



Final Report, Phase 2:
Capital Region
Food and Health
Action Plan

Dear Community Members,

Fellow Community Members,

As part of the collaborative project: Putting Food and Food Policy on the Table,

The Capital Regional District (CRD) Roundtable on the Environment (RTE) and the Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CR-FAIR) would like to present the “Capital Region Food and Health Action Plan.” I am very pleased with the progress that has been made by the partnership of the CR-FAIR, CRD, VIHA, and other contributors, who are actively working together to advance local food security and the concept of healthy communities in our Capital region. Not only are the results of their combined efforts to be presented in this booklet commendable, equally so is the breadth and depth of involvement of people from our many communities, community organizations, institutions, businesses and agencies who are working on local food security and health issues.

The detailed plan for action outlined here paints a clear picture of what needs to occur if we are to collectively tackle such major and pressing concerns as climate change, fossil fuel and transportation

issues, and health care accessibility. But this is only the starting point — as a community we need to mobilize if as a Capital Region we wish to become “food secure” — that is where we reach a point when all people at all times can acquire safe, nutritionally adequate and personally acceptable foods in a manner that maintains human dignity and sustains our environment.

To this end, it is in all of our interests to work together towards a common vision and common goals of Regional food security. The work presented here defines the key next steps required to broaden the involvement of all of us in the Capital region, for it is recognized that the existing partnership, no matter how dedicated and effective they have and will be, cannot do such an important and complex task alone — it will require supporting and complementary policies, programs and actions at all levels. With this in mind, I encourage you to get more involved to help see this plan to fruition, and I can assure you that the CRD Roundtable on the Environment will assist in every way possible to provide supporting leadership to aid in the advancement and delivery of this Food and Health Action Plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Brice". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Susan Brice, Chair, CRD Roundtable on the Environment



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Final Report — Phase 2

Capital Region Food and Health Action Plan

Introduction

The Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CR-FAIR) and the CRD Roundtable on the Environment (RTE) are engaged in a joint food system project: Putting Food and Food Policy on the Table.

The purpose of this project is to bring governments, industry and communities together to effect positive change within the regional food system.

The Project has three phases:

- ▶ **Develop a Regional Food Charter**
To provide a vision for the regional food system
- ▶ **Write a Capital Region Food and Health Action Plan**
To identify the priority actions needed to realize this vision
- ▶ **Establish a Regional Food Policy Council**
To coordinate and monitor the implementation of the Capital Region Food and Health Action Plan over the long term

Regional Food Charter

The Regional Food Charter was developed by CR-FAIR and the RTE in consultation with a diverse and inclusive group of government, industry and community stakeholders.

The Regional Food Charter describes the regional food system as integral to:

- ▶ **the regional economy;**
- ▶ **the regional environment; and**
- ▶ **community resilience, food security and population health**

The Regional Food Charter is online at www.communitycouncil.ca

Who are CR-FAIR and RTE HCSC?

CR-FAIR is a consortium of representatives from local food producers, food banks, community groups, community kitchens, food retailers, community gardens, nutritionists and other health professionals, the hospitality industry, unions, educators and government. Their mission is to increase knowledge and bring about positive change in the food and agriculture system within BC's capital region by expanding awareness and communication, bringing people together, supporting program initiatives, and promoting long-term change. Their vision is a "sustainable and secure local food and agriculture system that provides safe sufficient culturally accepted nutritious food accessible to everyone in the Capital Region through dignified means".

The RTE Healthy Communities Sub Committee (HCSC) consists of members from diverse backgrounds drawn from the community as well as from various governmental agencies. Their goal is to develop a Healthy Communities decision making framework for the RTE, with food security as their initial focus. This will be done through partnerships with CR-FAIR, Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA), Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs), government, First Nations, businesses and institutions.

Capital Region Food and Health Action Plan (FHAP)

The FHAP identifies the steps government, industry, institutions, communities and citizens can take to realize the vision enunciated in the Regional Food Charter: to increase the economic viability and environmental sustainability of the regional food system, while contributing to population health, food security and community resilience.

This booklet is a summary of the full FHAP. The complete Plan is available online at www.communitycouncil.ca

The priority actions identified in the FHAP are to:

- ▶ **Protect Farmland**

Through the Regional Growth Strategy, Official Community Plans, Area Agriculture Plans, zoning and bylaw changes.

