*, p. 72

Agriculture, fisheries and food is a \$16 billion growth industry in B.C.<sup>24</sup> with 249,500 jobs in the entire food system<sup>25</sup> and 33,600 jobs directly provided

20 Ibid, Table 5.

21 Ibid, Table 7.

22 Ibid, Table 7 & Provincial Agricultural Land Commission, Agricultural Land Reserve Statistics January 1, 1996, Table A-2

23 Statistics Canada, Press Release "BC leads Canada's growth in number of farms", May 14, 1997.

24 Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Fast Facts (1996), Province of British Columbia, p 2.

25 "...the entire food system..." includes, Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Processing, Food Service and Retail, Transportation, Wholesale Trade and Support Services. (Ibid, p. 5).



**TABLE 2**  
**1996 B. C. FARM CASH RECEIPTS**

	\$ millions	Percent
Poultry and Eggs	\$307	19%
Dairy Products	302	19%
Floriculture & Nursery	222	14%
Cattle and Calves	179	11%
Vegetables	164	10%
Berries and Grapes	91	6%
Tree Fruit	73	5%
Grains & Oilseeds	56	3%
Hogs	53	3%
Other	153	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,600</b>	<b>100%</b>

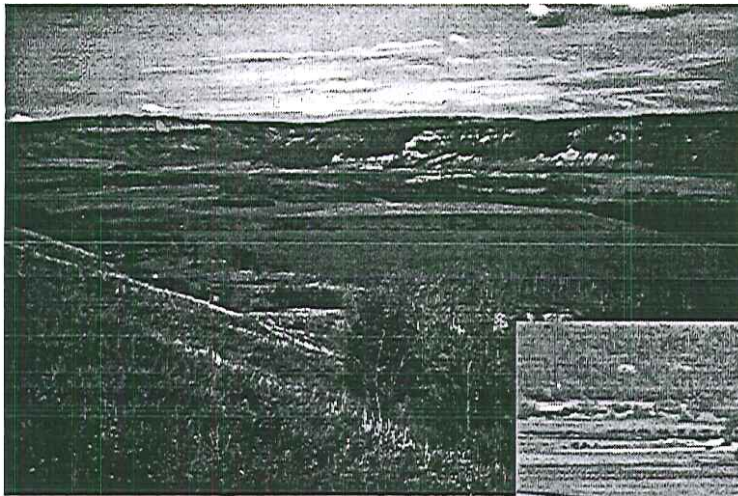
Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, *Fast Facts* (1996), Province of British Columbia.

by primary agriculture.<sup>26</sup> The annual farm cash receipts in B.C. stood at about \$1.6 billion in 1996<sup>27</sup> with a total capital value of \$13.8 billion in 1996.<sup>28</sup> Over 60% of Provincial food requirements are met by British Columbia's farmers and fishers.<sup>29</sup> The Province exports (internationally and interprovincially) food products valued at \$2.8 billion.<sup>30</sup> Table 2 indicates the relative importance of the major commodity groupings. In addition to these figures, the 1996 value of fish landings reached \$572,000,000.<sup>31</sup>

### 3. Summary

The primary value of B.C.'s agricultural land and the activity of farming - why it should be regarded as a precious resource and important economic activity - relates to three key factors. First, is its functionality - its ability to provide for one of the most basic of human needs. Secondly, the activity of the primary producers on these lands makes an important contribution to the Province's economy, defines part of the Province's social fabric and is a valued visual characteristic. And thirdly, in many key areas the agricultural land base is of high quality but quite limited in quantity.

These factors are central to planning for agriculture and crucial to ensure agriculture's home within ALR in a manner that is supportive in the long term.



*From the Peace River (top) to Sumas Prairie (right); agriculture from one corner of the Province to the other.*

26 Ibid, p. 5.

27 Ibid, p. 3.

28 Statistics Canada, 1996 *Census of Agriculture Profile Data - British Columbia*, Table 16. (Farm Capital is the sum of the value of farm machinery and equipment, livestock and poultry and land and buildings..)

29 Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, *Fast Facts* (1996), Province of British Columbia, p 2.

30 Ibid, p. 4.

31 Ibid, p. 3.



# 2

## DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES ON FARMLAND

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## INTRODUCTION

Land use decision-making in the 1990's would be quite foreign to early Hudson Bay fur traders, or to the 5,000 gold miners that went north in the Spring of 1861 to Barkerville,<sup>1</sup> or to the early railway builders. The same could be said for the early exploitation of most of B.C.'s bountiful store of resources. The people were few, the land was large and there were fortunes to be made and lost. There was a single mindedness at work that was a world away from public participation, round table discussions, focus groups and impact assessments.

As late as the 1920's the diking, draining and reclamation of Sumas Lake allowed for the creation of one of B.C.'s show case agricultural areas comprising 4,000+ hectares of highly productive farmland. But this public works / agricultural undertaking also represented the imposition of aspirations for new uses of these lowlands that were very different from the one nature intended.<sup>2</sup> It has been speculated that the transformation of this natural landscape into hundreds of Sumas Prairie farms may never have taken place if the decision was being made today.

Almost every land use decision involves a wide range of interests, bringing several different points of view to bear on the subject. The checks and balances now built into public review and decision-making processes can be time consuming, expensive and at times frustrating. Yet, most land use decisions can never be fully reversed and the impacts and precedents that may be set normally go far beyond any single site - with the potential to affect many people. In dealing with land use issues, it is imperative that varying points of view be respected and understood ... if not always agreed to. Policy development and land use decisions will be improved by a fuller appreciation of differing points of view. However, within the ALR any determination of land use must be inspired by food conscious decision-making.

**Within the ALR we must make  
food conscious decisions.**

## FARMLAND: DIFFERENT THINGS TO DIFFERENT PEOPLE

As is the case with most resources, agricultural land is many things to many people. In planning for the long term agricultural use of agricultural land it will be a continuing challenge to effectively deal with these varied and at times, conflicting perspectives and interests applied to the agricultural land base.

*"Farmland ..... fields,  
holding cities apart."*

Phil Jenkins  
Fields of Dreams  
p. 11

Following is a brief review and comment on several different interests, perspectives and values associated with farmland. Some of these interests are very compatible with the enterprise of farming, but others are in direct or partial conflict.

In any consideration of the variety of different perspectives towards farmland, it is important that agricultural production, in its many forms, be considered as the "use of priority". In any accommodation or consideration of varying uses and interests associated with farmland, these must be evaluated in the context of what

<sup>1</sup> Woodcock, G., British Columbia: A History of the Province, Douglas & McIntyre, 1990, page 103.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, Bob, "The Reclamation of the Sumas Lands", Fraser Valley College (unpublished), 1983 p. 1

*Agricultural production -the use of priority within farm areas.*

*Natural Capital is dependent upon ecological assets ... one of which is our food producing renewable resource lands.*

is in the best interest of sustaining our limited supply of land available for agricultural production and the ability for farmers to farm.

## 1. Farmland as Natural Capital

Besides the more site or area specific productive and environmental function that agricultural land plays, there is a much broader and more fundamental role. It is a perspective that farmland is part of our 'global, life support system'. Natural capital assists in the understanding of sustainability. As Mitlin and Satterthwaite explained in their 1991 paper "Sustainable Development and Cities", natural capital consists of three kinds of "ecological assets": (1) non-renewable resources, (2) the finite capacity of natural systems to produce renewable resources (one example being food crops) and (3) the capacity of natural systems to absorb pollutants arising from human actions without side effects which imply heavy costs passed onto future generations.<sup>3</sup>

Most often when we refer to the health of the economy we use a monetary yardstick almost exclusively. The "money economy" is most often our gauge of success.<sup>4</sup> However, University of British Columbia Professor Bill Rees argues that agricultural land must be considered from an ecological economics perspective. Dr. Rees grapples directly with the common economic myths mounted against the preservation of farmland. As he points out, "In the minds of many, economic rationality would permit our best agricultural land to be converted to almost any more productive use until food scarcity makes farming more competitive."<sup>5</sup> But the real world isn't that simple. Replacing these long-standing economic conventions is the need to regard certain biophysical entities responsible for life-support functions of the ecosphere as a special class of

"natural capital". From this perspective each generation should inherit an adequate stock of essential natural capital - one of which is our arable soils - no less than the stock of such assets inherited by the previous generation.<sup>6</sup> Dr. Rees concludes,

*"Soils and arable land is considered to be a form of productive natural capital with only limited potential for technological substitution. Its unique properties and immeasurable value as an essential component of our global life support system justify the exclusion of adequate stocks of agricultural land from competing land markets. In short, a range of considerations and values beyond short-term efficiency bear on critical land use decisions. This is more likely to ensure food security in a world of rapid ecological change and political uncertainty. As a bonus, we may succeed in preserving important elements of rural life and landscape, a significant part of our national heritage."*

Rees, W.E., Why Preserve Agricultural Land?, page 11

<sup>3</sup> Roseland, M., Toward Sustainable Communities, National Round Table on the Environment and Economy, Ottawa, 1992, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Berry, Wendell; The Gift of Good Land, North Point Press, New York, 1981, page xiii.

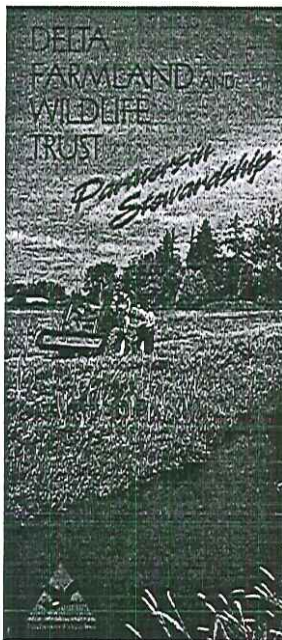
<sup>5</sup> Rees, W.E., Why Preserve Agricultural Land?, a paper prepared for a Symposium on Urban Growth and the Agricultural Land Reserve: Up not Out, February, 1993, page 10 and 11.

<sup>6</sup> Rees, page 5. In the same article, Dr. Rees considers the ecological value of forested and arable land in the absorption of CO<sup>2</sup> emissions - a contributive function of farmland that is often overlooked.



*The preservation and sustainability of farmland as a source of food and as wildlife habitat starts with a commitment to environmentally responsible and economically viable agricultural practices. Society as a whole must commit to the true costs of preserving farmland and the wildlife habitat it can provide. In return the farmer remains as the responsible steward of the land."*

Delta Farmland and  
Wildlife Trust:  
Partners in Stewardship



## 2. Wildlife Habitat

Although land that is farmed does not represent a natural landscape, wildlife use farmland for food and shelter. Therefore, agricultural land can play a complementary role in sustaining wildlife populations. Moreover, the application of certain management techniques can minimize negative impacts and help enhance agriculture's contribution to sustaining wildlife. As recognized by the Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust, "In order to preserve and enhance the current population levels of many species of wildlife .... it is essential to maintain the viability of farming operations in the region."<sup>7</sup> Moreover, it is not uncommon for agricultural areas to contain designated wildlife reserves and other environmentally sensitive areas important to maintaining critical wildlife populations.

Government agencies and conservation organizations such as the Canadian Wildlife Service and Ducks Unlimited are also developing programmes to integrate wildlife preservation and habitat conservation with farming. An example of a coordinated management effort is that of the Trumpeter Swan Management Project in the Comox Valley. Trumpeter Swan populations, in jeopardy in the 1930's, have made a remarkable recovery, doubling in each of the last three decades. Today 7,500 Trumpeter Swans winter along the southwest coast of B.C., accounting for half of the world's population of this species. Agricultural land has become an important feeding area for the Trumpeter Swan but can have a number of significant negative impacts on farming. The Comox Valley project, operating since 1991, applies a number of management techniques but most importantly, it has involved strong cooperation between farmers and wildlife agencies. Like the Delta experience, preserving productive agricultural land by ensuring a viable agricultural industry is seen as a vital link to preserving the Trumpeter Swan.<sup>8</sup>

These projects, as well as the Interior Wetlands Program which focuses on extensive areas of wetland and adjacent uplands of the Fraser River Basin and the Greenfields Project in Delta, are all examples of wildlife stewardship efforts directly involving farm and ranch operators.

In any effort to ensure a meaningful integration of wildlife and agricultural policy it will be important to first recognize and acknowledge the relationships between these two resource interests and secondly to design management programs that work directly with farmers since, in the case of most land being farmed, this involves land in private ownership.

Partnership models, based upon one-on-one relationships with farmers, emphasizing voluntary rather than prescriptive solutions, are emerging. We need look no further than the Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust to see a partnership programme of this type in action. However, this concept has been evolving for some time. In Britain in the 1980's, voluntary programmes were initiated that involved the Ministry of Agriculture and were supported by the National Farmers' Union. The areas involved were part of designated environmentally sensitive areas. While payments varied, there were two levels

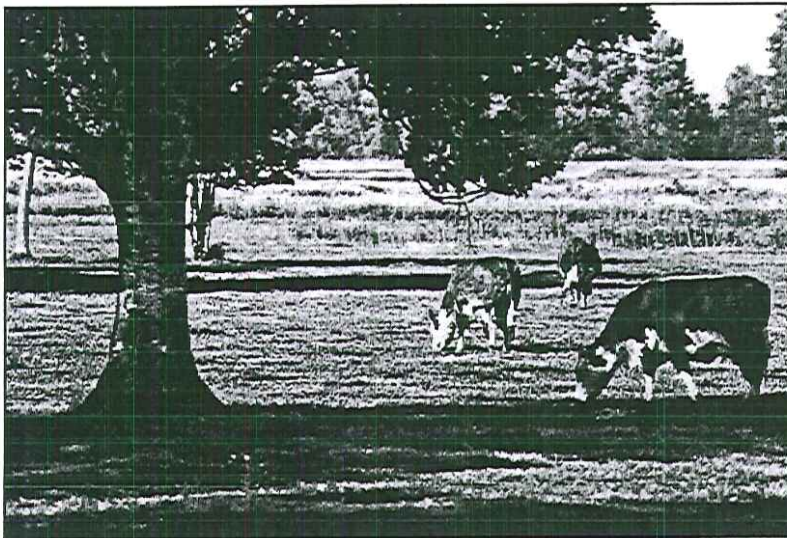
<sup>7</sup> Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust, Farm Stewardship Proposal for Parallel Runway Habitat Compensation Strategy, January, 1994, page v.

<sup>8</sup> Trumpeter Swans, a brochure published by the Comox Valley Waterfowl Management Project.



## RECOMMENDATION:

Programmes aimed at wildlife enhancement and environmentally responsible farming should emphasize voluntary, one-on-one relationship-building with farmers, and involve partnerships with farm groups.



*Cows lolling in the shade on a hot summer's day. One, but far from the only, image of B.C. agriculture.*

*Farmland .....*

*far more than just green space.*

of grant depending on the extent of conservation undertaken.<sup>9</sup> Another hallmark of the British programmes of this type is the one-on-one relationships established between farmers and conservationists similar to efforts by the Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust. The voluntary principle was recognised as early as 1968 and by the 1990's there were over 60 Farming and Wildlife Advisory Groups in Britain with farm conservation advisors working with farmers.<sup>10</sup>

### 3. Green Space

Despite the vastness of the Province, home for most British Columbians is in an urban setting. In contrast, farmland provides a distinctly different physical environment. For many people living in an urban area, food production may not be the first thing that comes to mind when in contact with farmland. Agriculture may simply represent a scenic vista - a green counterpart to an increasingly urban landscape. Some may live on the edge of an agricultural area. Others may visit a farming area as part of a Sunday outing or cross through it during their commute to work. For these people, maintaining the "green oasis" may be reason enough to preserve agricultural land and farming activities.

There is nothing wrong with appreciating the aesthetic value of the green and pleasant landscape that farming often represents. However, this is only a by-product of farming's principal function - the production of food and other agricultural products. Moreover, the "green space" aspect of farming is only one face - one image - of modern agriculture.

Farmland is also not a static museum piece. It is a dynamic, working landscape that varies, not only season by season, but in production methods.

The types of farm activities will also change in response to technological innovation and market challenges.

The farming community has long voiced its misgivings that agricultural land is seen too often, by too many people, as little more than managed green space. A clear danger lies in this perspective acting as the 'engine' that drives land use regulation.

Farmers are concerned that people are not looking beyond the "green" and have lost touch with the fact that agriculture is the work place for the business of primary agriculture. Farming involves a wide range of activities, from land stewardship to production, and in some cases a degree of on-farm processing and

<sup>9</sup> Mercer, D & D. Puttnam; *Rural England*, Macdonald Queen Anne Press, 1988, p. 177-180.

<sup>10</sup> From correspondence with the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, National Agricultural Centre, Stoneleigh, Kenilworth, Warwick, England, CV8 2RX.



direct farm marketing. It can, at times, include noise and odour and extended working hours. It requires buildings and often the use of sophisticated machinery. This is all part of normal farm practices - practices that are often not fully understood.

#### 4. Parks & Recreation

Agricultural areas are increasingly being viewed as important sites for recreational pursuits. This is particularly the case in existing and growing urban areas. Recreation in farm areas can range from wildlife viewing to hunting to golf to biking to horse back riding to a quiet walk on a dike or trail. For many,



*Matsqui Dike Trail - Abbotsford*

particularly the elderly and the young, contact with an agricultural area for recreation offers a more comfortable, less threatening green experience than that of a mountainous setting. This point is supported by a survey in the GVRD that found high participation levels in activities such as walking for pleasure, sightseeing and viewing of the landscape, driving for pleasure, and biking.<sup>11</sup> Farmland can be an attractive choice for each of these activities.

Several conflicts can emerge between recreational use and farm operations including increased traffic and informal parking (making farm machinery movements difficult or impossible), trespassing, littering and vandalism. As

a result, farmers are having to bear increasing costs from unmanaged recreational use in farming areas. As in other jurisdictions, a need is seen to develop a 'Country User Code of Ethics' for recreation use in farm areas.<sup>12</sup>

★ **Recommended Report:**

*Managing Outdoor Recreation in Greater Vancouver's Farming Areas*

Greater Vancouver Regional District

To date there has also been a lack of coordination or defining of responsibilities for outdoor recreation occurring outside established parks. As recreational uses are more formally established in farm areas, a concern facing the farm community is that the needs of recreation will overshadow the needs of agriculture.

There are a number of long-standing Provincial, regional and some local parks located within the Agricultural Land Reserve. If maintained in a relatively natural state, the agricultural capability of the land base may be only marginally impacted, if at all.

However, parks located in the ALR have strong potential for off-site impacts on nearby agricultural use. In reality it is doubtful that parks, like golf courses, will ever be converted to farm use unless pursued actively as an ongoing function of the park (e.g. community gardens, grazing and farm lease programmes) or in times of food crisis.

<sup>11</sup> Greater Vancouver Regional District, *Managing Outdoor Recreation in Greater Vancouver's Farming Areas*, April, 1996, p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p. 3, 6 and 23.

*Recreational uses interfacing with agriculture require the sensitive application of management techniques and the direct involvement of the farm community to ensure the highest possible levels of compatibility.*

*It's ironic that agriculture, one of the key elements contributing to the amenity of the Okanagan, is under pressure from the very people it is helping to attract.*

*The...country estate, with a huge house in the middle of a ten acre field is fundamentally at odds with agricultural land use."*

Michael Kluckner  
Paving Paradise  
p. 157

The Commission has dealt with a number of requests for using the ALR for 'hard facilities' such as soccer pitches, golf courses, ball diamonds, ice rinks and parking / staging areas for recreational uses. As some new urban areas develop they tend to be 'filled up' with residential uses. If no land is secured within developing urban areas for park and recreation use, nearby farmland is often viewed as a solution to this urban planning "oversight". The Commission has a decidedly different point of view and is not particularly sympathetic when situations like this arise. While golf courses have been accommodated in the ALR, even these uses - particularly with a related housing component - should be accommodated within urban areas employing density bonusing and similar techniques to achieve desired levels of residential density.

✓ *Guiding Principle: Park and recreation facilities serving urban communities should be accommodated within urban areas.*

## 5. Amenity Value

Agriculture plays an important role in not just adding to but, in fact, defining the attractiveness of the Province and many of its communities and regions. In so doing, farming - both the enterprise and its landscape - aids regional economic development by contributing directly to what has been defined as an area's amenity value: its value as a place to live, to visit, to study and to invest. This contribution is both direct and indirect through the specialty and value-added agricultural products that help to define a region.

Many of B.C.'s agricultural areas have been clearly recognized as offering amenity values and the Okanagan Valley is a particularly good example. Beyond agriculture's scenic attributes, direct farm marketing, fruit growing and wine production combine with its agricultural history to directly contribute to the Okanagan's amenity value.<sup>13</sup>

In many parts of the Province agriculture is considered to have a critical relationship to the tourist industry. This has been the case within ranching areas and is also the case in the Okanagan where serious efforts are being made to enhance the linkages between these two major industries. In the case of the Okanagan Similkameen Tourism Association, half of all its inquiries are for information about wine and agricultural tours and where to buy fresh produce. As the Association's Vice President remarked, "Agriculture is certainly part of tourism, and given a higher profile it helps make this Valley an even more unique place to visit."<sup>14</sup>

## 6. Rural / Estate Residential

Many people view agricultural areas as ideal settings to live and raise a family. Despite several serious implications as a high cost form of housing and the potential for land use conflict, the rural / estate residential use of our agricultural land base continues to have a very strong appeal.

Obviously all residents living in rural settings are not within the ALR .... but many are. In 1991 the "rural non-farm" population outnumbered the "rural

<sup>13</sup> Webster, D.R., The Role of Amenity in Canadian Regional Development, Plan Canada, July 1992, pages 6 - 15.

<sup>14</sup> Quote from a newspaper article by Ted Noonan



farm" population by 9 to 1 in B.C. Moreover, between 1986 and 1991, while the Province's rural farm population declined by 1,420 persons the rural non-farm population increased by 43,560.<sup>15</sup> It is not surprising that persons transplanted from an urban to an agricultural setting bring with them certain attitudes drawn from their urban experience, along with a strong will to protect their investment. The potential is high for the rural vision of the non-farm resident to come into conflict with the agricultural perspective of the working land base.

*To maintain a working environment in which agriculture can flourish, the gentrification of farming areas will clearly demand consideration.*

Remarking on the British scene, David Sinclair comments, "...that the new squirearchy... has no interest in understanding, and thus not much sympathy for, the people whose existence is governed by the countryside. It has invested ... not in a new way of life but merely in a new and more attractive landscape; the way of life remains fundamentally urban, ...". "For the most part, the concerns that bring such people to the countryside are basically urban perceptions .... and along with them comes a set of attitudes - prejudices might be a better word - towards rural life which have been forged in towns, tempered by memory and burnished by nostalgia and sentiment." "Newcomers feel they must protect their investment ...and nothing must be done that might tarnish its appeal to others with similar attitudes..."<sup>16</sup>

*"Houses on 2 acre lots ruin rural land, especially farmland, just as effectively as fifty-unit housing pods. The supposed "greenspace" they create has no civic meaning nor any rural significance - its too big to mow and too small to plow."*

J.H. Kunstler, *Home From Nowhere*, p. 240

For rural residents questioning normal farm practices that may seem to impinge on the quality of their life in the country, a farmer will rarely, if ever, put in motion an operational decision or agricultural practice that is not needed for their farm business. Moreover, land use conflict is very much a two way street. Vandalism, stock harassment, trespassing, litter and having to deal with unwarranted complaints is stressful and can cause operational strains -

financial among them - for farmers. When operating in close proximity to urban areas a growing reality for farmers is the need to expend increasing amounts of time simply defending their right to farm within designated agricultural areas. Differing perspectives in the countryside become quite apparent when farmers needs to gain specific endorsement for expanding or diversifying a farm operation in a farm area by way of a local bylaw amendment. Farmer to neighbour relationships and the impact of plans and bylaws on farm operations are central themes of the consequential amendments to the *Municipal Act* and *Land Title Act* flowing from the *Farm Practices Protection (Right-to-Farm) Act* discussed in greater detail in *Chapters 4, p.16 - 19* and *Chapter 8, p. 21*.

See: Appendix 20:

*A Check List of Common Urban / Agricultural Conflicts*

See: Chapter 9, p. 22: →  
*Housing in the ALR: Siting and Size* for further discussion on this point.

Providing for rural residential use within agricultural areas only tends to exacerbate the land price problem associated with farm areas. The siting of large homes in farm areas along with amenities such as tennis courts, swimming pools and excessive landscaping can harm the usefulness a parcel for agriculture by utilizing a surprising amount of the land base for strictly residential purposes. Residual land is either not used or underutilized for agriculture and when portions of properties are leased or rented for farm use it is often on a short term basis, influencing stewardship practices.

In some communities plans and bylaws may restrict agriculture rather than provide opportunities for its growth and diversification. This becomes particularly critical where the rural estate population outnumbers the farm

<sup>15</sup> Statistics Canada, *Cat. No. 94-129*, May 1988 and *Cat. No. 93-330*, April 1993.

<sup>16</sup> Sinclair, David, *Shades of Green - Myth and Muddle in the Countryside*, Grafton Books, 1990, pages 70 - 71.



See: Chapter 9, p.71: →  
Water Management for  
further discussion on  
this point.

population *within* an agricultural area, and they take their place on advisory planning commissions, diking and water authorities and the like - making or influencing decisions directly affecting agriculture.

## 7. Agriculture or an Urban Tomorrow? Speculating on Land Use Change

*The perspective that  
land developed for  
agriculture is land not  
yet fully developed is a  
distinctly urban  
attitude.*

Another view of farmland's utility, far more damaging than rural residential use, is the speculation on land use change. Despite widespread public recognition of the importance of preserving the Province's foodlands, far too often the ALR is not recognized as a reserve of land for agricultural pursuits *in the long term*. Despite the ALR having been in place for almost 25 years, an attitude continues to persist that agricultural areas are simply awaiting non-farm development. This vision perpetuates a psychology of expected land use change and promotes the myth that the full potential of agricultural land has yet to be achieved. Continuing expectations - speculation if you like - and the active pursuit of future land use change within the ALR represents a fundamental threat to the preservation of the resource and the agricultural sector upon which it is based.

Purchasing farmland and then promoting land use policy change is an old and predatory game but it is a game that comes with a high cost to agriculture. It goes well beyond the land in question to undermining the morale of agriculture communities and drying up farm capital that would otherwise have invested in agriculture's future. This results from a shortening of the planning horizon with the farmer beginning to disinvest in the maintenance of structures or the keeping

of fields in good condition.<sup>17</sup> This impact clearly came into focus between 1988 and 1991 after the Cabinet decision to allow golf courses as outright uses in the ALR. The optioning of farmland for golf courses generated considerable uncertainty in the farm community. One Delta farmer faced with this dilemma stated that, "One of my fields needs extra drainage, and if I put it in, and the farm is sold (for golf course use) it is wasted money. But if I don't and it doesn't sell it's wasted time."<sup>18</sup>



Fostering the perspective of an urban tomorrow for agricultural land has several serious consequences, particularly in its effect on pricing farmland out of the market for farm use. On average in B.C., land and buildings constitute almost 86% of

<sup>17</sup> Schnepf, Max (ed.); *Farmland, Food and the Future*, Soil Conservation Society of America, 1979, an article by Robert E. Coughlin, "Agricultural Land Conversion in the Urban Fringe"; page 37.

<sup>18</sup> Delta Optimist, "Dornoch Dunes: Delay Causing Option Problem", March 13, 1990



*The Impermanence  
Syndrome*

total farm capital (1996) with machinery, equipment, livestock and poultry making up the remainder. As high as this percentage is, it is significantly higher close to urban centres.<sup>19</sup>

The rise in land prices, whether it is the result of proximity to urban areas, an intrusion of rural estates or absentee land ownership anticipating an eventual land use change, all tend to weaken the often highly specialized, heavily capitalized and fragile agricultural economy and the family farm ownership structure. This may set in motion shifts to different types of farming, possibly harming the stability of an area's traditional agricultural community and support services. The increased farming of land leased, particularly on a short term basis, rather than owned can have a number of direct negative effects, including a reluctance to undertake necessary soil management practices. This was a key finding of the Delta Agricultural Study - a municipality in which two thirds of the land farmed is leased or rented.<sup>20</sup> Besides stewardship implications, what emerges is a psychology of uncertainty that has the potential to permeate the entire farm community.

Often land is simply left idle and in a derelict condition giving the appearance of agriculture's demise, promoting a community attitude that anticipates the eventual end of agriculture.<sup>21</sup> This important dynamic has been referred to as the "impermanence syndrome" and is characterized by the sale of land for hobby farm and rural estate residential use, disinvestment in farming and shifting agricultural use resulting in an under-utilization of farmland. It has been estimated that for every hectare of farmland urbanized, another hectare is left idle.<sup>22</sup>

This is a phenomenon particularly prevalent, but not restricted to, the urban fringe and contributes still further to the destabilizing of the agricultural community. Some farmers may, as a result of forces pushing up land prices, become paper millionaires. Some will find that they have an increase in their mortgagable value to allow borrowing to afford high-cost machinery, and for others, the enticement of increasing land prices will simply provide the impetus to abandon the farm altogether. For non-established farmers, the land price problem can be particularly harsh, precluding them from full participation in agriculture because the price of farmland has been driven too high relative to its agriculturally productive value.

Charles Little, in an article in *Farmland, Food and the Future*, sums up this phenomenon by stating that, "...if farmers cannot enter or fully participate in the business of farming it is only a matter of time until there are no farmers farming at all. For most this is a nightmare vision of vertical integration, super-agribusiness, and absentee ownership carried to the final degree." He concludes that the land resource base is wholly implicated and perhaps has a

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<sup>19</sup> The value of land and buildings, as a percentage of total farm capital, increases closer to urban centres as demonstrated by the following examples: Urban Areas: Kelowna area: 93%, Saanich: 94%, Surrey: 92% and Richmond: 96%.; Rural Areas: Peace River: 69%, Quesnel area: 75%, Cranbrook area: 85%, and Burns Lake area: 77%  
Statistics Canada, *1996 Census of Agriculture Profile Data - British Columbia*, Table 16.

<sup>20</sup> See the *Delta Agricultural Study*; pages 12 to 17, 51 to 53 and 108.

<sup>21</sup> See: Runka, G., *Tree Fruit Industry - Land and Water Use Issues*, Okanagan Valley Tree Fruit Authority, 1992, pages 9 -10.

<sup>22</sup> Nelson, A.C.; *Preserving Prime Farmland in the Face of Urbanization: Lessons from Oregon*; American Planning Association Journal, Autumn, 1992; p. 469.

controlling role in determining the kind of agricultural future we face.<sup>23</sup>

In any discussion of the impact of speculation on agricultural land there is a certain irony in the fact that many in the urban land development business wish for a stable ALR in order to maintain a level playing field from which to operate. Dramatic changes to the agricultural land base can cause an unwanted jolt to this

<i>Annual Rate of ALR Exclusions Throughout B.C. - First 20 Years</i>		
<i>First 10 Years</i>	-	<i>7,850 ha.</i>
<i>Second 10 Years</i>	-	<i>3,040 ha.</i>
<i>Last 5 Years</i>	-	<i>1,470 ha.</i>

equilibrium. While speculating on the urbanization of farmland may have a long history in North America, in British Columbia it contradicts an ever more stable ALR - this through a period of almost continuous population increases in several key agricultural areas. (See: *Appendix 3 - Moving Towards Greater ALR Stability*)

An important shift in local government policy is emerging.

Consistency between Provincial and local land use policy affecting agricultural land is becoming more prevalent and is critical if the speculation on land use change within agricultural areas is to be thwarted. The Corporation of Delta is a ready example. In 1986 the community's official community plan was adopted. Prior to this time (1974-1986) almost 500 hectares were excluded from the ALR. Since the adoption of the Plan there has been no land excluded<sup>24</sup> from the ALR and applications of all types have decreased dramatically within the Municipality.

*A stable ALR is the cornerstone of planning for agriculture; heightening certainty for persons engaged in farm businesses and support industries.*

Many communities and regional districts are moving towards an abandonment of what might be referred to as "old style land use thinking" - where agricultural land was not only considered the appropriate, but indeed the *natural*, place for urban development. Today there are significant efforts being directed towards what the Commission refers to as the "up not out" planning approach. Policies promoting compact and complete communities, increased density and the redevelopment of existing urban areas are receiving widespread support.

With these changes in approach and attitude it can be anticipated that the "sorting out" days of the ALR are now behind us and that we will realize continued stability in the Reserve. Given the certainty of a protected resource base, efforts must be directed to ensure the social and economic viability of farming. This will demand renewed efforts at all levels to plan for agriculture as *the* long term land use of priority in our farming areas.

## **8. Hobby Farms & Small Holdings**

B.C. has one of the most heavily parcelized agricultural land bases in Canada. With hobby farms generally associated with smaller parcels, agricultural areas have traditionally satisfied demands for this form of land use. It is of course difficult to define precisely the cut-off points in size or agricultural output between hobby farms, part-time or full-time commercial farm units. Many small holdings continue to grow and market their agricultural products in the absence

<sup>23</sup> Schnepf, Max (ed.); *Farmland, Food and the Future*; Soil Conservation Society of America; 1979; an article by Charles E. Little, "Farmland and the Future"; page 125 - 126.

<sup>24</sup> Technically the Commission has conditionally approved exclusion on two occasions of two relatively small areas since 1986 but to date the conditions have not been met and the land remains in the ALR.



of significant economic returns. However, many hobby farms have the characteristic of being a less reliable form of agricultural production compared to part-time farms which can be defined as serious, small scale commercial farm operations but generate income levels that require one or more off-farm income sources.

<u>Farm Type</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Total Gross Farm Receipts</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Hobby Farms (TGFR = <\$2,500)	3,813	17.5%	\$4,533,849	0.3%
Hobby/Part- Time Farms (TGFR = \$2,500 to \$9,999)	7,717	35.3%	\$37,847,420	2.1%
Part/Full-Time Commercial Farms (TGFR = >\$10,000)	10,305	47.2%	\$1,796,835,489	97.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,835</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>\$1,839,216,758</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Statistics Canada, Agricultural Profile Data of British Columbia, Catalogue no. 95-181-XPB, Table 34., p. 108 -109.

Table 3 provides a summary of farm sizes according to total annual gross farm receipts. Although 53% of all census farms in the Province may fall within the range of either hobby farm or small scale part-time farms, together they constitute only 2.6% of all gross farm receipts.

Not surprisingly, within the orbit of the most heavily populated areas, historic patterns of subdivision have contributed to a large number of small farms. Almost 28% of the census farms with a gross farm income of under \$2,500 and about 44% of all farms having a land base of less than a 4 hectare (10 acres), area located within the Capital (Victoria), Greater Vancouver (Vancouver and Central Okanagan (Kelowna) Regional Districts.<sup>25</sup>

See: Appendix 11:

*Ancient Subdivisions & Parcel Consolidation* →

As a rule, hobby farms and small holdings, as a land use, are reasonably compatible with other farm uses and help to maintain a rural atmosphere within agricultural areas. The clear challenge will be to accommodate hobby farms in a manner that does not cause unnecessary disruption to more productive agriculture and to not encourage the further parcelization of our farmlands or the splitting up of existing multi-lot farm operations. A potentially far-reaching concern with hobby farms is their tendency to "bid up" the value of agricultural properties while introducing increasing numbers of former urban dwellers into agricultural areas. (See: Chapter 9, Housing in the ALR: Siting and Size, p. 22), Local governments can lessen the pressure on agricultural areas by protecting suitable rural lands outside the ALR for hobby farm use and help to discourage the further parcelization of land in the ALR.

<sup>25</sup> Statistics Canada, 1996 Census of Agriculture Profile Data - British Columbia, Table 5 and 2.

## 9. Alternative Productive Capability

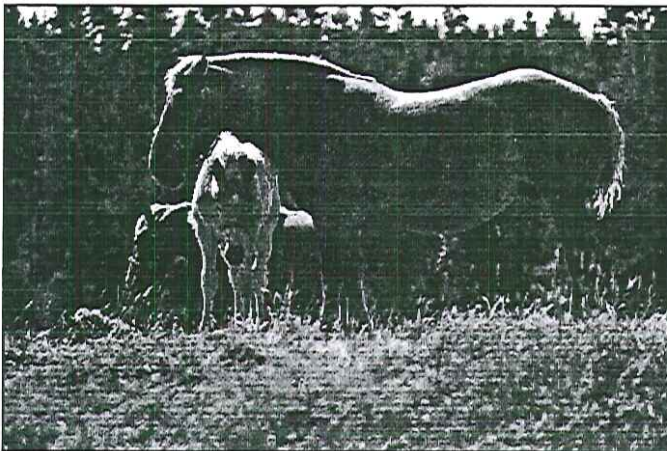
A key objective of the Provincial agricultural land preservation programme is to maintain a critical portion of our land base for food production. However, the productive capacity of farmland goes beyond this single, albeit, vital purpose and affords opportunities for diversification for B.C.'s agricultural producers. Floriculture, nursery and sod farms are important features on the agricultural scene. A total of 760 farms in 1996 contributed to greenhouse flower production, accounting for close to 46% of all land under glass in B.C. Over 3,213 hectares of land was engaged in the growing of a wide range of nursery products in the same year.<sup>26</sup>

Silviculture, including hybrid poplar fibre production, has always been an outright use in the ALR and large portions of the Reserve have been and, it can be anticipated, will continue for the foreseeable future to be used for forest production. In 1978 the Select Standing Committee on Agriculture reported that about 8% of the ALR at that time was under some form of forest tenure restriction.<sup>27</sup> In addition, the products of agriculture are now actively being used as a renewable energy source - examples include methanol and ethanol blended gasoline. The use of agricultural products for medicinal purposes is not new but today there is growing research into the use of a host of agricultural products for health giving purposes. Examples include the yew tree for cancer treatment and the use of the tobacco plant for pharmaceutical derivatives.

*In local planning processes it is important that rural, non-ALR areas, generally unsuitable for urban use, as well as those areas of the ALR with smaller lots, be maintained in the Reserve to ensure a home for horse farms and to avoid pressure to further parcelize other areas of the ALR.*

## 10. The Horse Industry

The horse industry is large and growing in British Columbia. It was estimated in 1994 that there were about 75,000 horses on 10,000 properties. Annual operating expenses were \$263.5 million with a total economic impact of \$463.6 million. There are two broad categories of horse operations - business, including racing, sport, ranch work and guiding, accounting for 65% of all horses, and recreation, accounting for the remaining 35%.



The horse industry naturally finds its home largely within agricultural areas. The recreational sector is prominent within close proximity to the Lower Mainland and Okanagan areas.<sup>28</sup> The Lower Mainland accounted for over 20% of all horses in B.C. in 1996.<sup>29</sup> Not surprisingly, given the strong relationship to urban areas, access to safe riding areas and trails has been identified by the horse industry as a primary concern<sup>30</sup> and poses a number of management challenges. A characteristic of many horse operations is the use of small land holdings. The average recreational horse farm is on 1.8 hectares.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Statistics Canada, 1996 Census of Agriculture Profile Data -British Columbia, Table 12.

<sup>27</sup> Select Standing Committee on Agriculture, Inventory of Agricultural Reserves in British Columbia, June 1978

<sup>28</sup> See: Robbins, Mark; B.C. Horses: A Significant Agricultural Activity; Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food, 1994.

<sup>29</sup> Statistics Canada, 1996 Census of Agriculture Profile Data -British Columbia, Table 14.

<sup>30</sup> Robbins, page 36

<sup>31</sup> Robbins, pages 27 and 28.



*... the horse industry is a significant livestock commodity, uses other agricultural products, preserves land for future food production and acts as a buffer between intensive agriculture and urban centres."*

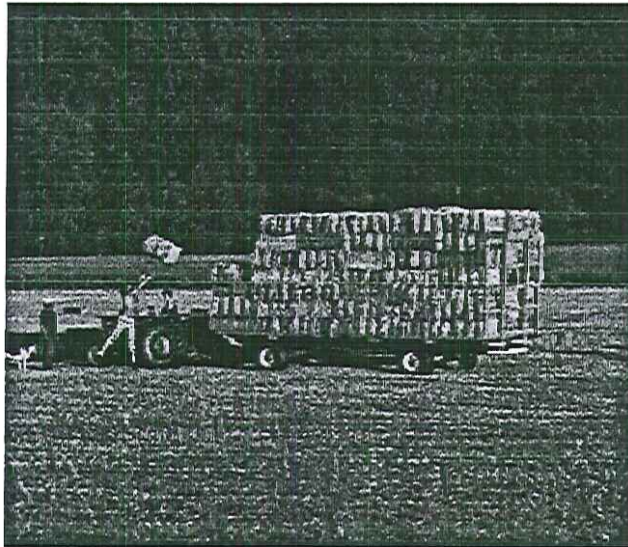
BC Horses, p. 1  
Ministry of Agriculture,  
Fisheries and Food

Horse operations, while providing a viable use of small parcels, can act as a buffer between urban and other agricultural uses and have several agricultural benefits including opportunities for diversification. The industry uses and supports several agricultural facilities such as veterinary services, provides a market for local hay (\$24 million worth hay from BC producers in 1994)<sup>32</sup> keeps land for future food production and helps to maintain a rural landscape that is relatively compatible with other forms of agricultural uses.

ESTIMATE OF THE NUMBER OF HORSES IN B.C. - 1994	
<u>Business:</u>	
Race	15,800
Ranch Work	17,220
Guides	2,200
<u>Recreation</u>	<u>26,000</u>
Industry Total	74,970
BC Horses - p. 17	

## 11. Farmland: For Farmers & Farming

For those actively engaged in farming there is a distinct relationship to the land. For commercial farmers it is their home and place of work - their source of livelihood. It provides for the well-being of farm families. Farmers are the engines driving this important sector of B.C.'s economy with operating



expenditures of almost \$1.7 billion dollars annually.<sup>33</sup> There is also a deeply entrenched social fabric within rural communities that is perhaps not fully appreciated by those living in urban centres with a more transient population. Some families have farmed the same land or in the same area for generations.

Despite its apparent charm, farming is a business. It is often at the whim of changing weather conditions and markets that can, at times, be just as changeable as the weather. Like many businesses, farming demands dedication, a heavy financial investment and the application of skills that most of us simply do not possess. It is a business that must be able to adapt to changing circumstances - particularly in response to the environmental imperatives of society at large. As providers of a safe and abundant source

of food, farmers serve a direct role in the health and well-being of British Columbians. Farmers are also custodians of extensive areas of land - trustees, stewards, guardians and caretakers.

This latter role has only recently been understood but not fully appreciated. A clear challenge has emerged to achieve the appropriate balance between economic and environmental objectives affecting agriculture. As farmers combine their business / agricultural producer role with the responsibilities associated with stewardship of foodland, wildlife habitat and environmentally-

<sup>32</sup> Robbins, page 9

<sup>33</sup> Statistics Canada, 1996 Census of Agriculture Profile Data -British Columbia, Table 17.

sensitive areas, there is also a societal responsibility to cooperate with the farm community to achieving sustainable objectives.

*“...a good farmer is a craftsman of the highest order, a kind of artist. It is the good work of good farmers - nothing else - that assures a sufficiency of food over the long term.”*

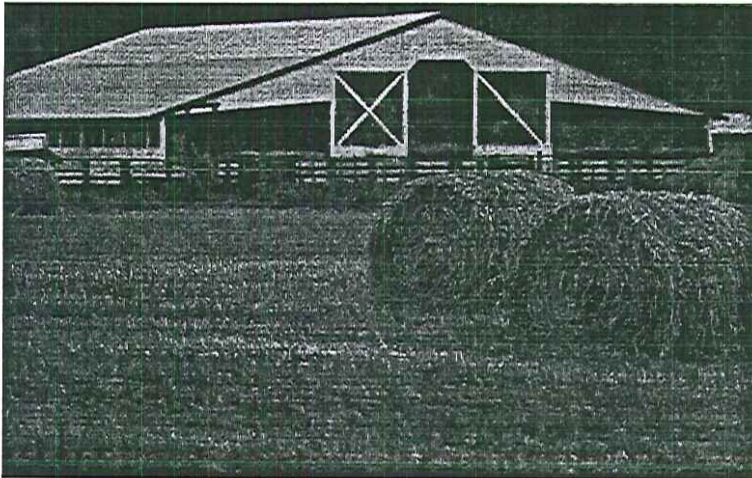
Wendell Berry  
The Gift of Good Land  
p. 124

## Summary

Most of the alternative perspectives on farmland have varying degrees of legitimacy. Fortunately, most people continue to recognize that the primary function of agricultural land is the growing of food - that *farming represents the long term “use of priority” for the agricultural land base.* For land in the ALR this should constitute the key perspective from which to plan for agriculture. Accordingly, land use decisions and economic programmes must be designed to support the retention of land in farm use over the long term. With this land base clearly defined for almost 25 years, we must now focus on planning effectively with those engaged in farming for sustainable food production over the long term.