- ▶ **Encourage Innovation and Diversity in the Industry**

Through the Regional Growth Strategy, Official Community Plans, Area Agriculture Plans, zoning, bylaws, and investment in innovation in the areas of primary production, on-farm services, food manufacturing, alternative distribution channels, and novel marketing options.





- ▶ **Meet Climate Change Obligations**
Through land and water protection, waste stream management, the provision of ecological goods and services, and reduced “food miles”.
- ▶ **Strengthen Food System Infrastructure and Organizations**
By building new links within the supply chain, strengthening information exchange, increasing organizational capacity, linking government to community, and conducting outreach and education campaigns.
- ▶ **Improve Population Health and Regional Food Security**
By building capacity for residents to access healthy diets and food resources, through partnerships with the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA), Regional and Municipal Governments, First Nations, emergency food providers and community agencies.
- ▶ **Establish a Food Policy Council**
To monitor regional food security and advise the CRD and local governments on food system issues, to coordinate the implementation of the FHAP, and to link government, industry and community with other food system stakeholders and communities.

Developing the FHAP — Reflecting the Community Voice

In 2006, after a series of Strategic Working Sessions involving a wide variety of food system actors and community voices, CR-FAIR and the RTE published the booklet: Putting Food and Food Policy on the Table – Phase One (Available online at www.communitycouncil.ca)

This booklet identified the main challenges and opportunities facing the Capital Region food system, and acted as a springboard for the development of a Capital Region Food and Health Action Plan, designed to address these opportunities and challenges.

A “working group” approach was used to develop the FHAP, bringing together the full range of food system actors to discuss opportunities and challenges, and to identify priorities for action. Working Group sessions included: farmers, food manufacturers, distributors, retailers, institutional purchasers, consumers, emergency food providers, First Nations service providers, environmental and climate change experts, and decision makers from local, regional, and provincial governments.

This consultation process culminated in the Food Matters: Annual Regional Forum on Food Security in May, 2007.

The FHAP thus provides an accurate, recent reflection of the diverse range of voices involved in the Capital Region’s food system.

Ongoing annual consultations on the FHAP ensure continued community engagement and the integration of complementary food system initiatives into the FHAP.

The FHAP was developed using a ‘systems perspective’, which examines the regional food system from seed to plate to waste.

Implementation of the FHAP

The next phase of the project will focus on communicating the messages in the FHAP, and establishing a Regional Food Policy Council to coordinate the actions it identifies. Based on research into Food Policy Council models, the proposed Regional Food Policy Council would be a permanent body, potentially attached to the CRD, with a membership that reflects the full range of food system and community interests.

Capital Region Food and Health Action Plan Recommendations

Overview

Economic Viability

- ▶ Secure the region's farmland
- ▶ Encourage productivity of farmlands
- ▶ Promote urban agriculture
- ▶ Link new farmers with available land
- ▶ Address water supply and quality issues
- ▶ Allow for more diverse, innovative approaches to farming, processing, distribution and sales
- ▶ Develop model institutional purchasing policies
- ▶ Build new supply chain links between producers and consumers
- ▶ Encourage institutions and consumers to 'buy local' to increase the success of the regional food industry.

Environmental Sustainability

- ▶ Secure the region's farmland and buffer zones
- ▶ Address water supply and quality issues

- Encourage environmental farming practices
- Recognize the value of farmlands in supporting ecological systems and the stewardship role played by the farm community
- Utilize solid waste streams as fertilizer and fuel for food production
- Support on-farm generation of green energy
- Encourage institutions and consumers to buy local, reducing 'food miles'
- Retain some minimal capacity to feed ourselves, within the jurisdiction we control, as an insurance against climate change.

Community Resilience, Food Security and Population Health

- Build community resilience by increasing the capacity of neighbourhood and local food system organizations
- Encourage community economic development
- Support urban, community and school gardens
- Increase government and public understanding of food access issues





- ▶ Increase understanding about food and health and create healthy choices where people work, learn, and play
- ▶ Recognize and encourage traditional food gathering practices
- ▶ Strengthen emergency food provision and other food resources at the neighbourhood, community and regional levels
- ▶ Consider food supply and land protection as an integral part of emergency preparedness plans.