David Sinclair remarks that, “The future of the countryside.... depends very much upon what happens to farming, and the future of agriculture depends entirely upon what society decides it wants from the people who provide the basic requirements of its survival. The problem is that a nation composed overwhelmingly of urbanites can see only dimly how the countryside works, and even then its vision is distorted by sentimentality on the one hand and prejudice on the other.”<sup>34</sup>

Sinclair is on the right track. In historic terms agricultural decision-making is, and has been, in transition for many years. Society today is having to come to grips with setting its agricultural agenda, not from a prevalent agrarian outlook, but within the context and under the influence of urban dominated perspectives. This is at the very core of the challenge to plan for agriculture in the long term.



*Pemberton Valley*





# 3

## WHY PLAN FOR AGRICULTURE ?

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the inception of the ALR, the Agricultural Land Commission has reviewed plans, bylaws and other land use documents from all regions of the Province.<sup>1</sup> Most have been generated by local governments and each has focused most directly on those sections of the plans and bylaws dealing with agriculture and the ALR. The review process has given the Commission a wide ranging exposure to planning and land use regulation applied to the ALR and agriculture. From this experience the following conclusions can be drawn.

*After reviewing almost 1,200 land management documents, the Commission has seen the 'good', the 'bad', and at times the 'indifferent' in planning for agriculture*

- There has been little if any specialized technical guidance on how to plan for agriculture in the face of settlement pressures.
- Despite local governments having a strong role to play in dealing with land use issues, agriculture has commonly not commanded a prominent position in policy development at the local level.
- Regional districts and municipalities, with strong local knowledge, are well-positioned to make positive contributions to agriculture's future.
- An enhancement of local and Provincial partnerships will achieve considerable benefits to ensure agriculture's long term health.

*Planning for Agriculture* is an effort to enhance partnerships and find ways to more fully engage the talents of municipalities, regional districts and other locally-based groups to bring agriculture into the forefront of local land use policy development.

*Planning for Agriculture* promotes and calls for practical means that can be undertaken, particularly at the local level, to assist in ensuring the sustainability of agriculture in British Columbia. As a clear and detailed planning guide it indeed often draws upon the efforts of local governments and other organizations - efforts that have resulted in the adoption of pro-active policies to assure agriculture's place in their local communities. In other cases, suggestions to modify present approaches are made or new, hopefully common sense proposals are suggested. *Planning for Agriculture* also proposes a variety of supportive Provincial initiatives to assist local governments. There is, however, much that can be accomplished within the context of current legislative tools as outlined in Chapter 4, page 14 to 19.

*Chapter 4, pages 14 to 19 provides an overview the planning and bylaw tool kit associated with planning for agriculture.*

There are many agricultural issues that communities have in common. However, given the diversity of B.C. agriculture, resting on an equally diverse agricultural land base, solutions will often have to be custom-made, responding to differing situations with unique approaches. As a starting point this chapter explores a number of broader perspectives that provide context for exploring local and regionally appropriate methods to planning for agriculture.

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<sup>1</sup> By the end of 1996 the Commission had reviewed almost 1,200 different land management documents as well as several plan and bylaw updates and amendments. This includes over 425 official community, settlement and regional plans, 230 zoning, subdivision and rural land use bylaws 125 transportation / linear corridor plans and nearly 50 proposals for adjusting jurisdictional boundaries. (See: *ALC Handbook - Chapt. 5, Table 2*)

# PLANNING FOR AGRICULTURE - SOME BROADER CONTEXTS -

## 1. The Necessity Of Food

Food is so fundamental to our well being that many British Columbians may prefer to suppress the very thought of food shortages. From food lines to hunger to starvation - this is a reality already facing far too many people in too many places around the globe. And the number of mouths to feed is growing rapidly - births over deaths world-wide equals a new City of Vancouver every two days.<sup>2</sup>

*The number of mouths to feed is growing rapidly - births over deaths world wide equals a new City of Vancouver every two days.*

As the Commission on Resources and Environment indicated, with continuing population growth there will be even greater demands on the land base for resources, including residential and commercial development, food production, recreation, forest and mineral products, energy and water. The resulting and potential land use conflicts have led to a search for solutions that will balance economic, social and environmental demands. At the same time, increasingly, the world's industrialized countries are recognizing that economic and environmental values are not discrete and separate considerations. British Columbians expect land use planning decisions to respect the non-economic significance of the natural world as well as the important economic values, especially in view of the gradual depletion of resources over the last century.<sup>3</sup> Dr. William Rees of the University of British Columbia has pointed out that when agricultural land is treated as just another tradable good there is a failure in the market place, from an ecological perspective, to consider the foodland resource as one of many ecologically critical materials and processes. Agriculture requires stable climate, an intact ozone layer, and photosynthesis, all of which are threatened but none of which are directly monitored in the marketplace. Rees advocates that we must regard assets such as agricultural land as a special class of "natural capital" and that we maintain a constant capital stock as a condition of sustainability.<sup>4</sup> (See also *Chapter 2, page 3*)

*It is ironic that agriculture must defend itself against the crush of population increases while at the same time prepare to feed rapidly growing numbers of British Columbians.*

For most British Columbians the reality is one of a healthy, abundant and cheap food supply by almost any standard. This reality has had an influence on the priority we have given the activity of farming. The spectre of food shortages can have a far different influence on agricultural policy and priorities. For example, until very recently Britain's agricultural policies were strongly influenced by the effectiveness of German U-Boats on supply convoys in the North Atlantic during the Second World War.<sup>5</sup> From the perspective of trade, Canada is a net exporter of agricultural products and, on this basis, is self-sufficient in food. However, the surplus in grains, oilseeds and meat are used to off-set imports in horticultural commodities which we do not produce in adequate quantities or must acquire out of season.<sup>6</sup> While British Columbians may not feel compelled by crisis, it is important that our agricultural policy take full measure of the

<sup>2</sup> See, Dyer, Gwynne, The Human Race, (CBC Documentary Series), Fall 1994 (250,000 additional persons per day - births over deaths - world wide).

<sup>3</sup> Commission On Resources and Environment, Planning For Sustainability: Improving the Planning Delivery System for British Columbia; Nov. 1994, page 5 - 6.

<sup>4</sup> Rees, W., "Why Preserve Agricultural Land?", Proceedings - Revisiting The Land Ethic: Caring For The Land; March 3 - 5, 1994, Vancouver, B.C., pages 1, 3 & 4.

<sup>5</sup> See, Mallanby, K., Can Britain Feed Itself?; Merlin Press, 1975, pages 1-3.

<sup>6</sup> Professor Art Bomke, Department of Soil Science, University of British Columbia, Correspondence, January, 1997.



false premise that we can continue to “buy” our way into sustainability. The loss of B.C.’s productive foodland resource has both serious local and global consequences.

*.. I balk at the idea of having my country dependent upon trading partners for its food supply. However, it is not difficult to imagine the social and political implications of a nation finding itself in such a dependent position with respect to food supply.”*

Glenn Lathrop,  
“Global Trade: Are we Risking Our Self-Sufficiency In Food  
Production?”,  
Input, The Real Estate Institute of British Columbia, Vol. 16, No. 3, 1992.

As Bill Rees explains, when people readily import (or appropriate) the products of nature, they have less direct incentive to maintain adequate local stocks of natural capital. This in turn may equate to exporting ecological and social malaise to the developing world.<sup>7</sup> As Mark Roseland has noted, “Sustainable development incorporates an inescapable commitment to social equity. This requires not simply the creation of wealth and the conservation of resources, but their fair distribution...”.<sup>8</sup> The ability to avail ourselves of cheaply imported foodstuffs increases economic pressure on B.C. farmers. At worst local farmers lose market share, forcing them out of agriculture altogether and escalating pressure to allow conversion of farmland to urban uses. As we close the circle, this increases the necessity to look beyond B.C. for food products that we could otherwise have produced locally. This forces producer countries to increasingly adopt unsustainable cultivation practices to meet our demand which further accelerates depletion of the world’s agricultural “natural capital”.<sup>9</sup>

*Planning for agriculture must be founded on a basic understanding of the unequivocal necessity of food and the local responsibility to meet local food demands as fully as possible.*

Planning for agriculture’s long term future must be founded not only on a basic understanding of the unequivocal necessity of food but on our local responsibility to meet our local food demands as fully as possible. We must ask ourselves if we are prepared to treat food as just another commodity similar to stereos and automobiles. Or, should Provincial and local land use and economic policy be aimed at ensuring the security of our agricultural “natural capital” and ensuring the viability of the farm sector.

As Bill Rees has noted, urban industrial regions live on carrying capacity “appropriated” from an increasingly global hinterland.<sup>10</sup> Planning for agriculture, while locally driven, must fully take into account the responsibility of British Columbians to ensure the security of *their* local food supply to satisfy to the greatest possible extent their domestic needs. This in turn lessens the broader social, economic and environmental implications that not doing so will have on other regions of the world.

<sup>7</sup> Rees W., Symposium Proceedings - Urban Growth and the Agricultural Land Reserve: Up not Out, Vancouver, B.C., March 1993, p. 5 & 7.

<sup>8</sup> Roseland, Mark; Toward Sustainable Communities, National Round Table on the Environment and Economy, p.9.

<sup>9</sup> Rees, *ibid*, 1993, p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> Rees, *ibid*, 1993, p. 4.

## 2. A Sustainable Future

### *Sustainable Development:*

*"...to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."*

The U.N. World Commission on Environment and Development; *Our Common Future*, p. 8

*"...to achieve global food security, the resource base for food production must be sustained, enhanced, and where it has been diminished or destroyed, restored."*

*Our Common Future*, p. 130

Sustaining agriculture is only part of the effort needed to achieve a broader sustainable objectives. The concept of sustainable development, coined in *Our Common Future* by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987, has been widely embraced. However, after just a decade we are only at the initial stages of a long global process of fundamental adjustment in the very manner in which humankind perceive relationships between development and the environment.

British Columbia has made important steps to move the Province towards a sustainable future and invoke a new sense of land ethic. Of particular note is the work of the Commission on Resources and Environment (CORE) in the development, in 1994, of a *Land Use Charter* and *Land Use Goals* for British Columbia. The Charter defines the underlying philosophy and articulates fundamental principles of environmental, economic and social sustainability, as well as the fundamental principles of an open and fair decision-making process. The Goals define the "desired end states" that land use decisions should aim for.<sup>11</sup> Sustainable development has some particularly direct relationships with agriculture and several of these are articulated within the CORE's Land Use Goals and are set out in *Appendix 4*. This package of goals provide a broad foundation or set of objectives for planning for agriculture.

While the concept of sustainability gained popularity and respect with the publication of *Our Common Future*, a 1992 paper by Paul Tisdall for the Science Council of Canada, "Approaches to Sustainable Agriculture: Seven Case Studies", notes that its application to agriculture goes back much further. The report traces a somewhat uneven application of sustainable principles to agriculture to the beginning of this century, as a growing reaction to industrial agriculture, to the establishment of the Ecological Agriculture Projects office at McGill University in 1974, to the present growing interest in what might be referred to broadly as environmentally sensitive agriculture.<sup>12</sup>

There can be little argument that the preservation of our productive capability (land, water and the human expertise to produce food) will remain a cornerstone of any sustainability objectives. Agriculture, as is the case with almost every human activity, has come under the increasing pressure of a heightened social agenda aimed at ensuring that actions - collectively and as individuals - are environmentally responsible. In B.C., the agricultural industry is actively addressing many of these issues, particularly those associated with the environment.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Commission on Resources and Environment, *Finding Common Ground: A Shared Vision For Land Use In British Columbia*, Jan. 1994, p. 6.

<sup>12</sup> Tisdall, Paul, *Approaches to Sustainable Agriculture: Seven Case Studies*; Science Council of Canada; 1992, p. 7 & 8.

<sup>13</sup> Examples of agriculture addressing environmental issues include: (1) the Canada-British Columbia Accord on Environmental Sustainability in the Agri-food Sector, (2) the 1993 Strategy Towards Environmental Sustainability in the Agri-Food Sector in British Columbia, (3) the Agricultural Waste Control Regulation and Code of Practice for Waste Management, (4) commodity based Environmental Guidelines development by MAF and the agricultural industry, (5) MAF's Environmental Enhancement programme, (6) Green Plan's Sustainable Practices programme, (7) Agricultural Environmental Protection Council administered by the former B.C. Federation of Agriculture, (8) the EnvirAlert programme of the B.C. Cattlemen's Association and (9) the B.C. Horticulture Coalition's peer advisory programme on waste management. Also farm groups in local areas are actively involved in wildlife protection - examples: the Trumpeter Swan Project in the Comox Valley and the Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust in Delta.



There are of course two sides to the sustainability coin - the environment and development. As Gary Runka has pointed out, "The relationship between competing economic and environmental forces is a major issue affecting all of Canadian agriculture."<sup>14</sup> The word *competing* is well chosen. The vagaries of current economic realities, changing global trade regulations and the need to continually upgrade and modernize to meet market expectations are forcing operators to make day-to-day decisions required to survive in the business of farming that may be moving in the opposite direction of a sustainable future. As producers have made very clear, it is not enough to simply preserve the land base. The farmer and the economic viability of the farm operation are of equal importance. A similar theme is noted by C.R. Bryant in an article in *Plan Canada*, "... farmland preservation cannot be accomplished simply through physical land use planning.... farmland preservation needs a viable farm structure... and while trying to preserve quality farmland, planning will have to confront the social and economic dimensions for maintaining a viable farm structure."<sup>15</sup>

Ironically the ALR may have created a focus on the question of land allocation to the detriment of a fuller consideration of other agricultural issues. The ALR was never intended to be the "end all" in agricultural policy at the Provincial level any more than an 'Agricultural' designation in an official plan should be at the local level. If farms are going to be successfully operated in an agriculturally and environmentally sustainable manner, a climate must exist in which farming is economically viable.

In the face of population growth leading to land development pressures, local governments have primary land use planning authority over private lands and the private use of Crown land (with the exception of the ALR). They also have development control authority<sup>16</sup> as well as a range of servicing and other regulatory authority. All of these land use controls can affect agricultural operations. Thus, the future viability of agriculture will depend on local governments using these extensive powers in a manner which supports agriculture. Otherwise, there will be ongoing land use and economic uncertainties, despite Provincial efforts. As Gary Runka has commented, "Sustainability is about permanence."<sup>17</sup>

### 3. A Lack of Agricultural Focus

Under the land use planning and regulatory powers provided by the *Municipal Act*, municipalities and regional districts have dealt with agricultural issues in a variety of ways. Approaches have varied with time and place, sometimes from one council or board to the next. While not universal, from the Commission's perspective, a relatively consistent theme is the lack of focus that agricultural issues tend to command at the local level. As a result, agricultural policies and regulations too often have either not served, or not served well, agricultural interests.

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<sup>14</sup> Runka, Gary; "Action Steps To Sustainable Agriculture"; a paper given at *Seeking Assurances - A Forum on Sustainable Agriculture*, Summerland, October 1994, p. 3

<sup>15</sup> Bryant, C.R. "Preserving Canada's Agricultural Land"; *Plan Canada*, July 1994, page 51.

<sup>16</sup> "...development control authority..." (even in the ALR, but ultimately subject to the *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act*).

<sup>17</sup> Runka, Gary; *ibid*, October 1994, p. 9.

*Too often, planning for agriculture gives the impression that farming is considered a transitory land use, an economic activity slipping slowly into history,*

*....yet, eating seems as popular as ever!*

There are two basic perceptions that continue to persist and affect land use policy, even after twenty-five years of a provincial agricultural land preservation programme. First, that despite good will and good intentions, economic forces will doom agriculture and thus the ALR to ultimate failure. Second, that the urbanization of farmland is a *natural* and *inevitable* phenomenon. Each of these attitudes has influenced how planning for agriculture has been approached. Continuing expectations of land use change within the ALR represents one of the fundamental threats to the preservation of both the resource base and the continuation of a viable agricultural industry.

The sheer “glamour” and the economics of speculation associated with urbanization have often shaped land use priorities. In the past, land use decisions have often been driven by a desire to encourage growth.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, the concept of growth has tended to be almost exclusively related to settlement planning which in turn has focused on urbanization, transportation linkages and industrialization.

An attitude has prevailed that resulted in agricultural and other resource lands being neglected or converted to other uses. At times agriculture has been literally paved over. A clear understanding, and corresponding willingness to deal with issues affecting agriculture, has been lost.<sup>19</sup> Agriculture’s economic role and a realization that the industry has tremendous growth potential have not been appreciated. There has been insufficient recognition of a significant number of direct and indirect benefits that agriculture provides - particularly in maintaining our health and well-being as a society.

A high profile agricultural land preservation programme, coupled with ongoing activities of Agriculture Canada and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, may also have contributed to an impression that ‘*someone else is taking care of the farm*’ - that there is a very limited role for local governments to play in planning for the sustainability of agriculture. This is far from the case. With an expanded planning tool kit that has emerged, particularly as a result of enactment of the *Farm Practices Protection (Right-to-Farm) Act* (see *Chapter 4, Pages 14 to 19*), local governments are assured a central role in planning for agriculture’s future.

Our foodlands<sup>20</sup> have also represented an undervalued resource - surprising perhaps given their function in providing safe and secure food.<sup>21</sup> There has been a gradual disconnection between the general population and agriculture, with many urban residents several generations removed from the farm. This disconnection also extends to land use technicians advising elected officials as well as most elected officials themselves.

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<sup>18</sup> See the Commission On Resources and Environment, Planning For Sustainability: Improving the Planning Delivery System for British Columbia; November 1994, page 5 .

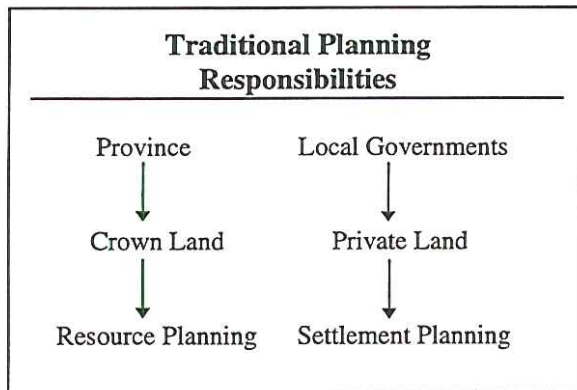
<sup>19</sup> As an example, why would a transportation system be created which makes it difficult for vegetable picking machines to access large portions of the agricultural land base within Delta, one of the most important vegetable producing communities in B.C.?

<sup>20</sup> It should be recognized that ‘Agriculture’ is much more than the production of food. Forest products, floral and nursery production, and medicinal contributions are other examples of agriculture. However, while all of these forms of production are quite legitimate within the ALR, the basic concept of the Reserve remains the securing of that part of the land base suitable to contribute (usually directly but at times indirectly) to food production or land that could be called upon to contribute to food production.

<sup>21</sup> A good example of the perceived relative value of agricultural land as a resource is provided by the expansion of Vancouver International Airport. Because of impacts on wildlife habitat, \$9 million was awarded to mitigate loss of wildlife habitat. Little or no assessment was made of the value and impact on the foodland resource despite the runway literally paving over land in the ALR. If it were not for a portion of these funds being allotted to the Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust, there would be virtually no compensation for the loss of some of the highest quality agricultural land in Canada.



There has also been a traditional split in B.C. between the resource planning of Crown land, most often the purview of the Provincial government, and that of settlement planning, usually related to private lands, and undertaken by regional and municipal governments.



Given that local government planning has been called on primarily to deal with population growth pressures leading to housing, commercial and other development, there has been a tendency to focus on accommodation of growth at the expense of resource based land uses, including agriculture. Perhaps more than any other resource based industry, agriculture needs to achieve an integration of settlement and resource planning. This need is heightened given that much of agriculture occurs on privately-held land, within the jurisdictional scope of local government planning authority.

Regardless of the level of government, as long as land use policies are developed based upon the perception that farmland is not going to have an agricultural future, ineffectual agricultural policies should be of little surprise. The fundamental vision of agriculture's future in a sustainable tomorrow must be adjusted from the ephemeral to one of permanence. This is the only foundation upon which meaningful agricultural policies can be built.

The planning function of local governments has a central, indeed critical, role to play in helping to create a regulatory climate that ensures preservation of the resource base and enhances the economic viability of farming. There is a clear need for agriculture to be firmly within the planning mainstream with far greater focus on agricultural issues.

#### 4. Moving Beyond Preservation

Despite some set-backs, the programme of preserving agricultural land in B.C. has been largely successful (See *Appendix 3*). However, there was a recognition that updating was needed. In March of 1993 the Commission sponsored a Symposium entitled "Urban Growth and the ALR". Speaking at the Symposium, B.C. Premier Mike Harcourt challenged the participants with the following comment: *"After twenty years it's no longer a question of whether we should have an Agricultural Land Reserve - the issue now is how to make it better."*

In 1993 and 1994 a number of amendments were made to reconfirm and strengthen the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*. Two major themes were pursued. First, Cabinet's involvement in the application process was essentially eliminated and second, an effort was made to both clarify and integrate the planning and regulatory activities of the Commission and its local government partners.

Three major themes or goals are central to the Commission's efforts to improve the programme. To varying degrees, *Planning for Agriculture* will assist in realizing each of these goals.

- Emphasize the Resource Value of Agricultural Land

There is a continuing need to emphasize and heighten awareness of the importance of our agricultural resource lands; those unique land forms that have the ability to feed us. There is a need to abandon, *forever*, the perspective that agricultural land is simply a commodity on the land market. A land ethic must be fostered that recognizes agriculture's central role in achieving a sustainable future.<sup>22</sup>

- Agriculture - The Use Of Priority in the ALR

The Commission considers it important to move beyond simply a preservationist mode to one of emphasizing the importance of recognizing farming as the use of priority within agricultural areas. This is not a perspective that is exclusionary of all other concerns or interests. As only one factor in the rural landscape, the challenge for agriculture is not segregation but integration, especially with respect to environmental and other resource concerns. Within the ALR, however, agriculture should represent the context from which other interests are considered. An enhanced focus on agriculture must include an overall land management tenor that is both sensitive to, and supportive of, the activity of farming in agriculture's working land base.