Suggested Actions for the Capital Regional District:

Food Production

- ▶ Strengthen the farmland protection provisions of the Regional Growth Strategy
- ▶ Use the Regional Growth Strategy to encourage food production
- ▶ Work with local governments to strengthen farmland protection within their Official Community Plans
- ▶ Work with local governments on their Official Community Plans to encourage food production

- ▶ Work to strengthen the farmland protection provisions of Agriculture Area Plans, and to encourage food production
- ▶ Assess the merit of alternative land tenure and management models for the CRD
- ▶ Use planning and rates to guarantee access to water for food production
- ▶ Minimize the drainage and related water system problems associated with urban development adjacent to farmland.

Environment and Climate Change

- ▶ Assess the opportunity to divert solid bio-wastes into fertilizer or fuel for farms
- ▶ Assess the opportunity for on-farm generation of green energy
- ▶ Support “buy local” initiatives, including the development of model institutional purchasing policies, to reduce “food miles”
- ▶ Ensure emergency preparedness plans consider the importance of the local food system

Community Resilience

- ▶ Raise the awareness of board members, planners and other CRD and local government staff to better understand the needs of the regional food system, and what government can do to protect and develop it
- ▶ Adopt or adapt the Regional Food Charter
- ▶ Establish a Regional Food Policy Council to link the CRD to the wider food system and to coordinate the implementation of these recommendations
- ▶ Use the FHAP and Regional Food Policy Council to implement Action 2.2 (5) of the RGS.

Suggested Actions for Municipalities and Electoral Districts:

Food Production

- ▶ Use Official Community Plans, Agricultural Area Plans, zoning bylaws and the powers granted under the Agricultural Land Commission Act to preserve food growing lands and encourage farming, while allowing for innovative approaches to on-farm housing, value-added activities, and tourism
- ▶ Assess the merit of alternative land tenure and management models within the local government area
- ▶ Use planning and rates to guarantee access to water for food production.
- ▶ Minimize the drainage and related water problems associated with urban development adjacent to farmland
- ▶ Support urban agriculture by providing resources and reviewing Official Community Plans and bylaws. Include municipal lands, community gardens, parks, boulevards and rooftops in this review





- ▶ Encourage more direct marketing: establish bylaws to allow adequate signage and facilities, with supportive zoning and business license practices.

Environment and Climate Change

- ▶ Assess the opportunity to divert solid bio-wastes into fertilizer or fuel for farms
- ▶ Assess the opportunity for on-farm generation of green energy
- ▶ Ensure emergency preparedness plans consider the importance of the local food system
- ▶ Support “buy local” initiatives, including the development of model institutional purchasing policies, to reduce “food miles.”

Community Resilience

- ▶ Each local government could develop a Food Security Policy, and create a Department of Sustainability
- ▶ Raise the awareness of councillors, planners and other staff to better understand the needs of the regional food system, and what government can do to protect and develop it.

- ▶ Adopt or adapt the Regional Food Charter
- ▶ Support the establishment of a Regional Food Policy Council to link local governments to the wider food system, and to coordinate the implementation of these recommendations.

Suggested Actions for Vancouver Island Health Authority

Food Security and Population Health

- ▶ Determine where current VIHA policy and practice can be aligned with the FHAP
- ▶ Review all health promotion programs and materials to provide additional messaging supporting local agriculture and provide list of available food resources in BC's Capital Region that utilize local products
- ▶ Provide supportive policy for health and safety issues in regards to local markets that support local agriculture
- ▶ Undertake collaborative research and database development with community partners

- ▶ Create and implement procurement policies that support local, fair trade food and agriculture products
- ▶ Participate in innovative pilot projects such as the use of food vouchers in Best Babies Programs that are redeemable at local markets

Community Resilience

- ▶ Adopt or adapt the Regional Food Charter
- ▶ Support the establishment of a Regional Food Policy Council to link VIHA to the wider food system, and coordinate the implementation of these recommendations.

Suggested Actions for School Boards

Food Production and Education

- ▶ Support a food garden in every school, with related programming
- ▶ Review opportunities for surplus lands to be added to agricultural programs
- ▶ Integrate edible landscapes into school landscape plans



- ▶ Consider curriculum enhancements to focus on local agriculture and food
- ▶ Participate in the pilot Fruit and Veggie Program
- ▶ Develop local food procurement policies connecting farms and institutional kitchens
- ▶ Review opportunities for increasing local food preparation linked to culinary training in schools.