- Building Partnerships

The Commission has consistently pursued the administration of the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* in a spirit of partnership. From the initial designation of the ALR to the day-to-day review of applications, local governments play a strong partnership role in the preservation of agricultural land. The Commission is particularly committed to building on existing partnerships with local governments and other local organizations. From the pursuit of a common vision to regulating the use of land, there is a need to develop stronger *co-management partnerships* between local and Provincial interests with a stake in ensuring agriculture's place in communities across British Columbia.

*For further information concerning the relationships between local governments and the Commission, see Chapter 4, p. 5.*

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<sup>22</sup> Dr. Bill Rees discussed sustainability and land ethics at a 1994 symposium. He noted that society presently has an anthropocentric (human-centred) view of land rooted in our cultural sense of separateness from the land and a belief that we dominate and control nature. Rees explains that another perspective is emerging which better reflects human ecological realities. "*This perspective sees humankind as a functional component of the landscape and seeks to understand both our changing role in, and our dependency on, nature.*" Humankind exists in a state of obligate dependency on the land and natural functions. (See: Dr. W. Rees, "Why A New Land Ethic?"; p. 8.



# THE LOCAL IMPORTANCE OF AGRICULTURE

## 1. City and Farm - Disconnections and Connections

Most British Columbians live in an urban setting. This has been the case since the early decades of this century. As a result there has been a gradual distancing between the general population and the production of food and other agricultural products. As Bill Rees has stated, "The very process of urbanization distances

us both spatially and psychologically from the land that sustains us, eroding any sense of our ultimate dependency on nature, of human ecological reality."<sup>23</sup> But there is another reality.

*"One might say that cities are founded upon the fields and based on the countryside. From the fields come wheat, barley, grapes, wine, oil: food for men and food for the other creatures too. If there were no oxen there would be no ploughing, sowing or planting, no herds of grazing cattle. And there would never have been cities. Once founded, cities have been linked to the fortune of the countryside, their prosperity and their demise depends on the countryside."*

Libanius of Antioch, 4th Century AD

From: Robin Osborn  
*Classical Landscape with Figures: The Ancient Greek City and its Countryside*, Inside Title Page

There is, in fact, a very direct connection between urban areas and farming. Clive Ponting, in *A Green History of the World*, describes the development of agriculture as the first great and most important transition in human history. For about two million years humans lived by gathering, herding and hunting. About 10,000 years ago, what is now known as agriculture (more than just a variation on the theme of gathering and hunting) began to emerge. With agriculture came the capability of providing much greater quantities of food and in turn this made possible the evolution of settled, complex, hierarchical societies and a much faster growth in human population. Agriculture was not an easier option for securing food than gathering

and hunting, but its one great advantage, compared to other forms of subsistence, is that in return for a greater degree of effort, it can provide more food from a smaller area of land.<sup>24</sup> Agriculture thus arose and remains a critical endeavour 'fueling' our cities.

*Agriculture is one of the fundamental underpinnings - the "raison d'etre" of urban settlement.*

As a result, there is an explicit link between city and farm, a connection that makes the security of the resource base and the business of farming in the interest of every urban area and their citizens, regardless of its direct connection or contribution to agricultural production. Bill Rees, in developing the concept of 'ecological footprints', states that, "However brilliant its economic star, every city is an ecological black hole drawing on the material resources and productivity of a vast and scattered hinterland many times the size of the city itself."<sup>25</sup> Agriculture represents one of these vital material resources making possible our city structure. Rees maintains that the resource needs of urban regions go well beyond political boundaries. Using the Vancouver-Lower Fraser Valley as an example, the regional population appropriates from nature the ecological production of a land area 22 times larger than the region itself.<sup>26</sup>

The connection between urban areas and their agricultural hinterlands is clear. As a result our cities and towns should have just as keen an interest, on behalf of their citizens, in the stewardship of the resource and agricultural productivity as

<sup>23</sup> Rees, *Why Preserve Agricultural Land?*, 1993, p. 1

<sup>24</sup> Ponting, Clive; *A Green History of the World*; Sinclair - Stevenson Ltd., London, 1991, pp. 37 & 41.

<sup>25</sup> Rees, W. E., "The Ecological Footprints and Appropriated Carrying Capacity: What Urban Economics Leaves Out," presented to *Globe 92*, Vancouver, B.C., March 18, 1992.

<sup>26</sup> Rees, "Why A New Land Ethic?", p. 11.

the more rural regions. In cases where urban municipalities and regions contain portions of the Province's foodland resource, of which there are many examples in B.C., an interest in agriculture's welfare should be unambiguous.

### *Ecological Footprint*

*The corresponding area of productive land / water required to support the defined economy or population (i.e., to produce its resource needs and assimilate its wastes) at a specified material standard of living, wherever on Earth that land may be located.*

Dr. W. Rees  
"Why A New Land Ethic?", p. 12.

## **2. Agriculture - A Part of Complete Communities**

Agriculture is a large and growing part of the B.C. economy - almost 22,000 farms, 55,700 persons in direct employment and food processing, and over \$1.8 billion generated annually at the farm gate.<sup>27</sup> This is important both Provincially and locally. Besides the hinterland connection, agriculture has historically helped to define many of our communities. The very physiography of the Province - valleys and mountains - force unavoidable relationships between urban and rural land uses. Today farming plays a significant role in local jurisdictions throughout British Columbia. This is the case both in its contribution economically, particularly as a factor of growth and stability, and also in its overall visual imprint on the rural landscapes of the Province.

*"The presence of the ALR also helps the District to plan its urban development by reducing the number of growth directions to a manageable proportion..."*

District of Chilliwack,  
Draft OCP, 1990

The preservation of agricultural land has often been portrayed as an impediment to urban development. There is, however, clear evidence that the preservation of farmland is having a far more positive effect on the form of urban development than was earlier considered to be the case. The ALR is undoubtedly a shaper of urban form in many communities and contributes to the development of compact and more efficient urban areas with numerous consequential benefits. As Mark Roseland points out, urban sprawl is one legacy of abundant fossil fuel along with our perceived right to the unrestricted use of the private car. Most North American cities were built using technologies which assumed that abundant and cheap energy and land would be available forever. As a result communities grew inefficiently, and became dependent on lengthy distribution systems. Cheap energy influenced the construction of spacious homes ... fostered our addiction to the auto, an increased separation of our workplaces from our homes.<sup>28</sup> All of these factors have a direct bearing on agricultural land preservation.

The demands of urbanization have sometimes tended to overwhelm local planning agendas. In some cases this has impacted negatively on agricultural issues. However, beyond the necessity of food and farming's contribution to

<sup>27</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, *Fast Facts 1996*, p. 3 & 5 and Statistics Canada, 1996 *Census of Agriculture Profile Data - British Columbia*, Table 5.

<sup>28</sup> Roseland, Mark; *ibid*, pages 23 & 24.



local economies, planning for agriculture should be regarded not as a distraction from other important concerns, but as a key factor in planning for complete communities.

In developing land use policy it is not just the agricultural resource base - the ALR - that should be regarded as a fixed entity; it is also the agricultural resource and the activity of farming that should be infused with certainty. With the application of appropriate management techniques, the activity of farming can be carried out almost indefinitely. In contrast agricultural lands are finite. Michael Welbank, past president of Britain's Royal Town Planning Institute asserts, "How can we possibly take any new land for development and claim we have discharged our responsibilities to future generations? It is a finite resource and however little each generation uses, in time it will all be used." Welbank continues, "We need a greater effort to ensure the reuse of previously developed land as a continuous process until we reach the stage where new land is never taken. Alternatively, if new land is taken then some part of the remaining land should be improved. Thus, although the amount of undeveloped land may be reduced, its quality is improved."<sup>29</sup>

It is also of fundamental importance that growth is considered in the context of regional strategies. In almost all areas of the province, through the application of more compact development and other creative solutions, there is simply no real need to remove land from the ALR for urbanization. This may appear to some as an all too bold statement. However, removing land from the Reserve for urban expansion would not only be a disservice to agriculture but would, in many instances, promote inefficient urban development. But more fundamental than this, population growth within any specific region equates directly into an even greater demand, and corresponding responsibility, for protection of the resource base and requirements of food production. Thus, in regions of urban growth - with an escalating number of mouths to feed - paving over the agricultural resource as a matter of policy is tantamount to a shirking of responsibility for the most basic of human needs.

## SUMMARY

At its foundation, planning for agriculture must be built on a shared vision of agriculture's future. In the following chapters a number of issues, opportunities, solutions and recommendations are discussed, including an examination of Provincial and local government roles and how existing planning tools can be more effectively applied to focus local land use policy on agriculture issues. It will be increasingly important to approach planning for agriculture in a manner that marries local knowledge of the land base and communities with Provincial objectives, and uses fully the available planning tools and support products.

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<sup>29</sup> Welbank, Michael; "In the beginning was the phrase...", Planning Week, Vol. 2, No. 13, Journal of the Royal Town Planning Institute, March, 1994, p. 17.

# 4

## PROVINCIAL & LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROLES

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## INTRODUCTION

In British Columbia, with the enactment of the *Land Commission Act* (now *Agricultural Land Commission Act - (ALCA)*) in 1973, agricultural land preservation and the use of this land for farming was clearly defined as a matter of Provincial importance. This action, however, did not exclude local governments and other local organizations from playing an essential role in meeting the objectives of preserving the resource base and strengthening farming. While the ALR functions as a form of Provincial zoning in favour of farming, local government planning and regulatory powers, even in the ALR, are maintained.

This chapter reviews the Provincial role in planning for agriculture, the objectives of the Provincial agricultural land preservation programme, and the commitment of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAF) and the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) to work closely with local governments in the development and implementation of agricultural policy. Starting in 1994 with changes to the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, followed in 1995 with enactment of the *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act*, fundamental legislative changes have been made that help ensure agriculture's place in the planning mainstream.

These legislative changes have been founded upon an understanding of the contribution that can be made at the local level and the part that community plans and implementing bylaws can play to sustain B.C. agriculture. The role that local governments can play - often within very different local agricultural settings - will be reviewed, and an overview will be provided of the land use planning tool kit which is specifically available to address agricultural land use issues.

Finally, the need to develop strong working relationships between the Province, local governments and farmers is emphasized along with the importance of working towards a shared vision of how best to protect farming's working land base, resolving competing land use demands and resource priorities, and ensuring that agriculture can be sustained and enhanced in the future.

## THE PROVINCIAL ROLE

### 1. Ministry of Agriculture and Food

For over a hundred years the Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAF) has supported and encouraged agricultural development in B.C. The Ministry is responsible for over 40 pieces of legislation (see: *Appendix 14*) and links agricultural programmes with other ministries and agencies. The Ministry is involved in a wide range of services including economics and marketing, extension, resource management, animal health and many specialized services. Another important responsibility of the Ministry is aquaculture. The head office is in Victoria with 15 regional and district offices throughout the Province (see: *Appendix 12*).

*For additional information about the Ministry of Agriculture and Food see: Appendix 18 - Key Farm & Related Organizations*

With passage of the *Land Commission Act* in 1973, the long standing programmes of the then Department of Agriculture remained in place. The advent of the ALR was not intended to replace, but rather augment, this effort. The Commission and MAF have many common interests. However, there has been an informal, but far from exclusive, split in focus between the two organizations. The Ministry has continued its traditional programmes promoting industry development, while the ALC has concentrated more on the preservation component of its mandate and helped to ensure that land use planning and regulation is agriculturally supportive. Despite this split in focus, the ALC and MAF have a strong working relationship which has been enhanced with the passage of the *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act* (FPPA).

There is considerable interaction between the various ministries and agencies of the Province and local governments, with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs playing a key supportive role in this regard.<sup>1</sup> While several other ministries have direct relationships with local governments, MAF has historically had a relatively minor involvement with local governments and as Bish notes, this association was often confined to situations where local policies affected land in the ALR.<sup>2</sup> While the linkages between local governments and the agricultural land preservation programme will be discussed below, Bish's analysis of the relationship of local governments to Provincial agricultural programmes, when compared to other ministries, is largely accurate.

*Improved sharing of information and expertise between the Province and local governments is being pursued.*

Given local government's land use planning role, the sharing of information and expertise between Provincial agricultural interests and local governments provides an opportunity to strengthen relationships. Such 'info-sharing' is currently taking place between Pitt Meadows, MAF and Agriculture Canada. These three agencies are pooling their resources and expertise to develop a model which uses a geographic information system to inventory and analyze land use information that is applicable to the agricultural land base. This work, while focused on Pitt Meadows, is being designed to have more universal application that should assist other local governments undertaking similar projects.

*"Agri-Teams" see: Page 6-13 for a Summary Box on the concept.*

Despite Bish's assessment, MAF has been involved with local governments in a number of ways. In particular, the former Greenzone programme and the work of district agriculturists often involve the Ministry in local issues. For many years MAF has conducted informative farm tours as part of the Union of B.C. Municipalities' annual convention. The Strengthening Farming initiative, including 1994 amendments to the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, and the 1995 *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act*, as outlined below, was aimed specifically at building much stronger partnerships between local governments, farm communities, MAF and the ALC.

The FPPA has in fact resulted in a significant re-orientation of MAF resources to implement and service the legislation. Provincial Agri-Teams have been developed to provide on-going support to local governments and material has been developed for approving officers in conjunction with the FPPA amendments to Section 86 of the *Land Title Act*, including a commitment to on-going support and advice. The *Guide for Bylaw Development in Farming Areas* produced by MAF, stands as a cornerstone document to assist in the review and updating of zoning and rural land use bylaws and the development of farm bylaws.

<sup>1</sup> A major exception is the *School Act* administered by the Ministry of Education.

<sup>2</sup> Bish, Robert, *Local Government in British Columbia - 2nd Edition*, Union of British Columbia Municipalities, 1990; pp 13 & 14.



*Strengthening farming can best be achieved by working within the context of local plans and bylaws.*

*In the 1970's, the loss of agricultural land was compounded by a growing feeling of impermanence in farm communities.*

A basic principle at work is that strengthening farming can be best achieved by working with local governments and within the context of local plan delivery and bylaw processes.

## **2. A Programme to Preserve Agricultural Land.<sup>3</sup>**

The loss of agricultural land to urbanization was a phenomenon that had been accelerating through several decades and was clearly a concern for the Provincial government and the people of B.C. by the early 1970's, when prime agricultural land was being lost at an alarming rate.<sup>4</sup>

Despite local land use planning and regulatory powers, local governments appeared unwilling or ineffectual in dealing with the impact of suburban sprawl onto farmland. Existing regulation also allowed for considerable parcelization and non-farm use of the agricultural land base.

Agriculture, especially in the face of long term investment, requires a high degree of stability. However, local governments tended to bring a degree of volatility to land use policy and regulation with Council and Regional Board elections every two and now three years. There was a feeling that the pressures of urbanization could not be stemmed, even when challenged by documents as visionary as the Lower Mainland Official Regional Plan adopted in 1966. Moreover, there was a recognition that many of B.C.'s most important agricultural areas, with high quality and often unique agricultural capabilities, were in close proximity to large and rapidly growing urban centres. There was evidence of the "impermanence syndrome" (see *Chapter 2, page 10*) in the face of urban pressures - disinvestment in agriculture, increases in hobby farms and rural residential uses in farm areas, underutilized or idle farmland and a general undermining of farm communities. There was also a recognition of the relative scarcity of B.C.'s agricultural resource<sup>5</sup> (see: *Chapter 1, page 7*). The first Chair of the Land Commission, William Lane, commented in 1974 on the absurdity of unnecessarily giving up productive agricultural land in light of the world food supply situation.<sup>6</sup> Agriculture was and remains an important part of B.C.'s economy and has important social and aesthetic values. As noted by Winter, agriculture is largely a family-focused activity. To destroy agriculture would mean an entire way of life would be nullified.<sup>7</sup>

In the early 1970's in B.C. it was far easier to find an urban development ethic holding sway than one emphasizing the stewardship of agricultural resource lands. The urbanization of farmland was considered natural if not inevitable. This land use ethic fostered impermanence in the agricultural land base and failed to recognize the fundamental importance of food security as other values

<sup>3</sup> There has been considerable material written about the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* and the ALR. The following section is not intended to serve as a comprehensive review of this subject but rather to provide a brief context statement for the role that the Act and ALR play in planning for agriculture.

<sup>4</sup> It has been estimated that the loss of 'prime' farmland in the early 1970's was approximately 6,000 hectares /year.

<sup>5</sup> In Canada and the U.S. 1.6 to 1.9 hectares of crop land and pasture is used to satisfy current average per capita consumption (Rees, *Why Preserve Agricultural Land?*, page 5). B.C.'s farmland in 1996 amounted to only 0.7 hectares per person compared to 2.4 hectares per person nationally. (Statistics Canada, *A National Overview*, Cat. No. 93-357-XPB and 1996 Census of Agriculture Profile Data - BC, Table 7.) B.C.'s total potential crop and pasture land (agricultural capability class 1 to 5) is equivalent to 1.1 hectares per person and there was 1.3 hectares of ALR per British Columbian in 1996. Therefore, even if all of the ALR was available and used for agricultural production, it would still fall short of the amount of land needed to satisfy current Canada / U.S. consumption levels.

<sup>6</sup> Lane, W. - Lecture, UBC, February 20, 1974.

<sup>7</sup> Winter, G.R., *The Significance of Agriculture To the Economy of British Columbia*, Department of Agricultural Economics, UBC, February 6, 1971.

...appreciation of the  
need for  
conservation and  
stewardship of  
resources scarcely  
existed at all until  
the 1960's

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Michael Kluckner  
*Paving Paradise,*  
p. 149

and visions were pursued. In a highly urbanized society that was becoming ever more disconnected with farming, agriculture's position on public policy agendas should not come as a surprise.

For some decades we have been in a period of transition from a largely agrarian to an urban community of interests. As a result, we now have to learn how to evoke food conscious policy formulation and decision-making from the perspective of an urban rather than agrarian dominated society. While necessary ethical adjustments will be challenging and take time to fully evolve, B.C.'s agricultural land preservation programme can be viewed as both a response and part of this process.

Since its adoption, the *Land Commission Act* has stood as a counterweight against a land market that has not placed a particularly high value on preserving the Province's foodland resource. The adoption of the *Land Commission Act* was a conscious decision to identify the preservation of agricultural land as a matter of Provincial interest. It represented a shift in regulatory land use power in favour of the Province as it applied to defined agricultural land - the ALR .

As indicated by Furuseth and Pierce in *Agricultural Land In An Urban Society* , "The permanence and importance attached to the Land Reserve is unique in planning for privately-owned land in North America. The legislation and rules of the Land Reserve are far more stringent than the regulations most EFU (exclusive farm use) zones used in other areas."<sup>8</sup> The Agricultural Land Commission's role, from the outset, was not just to identify and preserve agricultural land but to also regulate the use of land - both private and Crown provincial - in the ALR. However, the Commission has long recognized that the preservation of agricultural land should not rely on a single means such as exclusive farmland zoning<sup>9</sup> even when Provincially inspired. There are several other techniques that together should work as a policy package (see below *page 20*). An important contributive part of the package is agriculturally progressive and, comprehensive community and regional plans.

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**ALC MANDATE:**

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1. *Establish the ALR;*
2. *Protect the scarce supply of agricultural land;*
3. *Encourage the establishment & maintenance of farms;*
4. *Ensure bylaw, plans and policies affecting the ALR support farming.*

### **3. The Agricultural Land Commission, ALR and Local Governments**

In 1973, the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) was given the mandate to establish the ALR, preserve agricultural land and encourage the establishment and maintenance of farms and the use of land in the ALR in a manner compatible with agricultural purposes. More recently, the mandate of the Commission has been amended to include encouraging local governments, first nations and the Provincial and Federal governments to support and accommodate farm use within the ALR in their bylaws, plans and policies.<sup>10</sup> The Commission's powers include the authority to determine the appropriateness of future subdivision and non-farm uses proposed in the ALR and to exclude land from the Reserve and include land into the Reserve.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Furuseth, O.J. & J.T. Pierce; *Agricultural Land In An Urban Society*, Ass. of American Geographers, 1982, p. 74.

<sup>9</sup> Nelson, A.C.; *Preserving Prime Farmland in the Face of Urbanization: Lessons from Oregon*; p. 472.

<sup>10</sup> *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, Section 10(1), "Objects and Powers".

<sup>11</sup> With changes to the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* in 1993, Cabinet's role in the process of excluding land from the ALR as well as the role of the Environment and Land Use Committee of Cabinet (ELUC) upon appeal, and the inclusion of land into the ALR were all but eliminated with the passage of amendments to the Act (Bill 42-1993). Only in circumstances where Cabinet declares a "provincial interest" would it be involved with the process of land being excluded from the ALR. In such cases, the process would require that the matter be reviewed by the Environment Assessment Board or Inquiry Act commissioner which in turn would require a public hearing as part of the process. In all other cases, the Agricultural Land Commission is responsible for exclusions and inclusions of land from/into the ALR.



Before the passage of the *Land Commission Act*, most decisions concerning the use of agricultural land in private tenure rested almost exclusively with municipalities and regional districts where the function of land use planning and regulation was undertaken. With few exceptions, the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* takes precedence over other Provincial legislation<sup>12</sup> including local government planning and zoning powers drawn from the *Municipal Act*. The ALR overlays the local government regulatory system and represents a degree of loss or a sharing of land use authority with respect to a portion of local government's land base. In some cases this has produced resentment that has not been conducive to the development of harmonious land use policy, let alone a shared vision. Rather than the ALR being accepted as a new land use reality, in some quarters it has been regarded with bare tolerance awaiting the day when the agricultural land preservation programme would "collapse" and we could all get back to "business as usual", exploiting any agricultural land that stood in the way of what is seen as "progress". For those speculating on the demise of the ALR and the eventual urbanization of farmland, a healthy agri-food sector is not necessarily seen as being in their best interest.

What has emerged is a land use dichotomy that is central to the question of developing an effective and consistent policy framework for dealing with agricultural issues. The provincial government has given two organizations - local governments (through the *Municipal Act*) and the ALC (through the ALCA) - regulatory authority over the same land base - the ALR. Some might conclude that this is a prescription for conflict. If nothing else it speaks to the need to ensure close working relationships between the ALC and local governments. Indeed, a large part of the Commission's efforts have been directed at developing harmony between the Provincial and local visions associated with the Reserve - sometimes successfully, sometimes not. With the enactment of the Provincial agricultural land preservation programme, the local government role was not excluded but intentionally included and defined.

The initial ALR proposals were developed in conjunction with regional districts. In turn consultative processes were initiated with member municipalities and the citizens of the regions through the public hearing process. Once the ALR boundaries were established, the Act provided a clear local government role in the application process. In virtually all cases, any initiative to amend the ALR or consider the subdivision or non-farm use of agricultural land must first be considered by the regional district or municipality where the proposal is initiated. Indeed, in many cases local governments have the authority to not forward applications to the Commission where a proposal is contrary to local policy. This power was further enhanced in 1994.<sup>13</sup> When the Commission does make a decision to allow a non-farm use or subdivision, this does not usurp local regulation. The proposal only proceeds if the local government determines it is in its best interest. A possible exception is where local land use plans and bylaws have not been adopted.

*A decision of the Agricultural Land Commission, upon application, does not usurp local government planning and zoning authority.*

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<sup>12</sup> The *Agricultural Land Commission Act* and regulations are not subject to any other enactment, whenever enacted, except the *Interpretation Act*, the *Environment and Land Use Act* and the *Waste Management Act* (ALCA - Sec. 45(1)).

<sup>13</sup> See *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, Sections 15(4) and 22(2).

The Act also provides a direct means, often referred to as 'block applications', for local governments to initiate amendments to the ALR. In fact, many of these initiatives either represent 'spin-offs' of community plan or zoning bylaw reviews or are undertaken as joint, area specific reviews of the ALR by the Commission and local government. Not only is most land excluded from the Reserve through this means of application, it proportionately has the least impact on prime agricultural land, demonstrating the value of the Commission and local governments working together when adjustments to the ALR are considered.<sup>14</sup>

*For further information about the relationships between the ALR and local government planning, the reader is directed to the:*

*"ALC Handbook...a window on the ALR"  
Chapter 5: Local Government & the ALR.*

The ALR has often been referred to as the "ALR plan". At other times it has been called "provincially inspired zoning". However, neither expression is wholly appropriate. As a plan, the ALR and ALCA certainly contain broad and clear objectives and the fundamental vision of agricultural land preservation is very long term. As a zoning device the ALR employs classic districting techniques. However, the ALCA and ALR stand largely as a unique land use planning instrument. The Commission has developed several general orders and land use policies associated with the ALR. However, for the most part these can be regarded as "policies of clarification" and have, with some exceptions, been largely inspired by the Act's application / decision-making process. Although there have been a few site specific examples, the Commission itself has never undertaken any large-scale traditional planning of the ALR. Thus the Reserve is not a plan in the spirit of an official plan as expressed in the *Municipal Act*. As a result, progressive agricultural policy development applied to the ALR has, in reality, been relatively scant.

There has also tended to be an ongoing question of, "Who is taking care of the agricultural land base and farm activity?" MAF, along with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, has maintained its strong technical presence regarding farm practices, marketing, and food safety, etc. The Commission, faced initially with the daunting task of establishing the ALR, has since expended an inordinate amount of its resources in defending the ALR through the onslaught of over 30,000 applications to date. In particular, the first ten years was a period of "sorting out" the ALR, shifting the boundary in an effort to put in place a long term defensible Reserve. Unfortunately, efforts to amend the ALR have tended to disproportionately capture the limited resources that have been available rather than engaging in more effective, proactive planning for agriculture's future.

*For over 10 years the Reserve has become increasingly stable.*

See: Appendix 3

While fine-tuning the ALR has been necessary and will continue, many important parts of the Reserve have been reviewed and there is every reason to believe that the Reserve is now into a period of much greater stability. This should afford all concerned an opportunity to focus *more* on what is going on inside the ALR and along its interface and much *less* on the location of the ALR boundary.

The Commission is often viewed as simply a single focus organization with the preservation of agricultural land ruling its every decision. Indeed its mandate is quite clear. However, its operating methods and decision-making history demonstrate an organization that is determined to work within the mainstream of

<sup>14</sup> Block exclusions have been responsible for more land being removed from the ALR (73% of all land excluded) than have individual land owner applications or appeals to the Environment and Land Use Committee of Cabinet (ELUC), they have been the least harmful in terms of the quality of land excluded (only about 7% of all land excluded through block applications has been prime agricultural land). In addition the level of agreement between the Commission and local government on lands to be excluded by this means is exceedingly high - over 90%.



making a food conscious decision that will not only lessen or eliminate impact on agriculture, but shows leadership.

### 1. Contrasting Agricultural Settings

Naturally the sheer amount of agricultural land within a local government jurisdiction, the different types and level of farm activity and agriculture's relationship to urban communities will have varying implications on how farming is viewed and its importance in terms of policy development at the local level.

Regional districts encompass all of the Province with the exception of the Stikine region in north western B.C. The 27 regional districts are the general-purpose local governments for unincorporated areas. In many cases they also provide a variety of services to member municipalities and provide regional context, particularly with the development of regional growth strategies. Agriculturally there are considerable differences between municipalities and regional districts,

but as Table 4 indicates, both are important to agriculture in British Columbia.

While somewhat crude, Table 4 illustrates some basic agricultural contrasts between municipalities and regional districts in B.C. The lion's share of land in the ALR is within the unincorporated areas of regional districts. These lands are particularly critical and form the basis for more extensive agriculture such as grain farms and beef operations.

Municipalities, while having far less land in the ALR, generate the majority of annual gross farm receipts. This is due to the production of high valued commodities, often through the application of relatively intensive farming practices. As an added challenge, nearly 75% of British Columbians live in municipalities with land in the ALR.

<u>Indicator</u>	<u>Municipalities With ALR</u>	<u>Regional Districts (unincorporated areas)</u>
Land in ALR (1996)	<b>5.3%</b> (250,970 ha.)	<b>94.7%</b> (4,462,750 ha.)
Annual Total Gross Farm Receipts (1995)	<b>65% to 70%</b> (\$1.20 billion to \$1.29 billion)	<b>30% to 35%</b> (\$0.55 billion to \$0.64 billion)
Population (1996)	<b>74.6%</b> 2,779,102	<b>13.7%</b> 510,859
Sources:		
<u>Land in ALR</u> - Agricultural Land Commission Statistics for Jan. 1, 1996		
<u>Gross Farm Receipts</u> - Estimate derived from Statistics Canada, <u>1996 Census of Agriculture Profile Data -British Columbia</u> , Table 5.		
<u>Population</u> - Statistics Canada, 1996 Census: Table GR1.		

*Both municipalities and regional districts make important contributions to B.C. agriculture*

In terms of the respective agricultural roles of municipalities and regional districts, it would be inappropriate to suggest that one is more important than the other. Each accommodates different forms of agriculture - which are Provincially significant.

Besides regional variations in B.C. agriculture, the amount of farmland within a given jurisdiction can vary dramatically. For example, agricultural issues will not command a high profile in the City of Castlegar with only 7 hectares in the ALR.<sup>17</sup> In contrast, the Bulkley-Nechako Regional District is a vast agricultural

<sup>17</sup> From the files of the Agricultural Land Commission

area with over 300,000 hectares in the Reserve<sup>18</sup> and nearly 970 farms. The farms in the Bulkley Valley are very large. Over 30% of all farms in this part of B.C. are over 162 hectares (400 acres) in size. The City of Burnaby, with over \$19 million in gross farm receipts<sup>19</sup> in 1995 has very small farms - many in the 2 to 4 hectare range. From the very large to the very small, each demonstrates the diversity of B.C. agriculture.

The presence of the ALR and agricultural activity varies considerably between jurisdictions. Appendix 1 provides a comprehensive list of the size of each jurisdiction, the amount of land in the ALR and the percentage of the land base the ALR accounts for. The box on the following page "Examples of Varying ALR Significance" highlights several different examples. The presence of agriculture and the ALR relative to other land uses can influence local concern for agricultural policy development.

Of the 105 municipalities with land in the ALR, about 30 have in excess of 1,000 hectares and/or total annual gross farm receipts in excess of \$1 million. In each of these, issues related to the agricultural land base should have a relatively high profile for their respective Councils. There are 60 additional municipalities with between 50 and 999 hectares in the ALR. A further 16 municipalities have only

minor amounts of land in the ALR - less than 50 hectares each.<sup>20</sup> In both of these latter situations, the importance of agriculture can vary. Despite having only relatively small amounts of land in agricultural production, communities like Grand Forks and Creston are important agricultural service centres to their surrounding farm areas. Therefore, the economic health of the community may be very closely linked to the agricultural industry. In other cases the small amount of farmland in a particular jurisdiction may be physically linked and form part of a much larger agricultural area with an adjoining municipality or regional district.

Another contrast which has a bearing on agricultural policy relates to the actual setting within which agriculture occurs. The Thompson-Nicola Regional District is one of several examples of a jurisdiction within which agriculture functions largely in a rural setting despite having a number of urban centres, most notably Kamloops and Merritt. Similar situations can be found in the Bulkley Valley, the Peace and Cariboo regions. In contrast, within the Okanagan Valley

#### EXAMPLES of VARYING ALR SIGNIFICANCE

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Large amount of ALR / farming a dominant land use:   | → <u>Abbotsford</u> : 27,700 ha. in ALR = 77% of municipal land base.                       |
| 2. Small amount of ALR but significant agricultural activity:                                 | → <u>Burnaby</u> : 280 ha. in ALR over \$19 million in gross farm receipts in 1995.         |
| 3. Small amount of ALR, accounts for a significant, but not dominant amount of the land base: | → <u>Qualicum Beach</u> : 260 ha. in ALR = 24% of municipal land base.                      |
| 4. Small amount of ALR attached to a larger agricultural area:                                | → <u>Armstrong</u> : 200 ha. in ALR adjacent to the 14,310 ha. ALR of Spallumcheen.         |
| 5. Small amount of ALR accounting for an insignificant part of the land base:                 | → <u>Comox</u> : 8 ha. in ALR = <1% of land base.   |
| 6. Large amount of ALR with significant growth potential:                                     | → <u>Comox-Strathcona Reg. Dist.</u> : 40,380 ha. in ALR with 30% (13,403 ha.) in farm use. |

<sup>18</sup> From the files of the Agricultural Land Commission

<sup>19</sup> Statistics Canada, 1996 Census of Agriculture Profile Data - British Columbia, Table 2.

<sup>20</sup> From the files of the Agricultural Land Commission.



*Farming in the GVRD, for the most part, is farming within an urban area.*

agriculture functions in close proximity to urban centres. The same can be said of the Lower Mainland. In fact, farming in the Greater Vancouver Regional District can be largely regarded as farming *within*, rather than on the edge of an urban area. Similarly Kelowna orchardists are very often not only farming in what most would consider an urban jurisdiction but very often within the very midst of an urban setting. In these latter examples the urban issues are likely to be the dominant focus of land use policy for the whole region, including the rural areas.

These contrasts will not only result in different agricultural issues, but the perspectives that their elected officials bring to the table can also vary. In the case of farming close to urban areas, agricultural policy is often driven by persons (both elected and hired officers) with an urban background. Thus, it becomes particularly important that linkages with the farm community be fostered. Farmers' institutes, agricultural advisory committees and other local agricultural groups will play an increasingly important role in ensuring local council and board members are kept abreast of agricultural issues.

The contrasts between farming areas and the diversity of agricultural operations in B.C. increase complexity from a policy development point of view. As a result it would be wrong to suggest that a single approach or model for dealing with agricultural issues can be applied with equal utility in all parts of B.C. There are, however, several basic ingredients that can guide planning for agriculture:

- connect with agricultural interests to seek input and better understand issues important to the farm community;
- approach agriculture as the "use of priority" within farm areas;
- develop a better understanding of agricultural areas through the application of improved land use inventories and monitoring of policy effectiveness; and
- undertake, in key agricultural areas, more focused and where appropriate, cross-jurisdictional, agricultural area plan development.

## **2. A Broad Range of Functions**

As Robert Bish explains in his guide to *Local Governments in British Columbia*, local governments affect the day-to-day lives of nearly all persons in B.C. Under the *British North American Act of 1867* and the *Constitution Act of 1982*, the responsibility for local governments rests with the Provinces.<sup>21</sup> Besides providing the means through which its citizens can take collective actions, they are also administrative extensions of the Provincial government. Local governments function under Provincial legislation affecting local jurisdictions in three broad ways:

- establishing how local governments can be organized;
- outlining certain functions that must be performed at the local level as extensions of the Province; and
- authorizing all activities that local governments may undertake.

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<sup>21</sup> Bish, page 9.

As Bish points out, this relationship between the Province and local governments is not without strain from time-to-time, but most often differences are resolved by mutual accommodation.

Municipalities and regional districts may have responsibility for a wide variety of functions from building sidewalks to managing land use. While local governments may only deal with matters which Provincial legislation specifically permit, over time the list of functions and forms of regulation has become extensive.<sup>22</sup> It is within this milieu that agricultural policy must be developed. Added to this disparity of functions are the challenges faced by most local governments in dealing with the settlement issues of a highly urbanized society. However, as discussed in Chapter 3, food security is as much an urban as a rural issue.

A key challenge is finding the appropriate balance and integration of many, often competing, interests. One of the central functions of most local governments in dealing with varying interests is through the planning and regulating of land use.

### 3. Current Legislative Opportunities to Plan for Agriculture

*Local governments have a broad range of responsibilities. This is an important context within which local agricultural policy must be developed.*

With the exception of Crown (Provincial and Federal) and first nation's land, the task of land use planning in most settled areas is undertaken by municipal or regional district governments. Local government planning and regulatory powers are particularly focused on privately-held land. With over 70% of privately-owned land in B.C. (excluding private forests) owned by farm families,<sup>23</sup> the importance of local government in planning for agriculture is clear. Local planning may take the form of regional growth strategies developed by regional districts or municipal and regional district official community plans and implementing bylaws. Each represents important opportunities to plan for, and contribute to, agriculture's long term sustainability.

*For further discussion of the role of regional planning see: Chapter 5, pages 5 - 7.*

Regional Districts do not share the same historical reach as municipalities.<sup>24</sup> However, regional planning in British Columbia does date back to the late 1930's when six Vancouver area jurisdictions created a voluntary planning association.<sup>25</sup> With passage of the *Growth Strategies Statutes Amendment Act* in 1995, regional planning found new life after the demise of regional planning in 1983. The development of regional growth strategies has particular significance to agriculture. Not only will the form and boundaries of new urban growth be influenced by regional parameters, but the strategies will play a particularly important role in ensuring agriculture's sustainability through the need for growth strategies to maintain "...the integrity of a secure and productive resource base, including the agricultural land reserve..".<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Bish, page 109.

<sup>23</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, *Strengthening Farming in British Columbia*, Consultation Background Report, February 1995, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> For example: New Westminster was incorporated in 1860 and the City of Victoria in 1862. See Bish, page 15.

<sup>25</sup> Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board, *Origin of the Lower Mainland Regional Planning Board*, New Westminster, 1966.

<sup>26</sup> *Municipal Act*, Part 25, Section 849(2)(e), "Purpose of Regional Growth Strategy".



*Determining urban growth boundaries is a key ingredient in any successful effort to preserve agricultural land.*

*See: Appendix 14 & 15 for a list of legislation administered by MAF and Agriculture /Agri-Food Canada*

*Legislative opportunities in B.C. put local governments in a pivotal role to ensure agriculture's place in the planning mainstream.*

The *Municipal Act* provides local governments<sup>27</sup> with the power to adopt official community plans and implement bylaws. While all official plans must be deposited with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, only in the case of plans adopted by regional districts and villages and rural land use bylaws adopted by regional districts, does the Minister of Municipal Affairs have to grant approval prior to adoption.

For rural land use bylaws<sup>28</sup> the handling of agricultural policy development is quite similar to community plans in terms of its relative importance. The degree of prominence afforded agriculture under the content provisions for both community plans and rural land use bylaws is not dissimilar to most other forms of land use highlighted under Section 877(1) of the *Municipal Act*. One possible exception is the provision of urban land uses. In this case, residential development, urban services and other urban support facilities such as schools, parks and waste treatment facilities tend to have a somewhat elevated status in terms of the need to consider these land uses within a community plan.<sup>29</sup>

There are approximately 75 different pieces of legislation focused on agriculture and administered by either the Provincial Ministry of Agriculture and Food or Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. However, "agricultural" legislation for the most part deals with a wide range of matters related to food safety, animal welfare, marketing, industry development or is commodity focused.

However, as summarized below, there are currently several opportunities within British Columbia's legislative framework to influence or provide latitude to plan for agriculture. While spread amongst a number of different pieces of legislation, when examined as a package there is strong connectiveness between the various elements. As might be expected, the *Municipal Act* provides a particularly strong focal point. In almost all cases this legislative package places local governments in a central role to shape agricultural land use policy and regulation and ensure agriculture's place in the planning mainstream.

### **A Summary of Current Legislative Opportunities for Agricultural Policy Formulation, Plan and Bylaw Development**

#### **Provincial Agricultural Land Commission Act**

The Agricultural Land Commission Act (ALCA) is the most prominent and influential agricultural planning instrument in British Columbia and will be discussed in greater detail below. Although Provincially administered, the Act has strong ties to local government land use planning and bylaw functions.

While the ALCA provides for the identification and preservation of agricultural land within an Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), it has also functioned, particularly before the initiation of regional growth strategies, as a form of urban growth boundary in many areas.

<sup>27</sup> In the case of the City of Vancouver, its statutory powers are found in the Vancouver Charter.

<sup>28</sup> Rural land use bylaws may only apply to unincorporated areas and combine elements of both community plans and zoning bylaws.

<sup>29</sup> Whereas agriculture is grouped together with five other land uses within one subsection, in contrast, residential, servicing and urban support facilities each warrant a separate subsection.

*A need for plans and bylaws to be consistent with the ALCA.*

*Community Plans must be forwarded to the Commission for comment.*

*The Commission encourages agriculturally supportive bylaws, plans and policies.*

*The ALC and MAF are committed to working closely with local governments*

The initial designation process of the ALR directly involved local governments. Municipalities and regional districts have continually participated in the application processes to amend the ALR or determine use and subdivision within the Reserve. For example, over 70% of all land excluded from the ALR has been by the “block” application process (*ALCA, Sec. 14(1)*). This process is normally initiated by local governments following a joint ALR review involving the Commission. In many cases, the ALR review has formed part of a local community planning process.

The relationship between the ALCA and local plans and bylaws is important. There is a necessity to ensure consistency between local bylaws (including plans) and the objectives of the ALCA, regulations and orders of the Commission.

- *Agricultural Land Commission Act, Section 47(2), “Conflict with Bylaws”*

It is also a requirement that community plans be forwarded to the Commission for review and comment prior to adoption to ensure consistency with the ALCA. This review process provides for an exchange between local governments and the Commission to consider pertinent issues, assure agriculture’s place in the broader mix of land uses and interests and provide opportunity for a multi-directional influence on policy.

- *Municipal Act, Section 882(3)(c), “Adoption Procedures for Municipalities”*

In 1994, the mandate of the Commission was modified to specifically give reference to encouraging, “...local, provincial, federal and first nations to support and accommodate the farm use of agricultural land within bylaws, plans and policies.” Working with local governments and other agencies during plan and bylaw development has been a long-standing commitment of the Commission. Ensuring consistency between the Provincial agricultural land preservation programme and the objectives and policies included in local plans is seen as a critical underpinning of any efforts to preserve the agricultural land base and support a healthy farm sector. Plans and bylaws inconsistent with the objectives of the ALCA serve to directly undermine the farm community.

See *Chapter 2, page 9 - “Agriculture or an Urban Tomorrow?”*

With passage of the *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act (FPPA)* a concerted effort is being made by both the Commission and Ministry of Agriculture and Food to work closely with local governments in a proactive, rather than reactive, mode during the development of plans and bylaws affecting agriculture. (See: *page 6-13* for a Summary Box on “Agri-Teams”). The opportunities available to develop strong working relationships not only between the Province and local governments, but also through the inclusion of members of the farm community in plan and bylaw development, represent a fundamental building block in planning for agriculture and a forum for multi-directional influence on policy development.

- *Agricultural Land Commission Act, Section 10(1)(d), “Objects and Powers”*



*...maintain the integrity of a secure and productive resource base, including the ALR;*

*The farm sector represents an important and growing part of most regional district economies.*

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**Regional districts should consider how their growth strategy contributes to food security.**

*Inter-governmental Advisory Committees to facilitate policy coordination*

*Agriculture and non-conforming use provisions.*

## **Regional Growth Strategies**

Each of the following 'purposes' of regional growth strategies should have positive implications for agriculture:

- “...avoid urban sprawl...;
- ...minimize the use of automobiles...;
- ..efficient movement of goods and people...making effective use of transportation and utility corridors;
- ...maintain the integrity of a secure and productive resource base including the agricultural ... land reserve;
- ...economic development that supports the unique character of the communities;
- ...reducing and preventing air, land and water pollution;
- ...protecting the quality and quantity of ground water and surface water;”

- *Municipal Act*, Section 849(2), “Purpose of Regional Growth Strategy”

Regional districts are to include within growth strategies, to the extent that they are regional concerns, several matters “...to provide for the needs of the projected population.” One of these is “...economic development.” This is an important content matter for agriculture since the farm sector forms an important component of the local economy for almost all regional districts in the province.

- *Municipal Act*, Section 850(2), “Content of Regional Growth Strategy”

Within the content of a regional growth strategy, opportunity is afforded to “...deal with any other regional matter” to provide for the needs of the projected population. It is recommended that every regional district should carefully consider how its growth strategy contributes to food security beyond the preservation of the agricultural land base.

- *Municipal Act*, Section 850(3), “Content of Regional Growth Strategy”

Provision is made for the formation of Intergovernmental Advisory Committees (IAC) including provincial government representatives. The IAC provides opportunity for provincial agricultural interests to assist the process by providing “interest statements” related to agriculture in the region, identify important relationships with other resources and land uses and outline broader provincial agricultural policy. The IAC will also “...facilitate coordination of Provincial and local government actions, policies and programs...” as they relate to the growth strategy. This coordinating role is particularly important to achieve mutual respect and supportive actions and to enhance the development of shared visions. The language of the legislation tends to suggest that the growth strategy process provides opportunity for a multi-directional influence on policy as a product of policy coordination.

- *Municipal Act*, Section 867, “Intergovernmental Advisory Committees”

## ***Municipal Act*, Part 26, Management of Development**

In 1985, the non-conforming use section of the *Municipal Act* was amended making specific provision for agricultural practices. This change added certainty for farmers when operations may be temporarily shut down due to seasonal, market or production cycles, disease / pest control or for safety reasons.

- *Municipal Act*, Section 911(2), “Non-conforming Uses and Siting”

*Municipal Act provisions for Sub-Area Community Plans.*

*Community Plan content and agriculture*

*Community Plans may include policies respecting the maintenance and enhancement of farming.*

*Rural Land Use Bylaws*

*Development Permit Areas for the protection of farming.*

The *Municipal Act* provides local governments<sup>30</sup> with the power to adopt official community plans and implement bylaws. Adding flexibility, local governments, "...may adopt one or more community plans for one or more areas." As will be discussed in later chapters, this is an important provision since it allows for more focused sub-area plans to be adopted, including plans focused on those parts of municipalities and regional districts within which agriculture is a dominant land use and economic activity.

- *Municipal Act*, Section. 875(1), "Application of Community Plans".

Community plans shall include statements respecting "the approximate location, amount and type of present and proposed commercial, industrial, institutional, *agricultural*, recreational and public utility land uses,..".

- *Municipal Act*, Section. 877(1)(b), "Required Content of Official Community Plans"

This long standing reference to agriculture in the plan content section of the *Municipal Act* was augmented in 1995 with a consequential amendment resulting from passage of the *Farm Practices Protection Act* (FPPA). Now a "...community plan may include policies of the local government respecting the maintenance and enhancement of farming on land in a farming area (ALR or area licensed for aquaculture) or in an area designated for agricultural use in the community plan. The intent of the amendment is to encourage a stronger focus on agricultural issues within official plans.

A community plan is specified as being a general statement of broad objectives and policies. (*Municipal Act Sec. 876(1)*). In combination, the opportunity to develop sub-area plans and the 1995 FPPA consequential amendment provides for a greater level of plan detail and more issue-focused action policies needed to achieve the broader objectives.

- *Municipal Act*, Section 878(1)(c), "Policy Statements in Community Plans"

Instead of using an OCP and zoning bylaw for purposes of land management, a regional board may opt for the use of a rural land use bylaw (RLUB) which combines elements of both a plan and implementing bylaw. The RLUB was introduced in the mid-1980's and may only apply to the electoral area portion of regional districts as designated by the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The RLUB has two parts. Part 1 has similarities to an OCP and is to be a statement of broad objectives and policies. Part 2, is a hybrid, providing for some aspects of both OCP and zoning bylaw provisions, including provisions for agricultural use. Like an OCP, a regional, "... board may adopt one or more rural land use bylaws for one or more areas." This provides opportunity to selectively focus an RLUB on agricultural areas of the regional district.

- *Municipal Act*, Section 886 "Rural Land Use Bylaws" and Section 887, "Content of Rural Land Use Bylaws"

Local governments have the opportunity to designate within community plans development permit areas for the "...protection of farming" to buffer or separate development from farming. This 1995 amendment to the *Municipal Act* also resulted from passage of the FPPA and has a strong supportive relationship to the "right to farm" side of the FPPA, which deals directly with the matter of farm-related nuisance complaints. Applying development permit areas also has the ability to provide direction for approving officers when considering

<sup>30</sup> In the case of the City of Vancouver, its statutory powers are found in the *Vancouver Charter*.



For further discussion on Development Permit Areas for the Protection of Farming see Chapter 8 - Planning Along Agriculture's Edge p. 23 and Appendix 6.

Provincial Bylaw Standards

Bylaw Reviews

Farm Bylaws

The FPPA provides additional planning tools for agriculture.

Flexibility built into the Bylaw Standards and Bylaw Review Process

For detailed information on Bylaw Standards see: "Guide for Bylaw Development in Farming Areas" produced by MAF.

subdivision near farming areas and the ALR under new provisions of the *Land Title Act* (see below).

The application of development permit areas is seen largely as an "urban" land use tool. It provides opportunity to sensitively plan for and apply buffering at the time of development. The use of development permits and subsequent application of buffering can enhance compatibility between land uses, improve the quality of life for persons on both sides of the interface, minimize nuisance complaints and increase the range of farming opportunities within the ALR in close proximity to urban areas.

- *Municipal Act*, Sections 879(1)(c), "Designation of Permit Areas" and 920(10), "Development Permits"

With passage of the FPPA, further consequential amendments to the *Municipal Act* provide for the development of Provincial standards with respect to agriculture to guide local governments in the preparation of rural land use and zoning bylaws applied to the ALR and areas licensed for aquaculture. In addition, a process has been put in place for the review of these bylaws and for approval by the minister responsible for the administration of the FPPA. In addition, there is now opportunity for local governments to adopt a new form of bylaw - the farm bylaw.

At first glance, developing Provincial bylaw standards related to agriculture and the bylaw review process may appear to be an effort to eliminate all prohibitions or restrictions on farm uses in the ALR and licensed aquaculture areas. This is far from the case. Briefly, the intent is to work within the context of local bylaw processes. This ensures local governments are at all times fully involved. The objective is to remove unreasonable prohibition and restrictions on agriculture and replace them with regulation which fosters a healthy and growing farm sector in a manner that enhances land use compatibility and encourages sound stewardship and farm practices.

The FPPA has provided a greatly enhanced agricultural planning tool kit. For example, the application of farm bylaws offers opportunity on the "farm" side to complement the efforts of development permits to put in place buffering on the "urban" side which protects farming. If found reasonable, this may mean the prohibition of specific farm uses in specific circumstances. However, it might also allow greater flexibility for the farm operation by ensuring, through the farm bylaw, the application of management techniques designed to enhance compatibility, such as the handling of manure or siting of exhaust fans.

The process of bylaw review will demand partnership building and the sharing of expertise and knowledge to 'discover' and apply the most appropriate bylaw regulation. It is important that regulation is appropriate and sensitive to the local setting while addressing the needs of the farm sector and Provincial agricultural objectives. It is for this reason that considerable scope for flexibility has been built into the process. The Provincial bylaw standards will provide a strong basis for bylaw review, but it is anticipated that some circumstances will demand local modification of the Provincial standards.

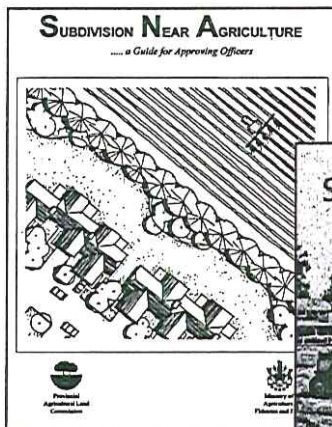
As should be expected, there is strong connectivity. The development and review of bylaws will directly support agricultural planning efforts through the sensitive implementation of plan policy. Provincial bylaw standards are discussed briefly again in relation to 'edge' planning in Chapter 8, page 32.

- *Municipal Act*, Sections 887(8), 903(5) and Division 8 (Use of Land for Agricultural Operations) Sections 916, 917, 918, and 919

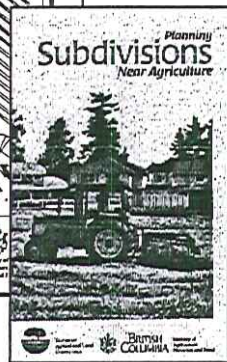
### Intensive Agriculture Provisions

Providing Buffering where Subdivision may unreasonably interfere with farming operations

Subdivision may be refused where road plans at the time of subdivision would unnecessarily increase access into the ALR.



For further information see: "Subdivision Near Agriculture ... A Guide for Approving Officers and the booklet Planning Subdivisions Near Agriculture".



The *Municipal Act* provides for intensive agricultural uses within the ALR notwithstanding regulations contained in a rural land use or zoning bylaw. This 1985 amendment to the *Municipal Act* was substantially amended by the FPPA in 1995. While maintaining its basic intent, in practice, once local bylaws are updated and approved the effect of Section 915 will cease within the bylaw area. Replacing the provisions of Section 915 with local bylaw regulation based upon the review process is an important objective of the FPPA.

- *Municipal Act*, Section 915, "Intensive Agriculture"

### Land Title Act

With the adoption of the FPPA, the *Land Title Act* was amended to provide approving officers with opportunities to require buffering at the time of subdivision to protect farming from development and to discourage unnecessary road access into the ALR. Like development permit areas for the protection of farming, the changes to the *Land Title Act* will most often find "urban" side application. However, there are exceptions. For example, where the Commission may allow subdivision in the ALR, buffering may be a condition of subdivision. Or, in the case of lots being subdivided that are less than 0.8 hectares (2 acres) and are exceptions to the ALCA regulations, appropriate buffering should be considered.

These amendments provide practical opportunities to establish buffering at the time of subdivision and can serve to implement development permit area guidelines for the protection of farming. Not only will the buffering enhance land use compatibility and lessen nuisance complaints against farm operations, they will also lessen expectations of land use change by ensuring the road network plan adjoining the ALR serves to enhance, rather than undermine, the integrity of the Reserve.

For further discussion see *Chapter 8, page 28*.

- *Land Title Act*, Section 86(1)(c)(x) and (xi), "Matters to be Considered by Approving Officer on Application for Subdivision Approval".

## A SHARED VISION TO PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

Historically, agricultural issues have not always been the subject of consistent policy interest at the local level. It is important, particularly in key agricultural areas, that issues surrounding food security and farmland preservation be given due attention.

Fostering a shared vision of how best to protect agriculture's working land base and sustain a vibrant farm sector is a starting point. Regional growth strategies and community plans provide important opportunities to enunciate broad land



use objectives as well as provide more precise policy direction. Given agriculture's diversity in B.C., many situations will demand a site specific, custom made solution. At the local level, resolving agricultural issues will not be the sole prerogative of official plans, bylaws or even local governments. There are a host of other agricultural interests at the local level - from producer groups to economic development commissions - and all have important insights, expertise and contributions to make.

The following chapters provide a package of ideas. A variety of issues pertinent to agriculture are explored. Some are broad in scope such as examining plan delivery systems; others are more focused. Necessary supportive actions that the Province and others can provide are also considered.

In observing the Oregon experience, Arthur Nelson found that a mix of policy initiatives is most effective in preserving farmland and providing agriculturally supportive land use policy.<sup>31</sup> His summary of the necessary package of policies and approaches is highlighted in Figure 1 with reference to our local counterparts. British Columbia now has all these ingredients in place. The challenge is using the tools available and using them wisely.

**Figure 1**

**The Basic Ingredients for Farmland Preservation and Agriculturally Supportive Land Use Policy**

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1. Exclusive Agricultural Districts.....	the ALR - (Province/ local government support)
2. Urban Growth Boundaries.....	Growth Strategies - (Regional Dist. & Municipal / Provincial support)
3. If possible, secure rural non-ALR areas to direct rural residential use.....	OCPs & Rural Land Use Bylaws - (Municipal & Reg. Dist. / Prov. support)
4. Farm Use Tax Deferral.....	Farm Assessment / ALR tax relief - (Provincial)
5. Right to Farm Provisions.....	Farm Practices Protection Act
6. Comprehensive Community Plans.....	OCP's & Rural Land Use Bylaws - (Municipal & Reg. Dist. / Prov. Support)

<sup>31</sup> Nelson, A.C.; Preserving Farmland in the Face of Urbanization, APA Journal, Autumn, 1992, p. 472.

# 5

## AGRICULTURE: TAKING ITS PLACE IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

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## INTRODUCTION

As outlined in *Chapter 3, page 6*, the effectiveness of local government planning programmes in dealing with agricultural issues has varied. The value of agriculture to a community's overall well-being has not always been understood or recognized and has, at times, been reflected in local decision-making. However, while Provincial legislation has sought to protect agricultural land and encourage farming, there are an increasing number of local governments complementing this effort in a number of ways. "Planning for Agriculture" builds on this experience and outlook.

### *Planning for Agriculture is to:*

- *ensure agriculture's continued economic contribution, both locally and Provincially.*
- *preserve a portion of B.C.'s "natural capital".*
- *contribute to healthy and complete communities.*
- *contribute to food security.*

It is critical that planning processes are *inclusive* by ensuring strong links with the farm community. There is a need to significantly increase the *focus* of planning processes on issues important to farming and contribute to agricultural sustainability as a land use and economic enterprise. It is critical that the focus is sharpened where *agriculture interfaces* with non-farm uses. It is also important to ensure appropriate *integration* with other priorities within rural areas and broader provincial and community objectives. It is, however, crucial that land use plans applied to farmland be developed from a distinctively agricultural perspective.

To achieve these broad objectives there is a need to make adjustments to current approaches, including:

- changing attitudes, priorities, and ensuring an enhanced understanding of agriculture, its working landscape and issues important to the farm community;
- making full use of the potential within the current local government planning tool kit;
- ensuring greater local government and Provincial policy harmony and meaningful integration of settlement and resource planning;
- sharing information and enhancing co-management partnerships, leading to a collective responsibility for planning the agricultural land base.
- enhancing Provincial support of local governments in their efforts to plan for agriculture; and
- continuing to explore, as appropriate, legislative changes that improve local governments' administrative tools to ensure municipalities and regional districts can effectively deal with agricultural issues.

Land management and associated policies applied to farmland - especially land in the ALR - must have an overall tenor that is both *sensitive to and supportive of agriculture*. This posture will only be attained if agriculture is recognized as the priority use within the ALR. A land use plan applied to farmland should, by design, be agriculturally biased. This perspective, however, does not suggest that associated plan policies exclude all other concerns or interests. Compared to the way planning in agricultural areas is approached today, agriculture must represent the contextual framework from which other interests are considered. In turn, an agricultural perspective must be fostered through awareness awareness programmes and an improved understanding of the land use dynamics in agricultural areas.

*It is important to ensure that planning for agriculture is part of the planning mainstream.*

*Agriculture, perhaps more than any other resource-based industry, must achieve an integration of settlement and resource planning.*

It is also essential that planning for agriculture be part of the mainstream of land use policy development and not crowded off local planning agendas. While sharpening the focus on agricultural issues, there is also a need to ensure integration with other interests and policy considerations. Figure 3 "Agriculture's Linkages Within Provincial & Local Planning Structures" and associated Explanatory Notes on pages 18 to 22 of this Chapter provide a "snapshot" of the many points in both Provincial and local government planning processes in which agriculture can, and should, be an active player.

## LOCAL / PROVINCIAL POLICY COORDINATION

It is no surprise that local governments have historically not been particularly involved with resource management issues. This has been partly due to the Provincial authority over Crown land and natural resources. Also, local governments deal with a crush of settlement issues related to urban growth. However, despite the traditional separation of planning responsibilities between the Province and local governments (see: *Chapter 3, page 8*) agriculture *must* achieve an integration of settlement and resource planning. Given relationships to soil, water and climate, agriculture is clearly resource-based. However, farming *is* development and also represents a form of settlement. Agriculture both generates and is the recipient of 'off-site' impacts and influences, particularly in close proximity to urbanization. Besides the interest that individuals and governments have in food security, (see: *Chapter 3, page 11*) planning for agriculture is part of planning for complete communities. Moreover, it is estimated that the majority (approaching 70%) of farm gate receipts in B.C. are generated within the boundaries of municipalities.<sup>1</sup>

Seventy-four per cent of all B.C. local governments have at least some land in the ALR (all 27 regional districts and 105 of 151 municipalities). For most local governments, agriculture should be a subject of importance for planning and policy development.

As CORE emphasized, plan delivery systems must provide coordination between traditional areas of responsibility and develop opportunities for co-management partnerships.<sup>2</sup> The various land use planning instruments of the Province and local governments are like layers of flooring stacked on top of each other. Each influences subsequent tiers in the process. As each layer of plan, strategy and bylaw authority is peeled back, the level of detail and complexity becomes greater, demanding coordination between levels in the process.

Coordination cuts in many directions. Of particular interest for agriculture is the Provincial ↔ local government policy relationships. However, there are also regional district ↔ municipal and municipal ↔ municipal (or electoral area) relationships. With the emergence of regional growth strategies there will be need for regional district ↔ regional district coordination and coordination with Provincial, federal and first nations interests.

<sup>1</sup> The estimate of the 1996 farm gate value of agriculture within municipalities in B.C. was derived from Statistics Canada, 1996 Census of Agriculture Profile Data - British Columbia, Table 5 and information developed by the Agricultural Land Commission.

<sup>2</sup> See, Commission on Resources and Environment, Planning For Sustainability, Nov. 1994, pp. 13 & 28-35

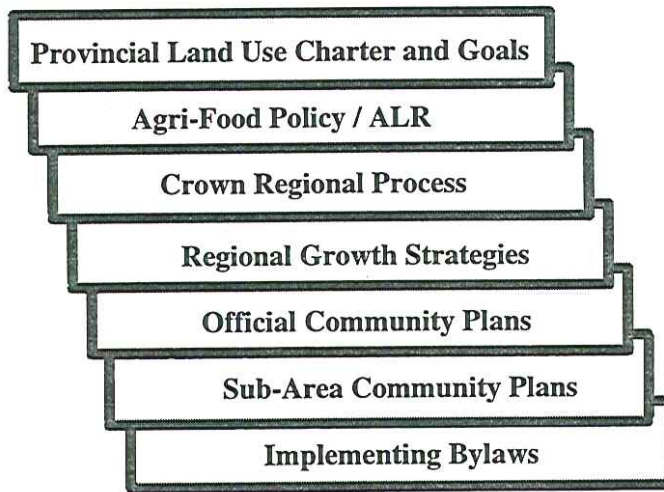


The several planning instruments depicted by Figure 2 move from broad Provincial policy to local government bylaws. When planning for agriculture, it is important that a consistent “policy thread” be woven between each of these elements.

Figure 2

**Key Provincial / Local Government  
Land Use Planning Instruments**

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*For further discussion of B.C.'s Land Use Goals see Appendix 4*

As outlined in *Chapter 3 (page 5)*, B.C.'s Land Use Charter and Goals, developed by the Commission on Resources and Environment, act as broad but important performance guidelines which other planning and policy development should respect and assist in achieving. As highlighted in *Appendix 4*, there are several aspects of the Land Use Goals that are directly and indirectly related to agriculture. Most pointedly, it is a Provincial Land Use Goal to have a secure land base to provide raw materials and other economic resources, including identification of land suitable for agriculture, rangeland and food production. The Land Use Goals also require identification of the ALR and the need to ensure its long-term designation for agricultural purposes. For a brief overview of CORE's work and the CORE Regional Planning process see *Figure 3* and its Explanatory Notes (*page 18*).

*An Agri-Food Policy for British Columbia*

Although not completed to date, an Agri-Food Policy for British Columbia is under development. As summarized in the Explanatory Notes to *Figure 3*, the Policy will represent a broad vision of B.C.'s agri-food sector containing strategic objectives and policies.<sup>3</sup> The Policy will provide guidance for the planning activities of other Provincial ministries, agencies and local governments. The Agri-Food Policy will also guide a wide range of MAF programmes, including the Strengthening Farming Initiative and the farmland preservation programme.

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Agriculture and Food, *Securing Our Food Future. An Agri-Food Policy for British Columbia* (draft discussion document), Province of B.C., Fall 1995, p. 5.

*The Provincial agricultural land preservation programme.*

*See Chapter 4, page 4.*

The *Agricultural Land Commission Act* and ALR represent one of the most prominent examples of a clearly defined Provincial strategic interest. As outlined in *Chapter 4, page 6* the ALC's regulatory powers and the plan and bylaw authority of local governments usually applies concurrently to lands in the ALR. The Act provides specific references to the relationships and the need for consistency between the Provincial land preservation programme and local plans and bylaws. Changes to the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* in 1994 were intended, in part, to ensure greater consultation and improved policy coordination between the Commission and local governments. For agriculture it is important that partnerships be fostered on several levels - between local governments, local governments and producers, and between local governments, MAF and the ALC.

*"Municipal autonomy must be integrated with Provincial needs. This is best accomplished where the Province is able to articulate its interests."*

CORE, *Planning For Sustainability* Page 71

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT LAND MANAGEMENT

The *Municipal Act* empowers local governments to prepare official plans and regulate the use and development of land. As outlined in *Chapter 4, pages 14 to 19*, there are a number of existing legislative opportunities available to positively influence planning for agriculture. Within this section the application of these opportunities is further explored.

### 1. Regional Growth Strategies

An important adjunct to local government land use powers was the enactment in 1995 of the *Growth Strategies Statutes Amendment Act*. In 1983 all official regional plans existing at the time were repealed, along with the legislative authority to prepare regional plans. The Commission has consistently supported strategic land use planning at the regional level. This is not surprising given the biophysical nature of the agricultural resource. Many of the Province's major agricultural regions such as the Peace and Lower Mainland, and the Okanagan, Salmon, Cowichan and Bulkley Valleys have agricultural areas geographically defined by physical elements rather than municipal or even regional district boundaries. Regional planning can also strategically address deficiencies in the links between local governments and provincial ministries and agencies, and can set in place broad regional land use objectives.

The *Growth Strategies Statutes Amendment Act* represents a series of amendments to the *Municipal Act* and other legislation, including the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*. These amendments give regional districts the opportunity to undertake region-wide planning and adopt growth strategies. MAF and the ALC provided input into the development of the legislation. By 1998 several regional districts were actively pursuing, or had adopted, regional growth strategies.

*See also Chapter 4, page 16*



Those aspects of the legislation particularly relevant to planning for agriculture are outlined in *Chapter 4, page 16*. Regional growth strategies should provide policy directions in two broad areas that can contribute to food security - (1) support the preservation of the regional agricultural land base and provide for and support the farm use of these lands, and (2) define the broad regional form of urban growth, including transportation and communication policy, and urban growth boundaries. The establishment of urban growth boundaries is one of the basic ingredients needed to support farmland preservation and agriculturally supportive land use policies.

*Establishing Urban Growth  
Boundaries in GVRD*

*The GVRD's approach to setting urban growth boundaries is instructive and a reversal of many techniques. A "Green Zone" was identified with the help of member municipalities. Rather than urbanization setting the land use agenda, growth will be managed in a manner that will preserve the Green Zone. Put simply, the Green Zone is where intensive urban development will not occur.*

While there is considerable variety in agricultural use, every regional district in B.C. contains at least some land in the ALR. Therefore, agriculture should represent a major consideration for every regional growth strategy process. As outlined below, several means should be pursued to seek input on regionally important agricultural issues, to link regional growth strategies and Provincial and municipal agricultural policy, and ensure input from local agricultural interests.

1. Prepare a regional *agricultural information base* to support the development of a regional growth strategy including :
  - identifying of prominent agricultural activities in the region, their extent and location;
  - determining the economic contribution of agriculture within the region;
  - identifying agriculture's major infrastructure and servicing needs;
  - identifying the location and extent of the ALR;
  - determining the relationships among agricultural land use and the current urban form and growth and the regional transportation network.

Preparing a regional agricultural information base could be assisted by a regional agricultural advisory committee, the ALC and MAF.

2. Consider existing *municipal agricultural policy* as enunciated within community plans and any strategies, studies or economic reports that have been formulated at the municipal level related to agriculture.
3. During the process of developing a regional growth strategy, provision should be made to seek input directly from representatives of the *local farm community*. MAF and the ALC could assist in facilitating this consultation process as could a regional agricultural advisory committee.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**That the development of regional growth strategies be based upon:**

- an enhanced understanding of agriculture's regional importance;
- consideration of municipal agricultural policy;
- input from the local farm community;
- consideration of broad Provincial agricultural policy; and
- support by MAF and the ALC through their contribution to Provincial mandate statements and participation on Intergovernmental Advisory Committees.

4. At the broadest Provincial level there are three documents that warrant consideration as guides in developing regional growth strategies:

- the B.C. *Land Use Charter* and *Land Use Goals* (land use goals particularly relevant to agriculture are highlighted in *Appendix 4*);
- the *Agri-Food Policy* for British Columbia, once completed, will be a statement of Provincial policy that will provide the broad context for strategic planning at several levels, including the development of regional growth strategies; and
- the ALR and the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* which represent a clear enunciation of Provincial policy.

5. During the preparation of regional growth strategies, MAF, the aquaculture branch of MAF (if an interested party) and the ALC should be requested to develop regionally specific position papers to assist in the development of *Provincial Mandate Statements*. The position papers will provide guidance on regionally important agricultural considerations and broader Provincial agricultural policy.

6. MAF and ALC representatives should contribute as members of *Intergovernmental Advisory Committees* (IAC's) formed to provide on-going input during the development of regional growth strategies. The MAF and ALC representatives to an IAC can help ensure that the growth strategy:

- recognizes the role and regional importance of agriculture;
- addresses regional agricultural issues;
- contains, within the broader regional growth strategy, the elements of a regional "agricultural / food security strategy" aimed at sustaining and encouraging agriculture within each region (see specific recommendation - *Chapter 4, page 16*);
- ensures harmonization with the Provincial agricultural land preservation and other agricultural programmes; and
- ensures the defining of urban growth boundaries.

## 2. Official Community Plans<sup>4</sup>

Any failings in the past of official community plans (OCP's) to deal effectively with agricultural issues, can be traced to several reasons. They may rest, in part, with an attempt to push the official plan beyond the role it was designed to perform - "*a general statement of broad objectives and policies*" Given this role, it isn't surprising that the community-wide official plan has come up short

<sup>4</sup> This discussion of the contribution OCP's can make to sustaining agriculture can generally apply to Rural Land Use Bylaws.



## Commission Mandate

to “encourage municipalities, first nations, and ministers, ministries and agents of the governments of British Columbia and Canada to support and accommodate farm use of agricultural land in their bylaws, plans and policies.”

Agricultural Land  
Commission Act,  
Sec. 10(1)(d)

*Official Community Plans have several important functions in ensuring agriculture’s place in their communities and a place on planning agendas.*

### A Note To Readers:

*Planning for Agriculture is focused primarily on planning processes. However, given the significant linkages between plans and implementing bylaws, Planning for Agriculture includes an overview discussion to provide context.*

*Flowing from the Farm Practices Protection Act, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food has undertaken an extensive examination of zoning, rural land use and new farm bylaws and have produced A Guide for Bylaw Development in Farming Areas. Detailed discussion related to implementing bylaws can be found within this MAF publication.*

as a ‘problem solving’ instrument for agriculture. In response, some local governments have begun to use sub-area plans as far more effective instruments to deal with local agricultural issues. While searching for more effective means to enunciate agricultural policy, the official community plan will continue to have several, and indeed increasingly important, roles to play in planning for agriculture, including:

- providing *linkages* with Provincial and Federal agricultural policy, regional growth strategies and other regional initiatives;
- continuing to express the community’s *broad agricultural objectives and policies* to form a philosophic and strategic underpinning for more detailed sub-area agricultural plans (where appropriate) and implementing bylaws;
- defining agricultural planning areas and giving policy direction for the undertaking of *Agricultural Area Plans* (see *Chapter 7 page 5:*);
- providing policy direction for undertaking focused “*edge planning*” along defined portions of the agricultural interface (see *Chapter 8 page 10:*);
- designating, where appropriate, *development permit areas* for the protection of farming (see *Chapter 4, page 17* and *Chapter 8, page 23*); and
- within those areas designated for agricultural use, but not defined as areas for the undertaking of Agricultural Area Plans, *providing focused agricultural policies for the maintenance and enhancement of farming* on land in the ALR and other lands designated for agricultural use as encouraged by the *Municipal Act*, Sec. 878(1)(c) (see *Chapter 4, page 17*).

### 3. Implementing Bylaws<sup>5</sup>

While plans are visionary in nature and broad in scope, bylaws provide much finer regulatory brush strokes. Bylaw provisions are more *here and now* in determining what a landowner can do in terms of real property development. Where a land use proposal is inconsistent with zoning regulations, processes are available to consider possible amendments. However, consistent with the hierarchical structure of the land use planning system, proposed zoning changes must be consistent with official plan policy.

While the zoning bylaw may be regarded as the primary instrument for implementing local government planning policy, it is far from the only means. As outlined below there are several other bylaw and land use instruments that may have implications for agricultural land and farm operations.

<sup>5</sup> This discussion, while focused on zoning bylaws, is generally applicable to Rural Land Use Bylaws as well.

**OTHER MUNICIPAL ACT LAND USE AND REGULATORY PROVISIONS THAT MAY DIRECTLY IMPACT AGRICULTURE**

- Sec. 725: Nuisances and Disturbances
- Sec. 703: Keeping of Animals
- Sec. 704: Regulation of Animal Nuisances
- Sec. 707: Animal Pounds
- Sec. 708-715: Protection of Trees
- Sec. 899-902: Board of Variance
- Sec. 907: Requirement to Provide Drainage
- Sec. 908: Regulation of Signs
- Sec. 909: Screening & Landscaping to Mask or Separate Uses
- Sec. 910: Construction Requirements - Floodplain Areas
- Sec. 923: Tree cutting permits
- Sec. 932-937: Development Cost Recovery (charges)
- Sec. 945: Highway provision and widening
- Sec. 946: Subdivision to provide residence for a relative

Some may assume that the Agricultural Land Commission prefers that land in the ALR not be subject to local zoning. Quite the opposite is true. Zoning bylaws can be much more comprehensive land use instruments than the ALCA and associated regulations. Invariably, even in predominantly agricultural areas, there are a variety of different land uses, even in the ALR. In any given planning or zoning area, there will be lands outside the ALR and, therefore, outside the authority of the ALCA. Zoning bylaws can assist to ensure greater land use compatibility in areas adjoining farmland.

There remain some areas of the ALR within the Province not subject to local zoning. It must be stressed that the decision to apply zoning provisions to a particular area of a jurisdiction is a decision for local councils or regional boards to make. However, the Commission has found that agricultural land preservation is well served when local and Provincial land use visions coincide through mutually consistent and supportive plans, bylaws and ALR policies and regulations. The effect is to lessen uncertainty and enhance confidence and support for agriculture.

*Local zoning acts like a regulatory catch-net in the ALR.*

Local zoning also acts as a regulatory “catch-net” when the Commission excludes land from the ALR or allows non-farm use or subdivision within the ALR. Commission decisions concerning applications under the ALCA do not override local planning and zoning authority. The relationship of the ALC, ALR and local regulatory authority is outlined further in *Chapter 4, page 5*.

There are a number of points that should be considered when applying zoning provisions to agricultural areas.

For example, regulatory provisions that may be commonly applied in an urban setting are not necessarily transferable (or required) in an agricultural area.

Because zoning and other bylaw regulations normally flow from planning policy, more agriculturally-focused planning should influence the development of bylaws that are sensitive to and supportive of farm operations. Similar to



*When applying regulation to farm areas, it should be done from the perspective of facilitating agriculture.*

official plans, zoning provisions should provide for the greatest number of agricultural options over the largest possible portion of the ALR or agricultural zone.

While zoning bylaws applied to the ALR must be consistent with the ALCA, and regulations and orders of the Commission, zoning provisions may include restrictions on farm uses beyond those of the ALCA that are not necessarily inconsistent with the Act or regulations.<sup>6</sup> A common example is the application of lot line set backs. It is important, however, that regulations do not effectively become prohibitive to agricultural uses in the ALR unless agreed to by the Commission.

While bylaws may be of a lesser order in terms of policy development compared to official plans, they can have a significant impact on farming. At the same time, if local bylaw regulations are applied to farm areas sensitively, they can play a very supportive role. An example of agriculturally sensitive regulation, in this case concerning signage provisions, is provided below.

Example: Signage and Direct Farm Marketing

Most local regulations associated with signage legitimately restrict the proliferation of signs in residential and rural zones. One exception is associated with home occupation uses. Here, small signs, often to a maximum size of 0.3 sq. m.. are allowed to advertise a variety of home-based businesses.

But is this size of sign appropriate for operators of direct farm marketing outlets in farm areas?

In developing signage regulations sensitive to farm needs it is important to consult with the farm community and recognize that the advertising of agricultural businesses in an agricultural area is a legitimate activity.

Direct farm marketing is a growing part of the agricultural economy. Direct farm sales are often important to the economic stability of some operations, and signage is the most cost effective means for direct farm marketers to advertise their businesses. Armed with this knowledge, common sense sign regulations that support rather than penalize farm business can be enacted to serve the farm community.



A concern within farming areas is the apparent inconsistency of zoning bylaws within single or similar agricultural regions. This may involve various regulations, from setback provisions to lot coverage, restrictions on specific commodity types, differing approaches to development cost charges or

<sup>6</sup> Agricultural Land Commission Act, Section 47(6).

inconsistent definitions of agricultural use. Zoning bylaws guide the personal land use decisions of landowners. However, bylaw provisions applied to land in the ALR related to non-farm use and minimum lot size (MLS) can set off false expectations of possible use and subdivision potential. The ALR is largely restricted to farm use and the Agricultural Land Commission does not define minimum lot sizes for the ALR.

*For Further Discussion on Subdivision see:*

1. *Chapter 9, pages 28 to 40 - Subdivision of Agricultural Land;*
2. *Appendix 9 - Minimum Lot Size Provisions: Proposed Bylaw Language*
3. *Appendix 10 - Discussion Paper: Subdivision of Farmland - A New Approach; and*
4. *Appendix 11 - Ancient Subdivisions & Parcel Consolidation.*

In the case of subdivision, the Commission judges each request for subdivision on its own merit but generally discourages the further parcelization of agricultural land. However, it is not uncommon for zoning provisions applied to farm areas to predate the ALR. This “old” zoning was rarely, if ever, developed from the standpoint of sustainable agriculture. In many cases the MLS applied to agricultural land often demonstrated a strong relationship to health considerations associated with the minimum site area for the use of an on-site sewage disposal system rather than agriculture. There continue to be examples of suburban and rural residential zoning designations applied to the ALR. In other cases, lot size provisions, like an 8 hectare (20 acre) MLS, applied to farm and ranch operations requiring an extensive land base, has little or no relationship to operational size.

Because of the impact of parcelization of agricultural land, the topic of subdivision is dealt with in some detail in Chapter 9 and the Appendices as indicated in the side bar.

There are, however, several local governments that have amended their zoning bylaws to improve the regulatory climate for agriculture. It is important, as bylaws are updated, that regulations applied to farm areas are consistent with the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* and developed in a manner supportive of agriculture. This, in fact, is an important emphasis of the *Farm Practices Protection (Right-to-Farm) Act*.

#### **4. The Farm Practices Protection Act and Bylaw Reviews**

With the coming into force of the *Farm Practices Protection (Right-to-Farm) Act* (FPPA) in 1996, a new era began with respect to the application of zoning and rural land use bylaw provisions affecting agricultural uses in the ALR. The FPPA has emerged to date as the primary legislative component of a larger initiative launched by MAF late in 1994 known as “Strengthening Farming in British Columbia”. The Initiative involves a number of components centred on improving relationships between farmers and their neighbours. It recognizes that besides designating an ALR, it is equally important to ensure that farming can take place in the Reserve within a fair, consistent and supportive regulatory climate.

While all aspects of the Strengthening Farming initiative are not going to be discussed, the FPPA introduced two broad components. One is associated with right to farm provisions, the establishment of the new Farm Practices Board and new means to deal with complaints related to farm operations. The other provisions were consequential amendments to the *Municipal Act* and *Land Title Act* dealing with plans, bylaws and subdivision next to farmland. The primary purpose of the amendments was to ensure a home for agriculture in the ALR while enhancing compatibility between farming and other uses.



*For details concerning the bylaw review process, see a Guide for “Bylaw Development in Farming Areas”*

The FPPA included several consequential amendments to the *Municipal Act* which impact official plans and bylaws are outlined in *Chapter 4 (pages 16 to 19)* and will not be repeated here. For details concerning the bylaw review process the reader is encouraged to referred to MAF’s *Guide for Bylaw Development in Farming Areas*.

### **Bylaw Reviews & the FPPA**

- The agricultural components of zoning and rural land use bylaws should be reviewed and updated to ensure bylaws applied to the ALR are sensitive to and supportive of farming, enhance compatibility between farming and other land uses and take a balanced approach with respect to other resource and community values.
- Bylaw standards developed by MAF (following consultation with local governments and the farm industry) will act as a guide in the updating and development of bylaws. Where appropriate, the standards may be modified to reflect local circumstances.
- MAF and the ALC will provide assistance as required during the bylaw reviews.
- Prohibitions and restrictions on the use of land in the ALR for farming contained in bylaws must be approved by the Minister of Agriculture and Food after the passage of a regulation under Sec. 918 of the *Municipal Act*.
- With the approval by the Minister of Agriculture and Food and after adoption of updated bylaws, the provisions of Sec. 915 of the *Municipal Act* providing for intensive agriculture anywhere in the ALR will cease to apply and will be replaced by the provisions of the updated bylaw.
- Where required, new farm bylaws may be adopted by local governments, upon approval of the Minister of Agriculture and Food, to add greater flexibility and site specific detail regarding farm operations.

## **NEW PLANNING APPROACHES - A Focus On Agriculture -**

For the last two decades Provincial programmes have played a substantive role in shaping agricultural policy in British Columbia. Local government official plans and bylaws, however, should play an increasingly important role in ensuring agriculture’s place in local communities. Complimenting this effort, improved Provincial support and the development of regional growth strategies in several parts of the Province will also provide a broader policy context for more detailed planning for agriculture.

The official community plan has been widely used as the primary land management instrument outlining local government agricultural policy. The zoning bylaw has been the chief (but certainly not the only) vehicle to give regulatory expression to OCP policies. More recently, rural land use bylaws have been used to combine the policy and implementing techniques of official plans and zoning bylaws in rural areas. A central theme of planning for agriculture is the need for a more focused approach in dealing with agricultural issues. It is important that land use policy applied to farm areas is developed from an agricultural perspective, recognizing

farm activities as the priority use within the agricultural planning areas. If official plans and implementing bylaws applied to agricultural areas are to be developed in a manner both supportive and sensitive to the farm industry, far more attention must be afforded farming activities and the agricultural land base. An improvement in the understanding of agricultural issues and the impact of decisions on the business of farming are required by those charged with developing, adopting and implementing plans and bylaws.

In the residential parts of any community a wide range of uses are found. Facilities, from roads to water lines to cable T.V., provide communication linkages. Parks and schools are normally found within residential areas. It would not be uncommon to find several home-based businesses. The form of residential use may differ from single family homes to duplexes to apartments of varying density. Despite these service, institutional, recreation and commercial uses, common within a residential area, the "use of priority" remains residential. Indeed all other uses applied to a residential area will be considered within the context of the impacts on residential use. If a proposed alternative use does not 'fit in' with the residential use, it would, in all likelihood, be considered incompatible and not permitted.

*It is important in farm areas from an agricultural perspective is a cornerstone of food conscious decision-making.*

It is important for the stability of agricultural areas and the health of the farm sector that the same perspective be adopted. The agricultural use of farm areas, particularly land in the ALR, must be clearly thought of as the priority use with land use decisions flowing from this perspective. This is a cornerstone of food conscious decision making.

As outlined in *Chapter 4, pages 14 to 19*, there are many opportunities within the present plan / bylaw delivery system to significantly enhance the local role in planning for agriculture. In the development of official plans that involve agricultural land, even if farmland represents a relatively minor part of an overall jurisdiction, new approaches must emerge that will foster planning for a sustainable agricultural industry. However, where relatively large, cohesive agricultural areas are identified, there should be a specific focus on the interests of the farm community through the development of 'Agricultural Area Plans' (AAP).

There are several prerequisites which can make a significant contribution to achieving a far greater local government focus on agricultural issues:

- Define urban growth boundaries and policies related to urban form in *regional growth strategies* (alternatively, where growth strategies are not undertaken, use OCP's for similar purposes)
- Enhance agriculture's status within official community *plans* and rural land use *bylaws*.
- Develop *consultative links* with the farm community on an on-going basis (example : Agricultural Advisory Committees) and through direct participation in the development of plans and bylaws. (see: *Chapter 6*)



- Undertake necessary *inventory* work to enhance the understanding of agricultural land use and farming activities, identify issues important to the farm community and potential impacts of planning or regulatory proposals. Additionally, define and use outcome or *performance measures* to ensure that agricultural planning goals and objectives are clearly understood and monitored, and actions are taken to ensure their effective implementation.
- Utilize more fully sub-area plans in the form of *agricultural area plans* (AAP's) in key farm communities. (see: *Chapter 7*)
- Encourage focused, comprehensive land use planning along critical portions of agriculture's interface in the form of *edge planning* (see: *Chapter 8*).
- Apply the new and modified *implementing tools* flowing from the *Farm Practices Protection Act* including:
  - agriculturally sensitive subdivision of land near farming (*Chapter 4, page 19*);
  - the review and updating of zoning and rural land use bylaws;
  - the application of new farm bylaws where appropriate; and
  - the use of development permits, as appropriate, for the protection of farming (*Chapter 4, page 17 and Chapter 8, page 23*).

### Products Of More Focused Planning for Agriculture

- ✓ Ensures agriculture is the priority use within the ALR.
- ✓ Will enhance public awareness of agriculture.
- ✓ An improved overall understanding of agricultural issues and the creation of information 'bench marks' to allow policy assessment, accountability and performance measurement through improved land use inventories (*Chapter 7, p. 28*) and monitoring (*Chapter 7, p. 48*).
- ✓ Improved opportunities for members of the farm community to participate in the development of policies affecting farm areas.
- ✓ Increased certainty for both the agricultural resource base and the activity of farming within agricultural / ALR areas.
- ✓ Plans and bylaws used as 'problem solvers' in a manner that is supportive and sensitive to the needs of agriculture.
- ✓ That the widest possible number of agricultural options are available over the widest possible portion of the farm area.
- ✓ Less potential for land use conflict.
- ✓ An improved integration of agricultural land use activities with other land and resource priorities of the Province and local communities.
- ✓ Going beyond preservation of the land base to incorporate social and economic objectives that will assist in sustaining an economically viable and environmentally responsive agricultural sector.
- ✓ Greater local and Provincial policy harmony and building of co-management partnerships.
- ✓ Opportunities for local and Provincial co-management partnerships.

- Encourage the development of local / provincial co-management *partnerships* in the development of plans and bylaws applied to the ALR.

## A SHARED COMMITMENT

Agriculture has not always been fully integrated into the planning fabric of the community as a whole. The agricultural industry has been keen to assert that it is not enough to only preserve the agricultural land base. Farming itself must be afforded security to operate within the ALR in a climate conducive to the industry's economic viability. At a time when the industry is facing the international challenges of the WTO, and NAFTA and public agendas associated with the environment and other issues, it is crucial that the delivery of land use plans and bylaws be addressed now and in a manner supportive of the farm community.

The Commission has also found another reality that has tended to thwart effective planning for agriculture. Too often the Commission and local governments have come to the planning table from largely opposing philosophical positions. Ironically the community plan, which holds so much promise as an instrument to work *for* agriculture's benefit, has too often been the ground through which these philosophical battles have been fought. This creates a difficult environment for farming when the official community plan is seen as a vehicle through which to continually downsize the ALR.

Where mutual commitment is achieved the results can be significant. After nearly twenty-five years and over 200,000 hectares of adjustments to the ALR we must approach the planning of this land base from a position of greater geographic certainty. Ultimately what is at stake is not just our foodlands but the agri-food industry itself. It is important, therefore, that all parties approach the table with an understanding that the agricultural land base is more or less defined, and that each has a shared commitment to develop policies that will effectively work for agriculture's benefit. Being armed with this commitment does not guarantee the resolution of all issues to everyone's mutual satisfaction; however, without this commitment, some degree of conflict is guaranteed. Mutual commitment does, however, provide the foundation to develop a shared vision of agriculture's future and the basis for developing planning processes based on a sharing of responsibilities.

The proposals contained in *Planning for Agriculture* are based on the continuation of a strong, Provincially administered ALR acting as a broad policy foundation. This is complemented at the Provincial level by the Land Use Charter and Goals, the Agri-Food Policy (when finalized) and by regional growth strategies. However, local government's planning authority is not only appropriate, given its ability to bring focus at the local level, it also has sufficient scope and opportunity to deal effectively with many of the land use issues important to securing agriculture's future.

Too often the concept of land use planning has been almost exclusively linked with *urban planning* for the developed or built environment. At times this has been to the direct demise of agriculture. For various reasons the ties between settlement and resource planning have been poorly drawn. Municipal and regional planning should not stop at farming's edge. Rather, the focus should shift from urban to agricultural planning, with the interface being a special area of dual urban / agricultural policy development. The farm community does not need or want *urban* planning. Policy development in farm areas must be based on a clear understanding and sensitivity to issues important to the farm



community and a commitment to deal effectively with these issues. At the same time, planning for agriculture cannot be divorced from settlement planning any more than urban planning can occur without consideration of resource and environmental implications.

The following diagram - "Agriculture's Linkages Within Provincial & Local Planning Structures" - and Explanatory Notes outline agriculture's current and potential place within both the Provincial and local planning structures. It includes both long standing processes such as OCPs, as well as those that are newly emerging or modified, such as regional growth strategies and farm bylaws, agricultural area plans and more focused planning along agriculture's interface. Implementing the proposed new and modified approaches will often involve change - in focus, resource allocation and attitudes. But it is change that is fully within the context of local plan delivery processes.

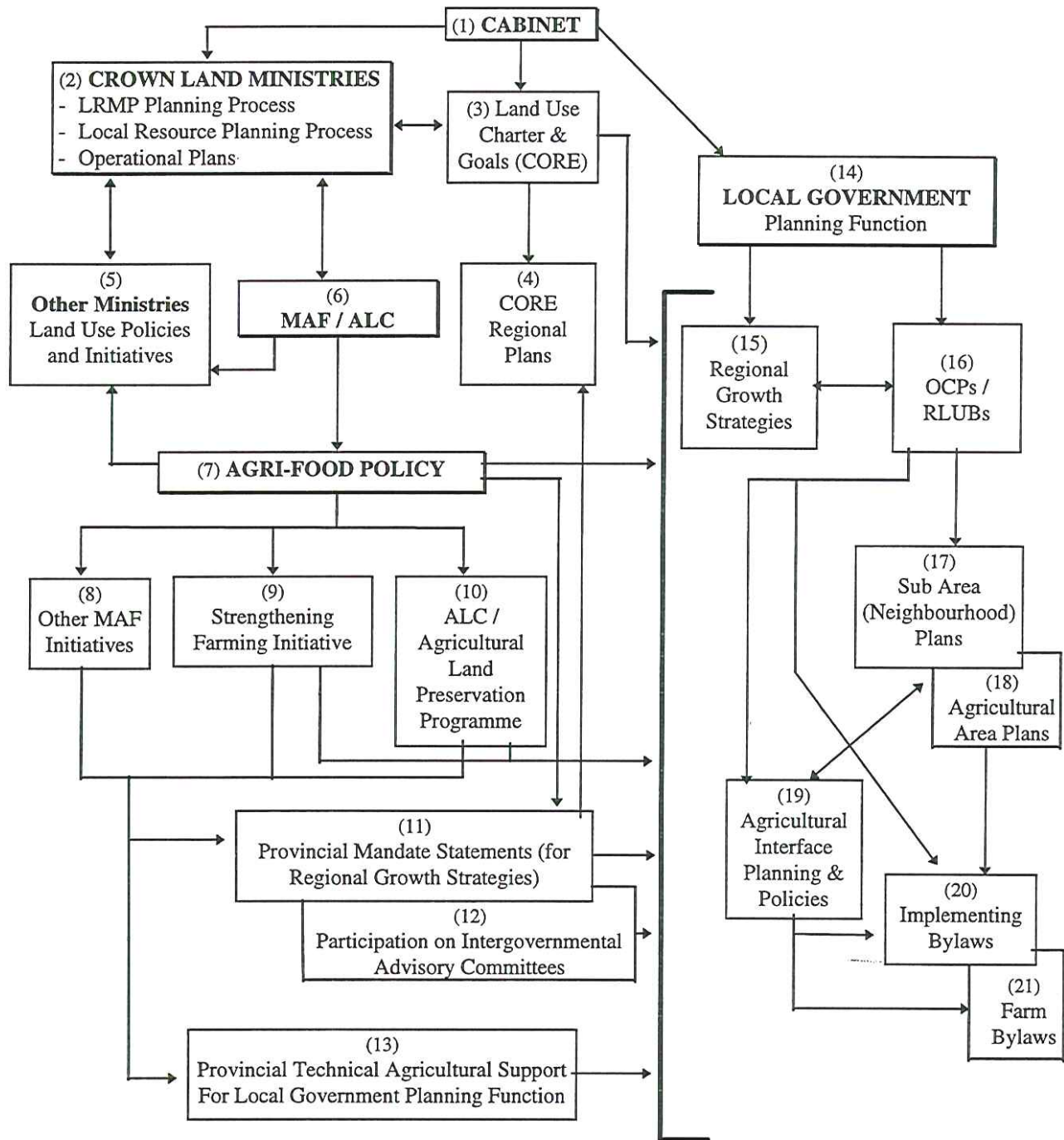
The next three chapters examine establishing stronger links with the farm community (*Chapter 6*), the development of agricultural area plans (*Chapter 7*) and planning along agriculture's interface (*Chapter 8*) - each of which can assist in ensuring a greater focus on agricultural issues and strengthening agriculture's place in the planning mainstream.

### Cornerstones - Planning For Agriculture -

- Stronger partnerships must be elicited among local governments, the farm community and the Province.
- The plan delivery system must be based on a model of *inclusion* (particularly for the farm community), and governance guided by mutual *support* and mutual *respect* leading to a shared vision.
- Evolving from enhanced partnerships, planning for agriculture should be a shared responsibility, drawing on a cross-section of talents.
- Local governments, in most cases, must ensure a more focused effort in dealing with farm issues.
- The Province must be prepared to act in a more supportive role to assist local efforts in planning for agriculture.
- Agriculture's role and place must be defined and clarified consistently throughout the planning process from Provincial policy to regional growth strategies, through to local plans and bylaws.
- In our key farm areas, agricultural planning areas should be defined to provide a focal point to expressed policy through operational level plans (*agricultural area plans*) drafted by working groups that bring together the talents of government, the farm community and others for this specific task.
- With the support of improved regulatory tools and guide documents, detailed policy should be developed along critical portions of the agricultural interface to ensure greater land use compatibility and permanence.
- Local bylaws should be gradually reviewed for the purpose of implementing Provincial agricultural standards and to ensure bylaws are designed as documents that enable and support agriculture to the greatest extent possible.

Figure 3

## Agriculture's Linkages Within the Provincial and Local Planning Structures\*



\* See the following Explanatory Notes



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**FIGURE 3  
EXPLANATORY  
NOTES**

**AGRICULTURE'S LINKAGES  
WITHIN PROVINCIAL & LOCAL  
PLANNING STRUCTURES**

At first glance Figure 3 appears as a complex web but it affords a view of agriculture's place in both Provincial and local plan delivery systems. Most importantly, it shows how the two interact with proposals for new, mutually supportive relationships. Using the bracketed numbers of Figure 3 the following provides an overview of each element. As indicated, several elements of the plan delivery system are new or modified since 1994

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**(1) CABINET**

Cabinet is the primary source of Provincial land use goals, policy and legislation affecting non-Federal lands. Cabinet establishes overall Provincial priorities, guides ministry objectives (2), (5) & (6), the CORE process (3) & (4), and is the source of local government land management authority (14). Agriculture's interests are represented by the Minister of Agriculture and Food (MAFF).

**(2) CROWN LAND MINISTRIES \***

Ministries involved with Crown land and resource issues set broad Provincial land use policy supported by the *Land Use Coordination Office (LUCO)* which assists cabinet and deputy ministers to coordinate the administration of inter-ministry land and resource planning and policy. MAFF is not represented on LUCO but on various processes associated with Land Use Coordination.

Subregional planning provides guidance to resource management decision-making. The *Land and Resources Management Planning (LRMP)* programme is an interagency process for integrated resource planning of Crown Lands. *Local resource management plans* are prepared for smaller areas and are coordinated by an agency or interagency team. MAFF is represented if agricultural resource issues are apparent. *Operational plans* are prepared at an area or site specific level as a basis for obtaining development permits. Provincial planning processes both affect, and are influenced by, policy and programmes of line ministries (5) & (6) and CORE (3) & (4).

**(3) LAND USE CHARTER & GOALS**

The Commission on Resources and Environment (CORE) developed a Land Use Charter and Goals which should influence Crown land ministries (2), CORE regional planning exercises (4) and local government land

management (14). A number of elements of the Land Use Charter and Goals are particularly relevant to agriculture and the preservation of the sector's resource base (see *Appendix 4*).

**(4) CORE REGIONAL PLANS**

Flowing from the Land Use Charter and associated Goals, has been the development of a number of strategic regional plans by CORE. Strategic plans include: Vancouver Island, Cariboo / Chilcotin, West Kootenay -Boundary and East Kootenay. CORE regional plans will influence, in particular, Crown land ministries (2). Both MAFF and the Provincial Agricultural Land Commission (PALC) have participated in these processes.

**(5) Other Ministries Land Use Policies and Initiatives**

Several ministries are involved in developing plans and policies affecting land and water resources. These policies will influence and be affected by broader Crown land ministry planning (2). Programmes and policies of MAFF and the PALC (6) and in particular the Agri-Food Policy (7) will influence other ministry policies where agricultural land is concerned. Through referral processes and inter-agency committees, MAFF and the PALC provide comments on plans and policies developed by other ministries.

**(6) MAFF / PALC**

The programmes of MAFF and the PALC will influence other ministries (5) and overall Provincial land use planning processes (2). MAFF has a larger number of programmes and is responsible for about 40 pieces of legislation. The PALC's mandate centres on the

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\* For further details concerning Crown planning processes and the work of the former CORE, see: Commission on Resources and Environment, "The Provincial Land Use Strategy Volume 1: A Sustainability Act of British Columbia and Volume 2: Planning for Sustainability, Nov. 1994



preservation of the agricultural land base through the administration of the ALR, the *Soil Conservation Act* and its work with local governments and other agencies in their studies, plans and bylaws affecting the ALR. MAFF, assisted by the PALC, is responsible for development of an Agri-Food Policy for British Columbia (7).

**(7) AGRI - FOOD POLICY** New

The Agri-Food Policy, once completed, will identify the role agriculture and food will play in our society. It will increase certainty in the industry and will allow for public reconciliation with other related issues by providing a basic policy foundation for the planning activities of other ministries (5) and local government planning (14). The Agri-Food Policy will also provide an over-arching policy framework for other MAFF initiatives and activities (8), the Strengthening Farming initiative (9) and the agricultural land preservation programme (10).

**(8) Other MAFF Initiatives**

MAFF has a wide range of programmes emanating from its regional and district offices dealing with the food industry and other agricultural products and activities. Several of these programmes link with other ministries and agencies. Extension, research, marketing, economic, soils and engineering, veterinary, aquaculture and fisheries and several specialized services make up some of the key activities of the Ministry in support of B.C. agriculture. The regional offices of MAFF, in particular, provide linkages between the Ministry and local governments within the region.

**(9) Strengthening Farming Initiative** New

'Strengthening Farming' is an initiative being developed by MAFF with assistance from the PALC to improve relationships between farmers and their non-farm neighbours and ensure a positive regulatory climate within agriculture's working environment. The initiative has a strong emphasis on developing partnerships among local governments, the farm sector and the Province.

Strengthening Farming in B.C. includes both legislative and non-legislative elements. The *Farm Practices Protection (Right To Farm) Act* (FPPAct) is the major legislative thrust of the initiative. The cornerstone of the Act is new right to farm legislation, including a dispute resolution process.

Consequential amendments include changes to the *Municipal Act* to encourage a stronger focus on planning for agriculture, improved opportunities for ensuring land use harmony along agriculture's interface and the development of Provincial farm practices standards in consultation with local governments and the farm sector.

The Act includes a process for utilizing the standards to update local implementing bylaws.

Each of these consequential amendments has direct linkages with local governments and will be assisted by ongoing support by both MAFF and the PALC.

**(10) PALC Agr. Land Preservation Programme** Modified

The Provincial Agricultural Land Commission has represented a key link between Provincial agriculture policy and the local government planning function. These linkages are built into the application / decision-making process under the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* as well as in the long-standing plan, bylaw and other land use document review function of the Commission. Amendments in 1994 to the *ALCA* enhanced the mandate of the Commission to ensure greater policy consistency and strengthen the liaison between the Commission, local governments and others with respect to agriculturally supportive bylaws, plans and policies applied to the ALR.

The Commission has recently undertaken several policy reviews and this process continues. Planning for Agriculture - the Local Contribution represents a major effort to clarify agriculture's place in local plan delivery systems and highlight practical means that can be undertaken at the local level to ensure the sustainability and enhancement of agriculture in B.C.

**(11) Provincial Mandate Statements (for Regional Growth Strategies)** New

With the development of regional growth strategies (15), it will be important for agriculture to provide policy clarity and an identification of key agricultural considerations. To assist this process MAFF and the ALC have developed regionally specific position papers to assist in the preparation of Provincial Mandate Statements. In addition the *Agri-Food Policy* (7) will also afford a broad agricultural policy direction for regional growth strategies.

**(12) Participation on Intergovernmental Advisory Committees** New

To assist in the regional growth strategy process (15), MAFF and the ALC have committed to participating on the Intergovernmental Advisory Committees to provide on-going and regionally specific input during the preparation of a regional growth strategy



**(13) Provincial Technical Agricultural Support For Local Government Planning Function**

**Largely New**

Changes to both the *ALCA* in 1994 and the adoption of the *FPPA* in 1995 will ensure a much greater integration of Provincial resource planning and local government settlement planning with respect to the agricultural land base and farming activities.

The Commission's long-standing review of local government plans and bylaws affecting the ALR is moving from a reactive to a more pro-active activity that will require additional resources and support products. This process has begun on a number of fronts including policy reviews, the production of guide documents, an updating of the Commission Handbook and an overall commitment to work more closely with local governments when agricultural issues and policies are being considered at the local level.

The *FPPA* will require both MAFF and the PALC to adjust resources and generate support products to meet the challenges of this legislation. Working with local governments and developing guide documents for the purpose of ensuring a stronger focus on planning for agriculture by developing agricultural area plans (18) and dealing more effectively with interface issues (19) will be of particular importance. The *FPPA* is setting in motion a process for developing Provincial bylaw standards to guide the updating of local implementing bylaws (20) and the adoption of farm bylaws (21). This process, led by MAFF and supported by the PALC, will demand resourcing and support products of practical value to local governments.

**(14) LOCAL GOVERNMENT Planning Function**

B.C.'s 178 regional districts and municipalities affect the day-to-day lives of almost all British Columbians. They perform over 70 different functions, drawing their authority from the Province (1). The planning function of local governments, which affects most private land, represents a key activity. Part 29 of the *Municipal Act* is the foundation of local government plan and bylaw delivery systems (exception - City of Vancouver which operates under its own Charter).

Given the wide range of functions and challenges facing local governments, agricultural policy development must not only be balanced but also integrated with many other, often competing, interests

Traditionally, local governments have focused their planning efforts on settlement issues. Recent changes to the *ALCA*, the *Municipal Act* and the *FPPA* will require a greater focus on agricultural issues within the plan / bylaw delivery systems of many local governments and greater policy consistency. This in turn will require additional

provincial support for local governments [(11), (12) & (13)] - drawing from its more traditional resource planning function. It will also necessitate the building of stronger partnerships - particularly with the farm sector - and processes based on a shared responsibility for ensuring sound and practical agricultural policy.

**(15) Regional Growth Strategies**

**New**

The *Growth Strategies Statutes Amendment Act*, which forms Part 25 of the *Municipal Act*, provides for the development of regional growth strategies, "... to promote human settlement that is socially, economically and environmentally healthy and that makes efficient use of public facilities and services, land and other resources." (Sec. 849(1)). Regional growth strategies will play a particularly important role in ensuring agriculture's sustainability. Firstly, the strategies must work toward the protection of agricultural lands and encourage the development of settlement patterns through the minimizing of urban sprawl and the use of private motor vehicles that should result in the more efficient and effective use of urban land to the long-term benefit of agriculture. Both MAFF and the PALC will play an important role in articulating Provincial agricultural policy through the development of Regional Agricultural Strategies (12) and participating on Inter-governmental Advisory Committees (*Municipal Act* - Sec. 867).

Agriculture, as a resource-based land use, often cuts across municipal and regional district boundaries. Regional growth strategies will afford an important opportunity to develop broad policy and consider the preservation of foodlands and agricultural sustainability from a regional perspective not normally afforded by the official community plans of individual local governments.

**(16) OCP's / RLUB's**

**Modified**

Official Community Plans (OCPs) and (in designated portions of unincorporated areas) Part 1 of Rural Land Use Bylaws (RLUB), represent the key instruments through which municipalities and regional districts express broad objectives and policies of the local government, on the form and character of land use and servicing requirements.

The *Municipal Act* makes provision (Sec. 865 and 866) for conformity between regional district bylaws and municipal official community plans and regional growth strategies (15).

With respect to planning for agriculture, OCP's and RLUB's will have the following key functions:

- provide linkages with federal, Provincial and regional policy;



- express a community's broad agricultural objectives and the philosophic underpinning of detailed agricultural area plans (AAP) where appropriate;
- define the agricultural planning area and give policy direction for commencement of an AAP;
- provide policy direction for focused edge planning processes (19);
- designate, where appropriate, development permit areas for the protection of farming; and
- where AAP's are not undertaken, provide focused agricultural policies to deal with agricultural issues of the plan / bylaw area.

It is proposed that partnerships between local governments, the farm sector and the Province be enhanced for the purpose of developing OCP's and RLUB's based upon a shared responsibility for the development of agricultural policy. This will be facilitated through the ongoing, but far more pro-active, effort of the PALC (10) and the involvement of MAFF in working with local governments during planning processes, the provision of improved support products by MAFF and the PALC (13) and the encouragement of stronger farm sector ties through the appointment of agricultural advisory committees and other means of improving linkages with the farm sector.

#### (17) SUB-AREA / NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS

Sub-area or neighbourhood plans, often flowing from OCP's (16) are seen as the key plan delivery instruments to providing the level of policy detail necessary to deal effectively with issues important to the agricultural community. In the case of key agricultural areas, sub-area plans may be expressed as "Agricultural Area Plans" (18).

#### (18) Agricultural Area Plans Largely New

An AAP is a sub-area plan applied to relatively large, cohesive farm communities to provide a greater focus on agriculture than is normally provided by an OCP or RLUB (16).

The AAP is seen as an appropriate means to express agricultural policy at a level of detail that can effectively deal with issues important to the farm community, enhance the potential for land use and resource compatibility, and clearly define agriculture's place in the larger community.

A process should be undertaken to clarify the boundaries of Agricultural Planning areas (Ch. 7, p 5-10) throughout the Province. It is anticipated that there may be between 40 to 60 such planning areas that could warrant a focused development of agricultural policies. An AAP may be developed jointly by two or more local jurisdictions through a cross boundary planning process where the defined agricultural planning area warrants such an approach.

A form of Agricultural Area Planning Working Group (AAPWG) can play a key role in the development of an AAP. The working group will be advisory in nature, represent a variety of interests, and report to the local government(s) responsible for the plan's adoption. (Ch. 7, p.13-16).

The AAP will draw its authority from an OCP (16) and influence the development of Agricultural Interface / Edge Plans & Policies (19) and Implementing Bylaws (20) & (21).

#### (19) Agricultural Interface Planning & Policy Development New

'Edge' or interface planning and policy packages should identify and deal with outstanding land use conflicts and heighten the potential for greater compatibility where land use change is anticipated. An 'edge' plan should include a comprehensive land use inventory and consultative planning exercise along critical portions of the interface. A key strength of an 'edge' plan will be its linkages between differing land uses for the purpose of striving for far greater land use harmony and stability within the agricultural community.

The critical interface areas should be identified at the time of OCP or possibly AAP development. The application of interface policies will be greatly enhanced through the amendments to the *Land Title Act* (Sec. 86(1)(c)(x) & (xi)) related to subdivision approval and to the *Municipal Act* (Sections 879(1)(c) & 920(10)) related to designating development permit areas within OCP's for the protection of farming through improved buffering.

#### (20) Implementing Bylaws Modified

Local governments have a number of opportunities for the development of bylaws, with zoning bylaws and Part 2 of RLUB's being particularly focused on plan implementation and land use regulation. The *FPPAct* establishes bylaw review and updating processes for the purpose of developing a seamless link between Provincial and local regulation affecting agriculture at a regulatory level.

MAFF, with assistance from the PALC and in consultation with local governments and the farm sector, will develop 'provincial farm standards' to guide the updating of bylaws. The standards will deal with matters commonly found in zoning and rural land use bylaws, and factors that can be adopted through new Farm Bylaws (21). Standards, when developed, may display regional variation. In addition the standards may be adjusted further to reflect local circumstances.

The standards will guide the updating of the agricultural sections of local government zoning and rural land use bylaws. The bylaw review and updating process will involve Cabinet orders applied incrementally to regional districts and member municipalities (or local trust



committees) within these regional districts (*Municipal Act* - Section 918. Once a Cabinet order applies, local zoning and RLUB's must be reviewed within three years for the purpose of ensuring consistency with the Provincial standards. The approval by the Minister of Agriculture and Food of updated bylaws only applies to those aspects of the bylaw dealt with by the provincial standards and applies to land within the ALR. The bylaws, once adopted, are intended to replace any existing prohibitions or restrictions on the use of land by a farm business in the ALR. Also, Section 915 of the *Municipal Act* (Intensive Agriculture) will cease to have affect upon completion of the bylaw updating process. (See: *Municipal Act* Section 915 to 919)

## (21) Farm Bylaws

**New**

Farm Bylaws are provided for in the *Municipal Act* (Sec. 917) and furnish opportunity for local governments to address factors of an operational nature not normally found in zoning or rural land use bylaws, including the potential for prohibitions on certain agricultural activities in specific areas. Local flexibility will be afforded. The bylaws will be guided by Provincial standards and generic farm bylaw language and must be approved by the Minister of Agriculture and Food.