Community Resilience

- ▶ Encourage every school to adopt or adapt the Regional Food Charter
- ▶ Support the establishment of a Regional Food Policy Council to link School Boards to the wider food system, and to coordinate the implementation of these recommendations.

Suggested Actions for Post-Secondary Institutions

Food Production and Education

- ▶ Review opportunities for surplus lands to be added to agricultural programs
- ▶ Integrate edible landscapes into landscape plans

- ▶ Review opportunities to better coordinate research and service learning related to the food system.

Environment and Climate Change

- ▶ Assess the opportunity to divert solid bio-wastes
- ▶ Support “buy local” initiatives, including the development of model institutional purchasing policies, to reduce “food miles.”

Community Resilience

- ▶ Engage in research projects with community groups, in areas including:
 - » Institutional purchasing policies
 - » Alternative land tenure and land use models
 - » The effect of the ALR on land prices
 - » The opportunities and threats of climate change for the regional food system
 - » Web-based tools to link producers and buyers

- ▶ Support and strengthen emergency food access on campus
- ▶ Adopt or adapt the Regional Food Charter
- ▶ Support the establishment of a Regional Food Policy Council to link academic institutions to the wider food system, and to coordinate the implementation of these proposed actions.

Suggested Actions for Community and Neighborhood Organizations

Community Resilience and Food Security

- ▶ Support the development of Neighborhood Food Action Plans
- ▶ Support the development of Neighborhood Food Systems:
 - » Develop neighbourhood food networks and support urban agriculture
 - » Encourage Pocket Markets
 - » Establish “Sharing Backyards” and gleaning projects

- » Conduct education sessions on nutrition, local food production and food preparation
- » Organize community feasts and other community food events
- » Support on-farm experiential opportunities
- » Hold workshops, e.g. composting and gardening

- ▶ Adopt or adapt the Regional Food Charter
- ▶ Support the establishment of a Regional Food Policy Council to link neighbourhoods to the wider food system, and to coordinate the implementation of these recommendations

Suggested Actions for Private Sector

Encourage innovation and diversity in the industry

- ▶ Build relationships with and utilize island processors and growers
- ▶ As small and medium-sized producers, find ways to cooperate and coordinate resources around

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transportation, storage, and distribution of local foods

- ▶ As wholesalers and distributors, buy locally produced and processed foods where possible
- ▶ As service providers that provide prepared meals to institutions under contract, purchase locally produced foods where possible
- ▶ Utilize networks, resources and knowledge to support local food security initiatives

Next Steps for CR-FAIR and the RTE

- ▶ Continue to build and implement the FHAP
- ▶ Actively engage in dialogue to establish a Regional Food Policy Council
- ▶ Continue to undertake education and awareness raising activities around healthy food systems
- ▶ Facilitate collaboration and joint initiatives through communications strategies including newsletters and public events

Stay Connected

Subscribe to the quarterly e-newsletter Making Food Matter. E-mail info@communitycouncil.ca or call 383-6166.

Acknowledgements

This report is published by the Capital Regional District Roundtable on the Environment through the Healthy Communities Subcommittee's partnership with CR-FAIR, the Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable, a program of the Community Council.

Many voices from all sectors in the community contributed to the partnerships, consultations and dialogue that are the foundation of this document.

Members of the Healthy Communities Subcommittee include:

Mike Romaine (Subcommittee Chair to August 2007)
 Kevin Brown, consulting biologist, agrologist, RTE
 Dean Fortin, City of Victoria Councillor
 Sonya Chandler, City of Victoria Councillor
 Linda Adams, Islands Trust
 Janelle Hatch, VIHA
 Lee Fuge, CR-FAIR
 Nancy Falconer, Canadian Cancer Society
 Dean Rebneris, market gardener
 Christine Bender, RTE

Member Organizations of CR-FAIR include:

BC Government and Service Employees' Union
 Certified Organic Associations of British Columbia
 (COABC)
 Community Council (ex-officio)
 Growing Green Project
 Healthy Communities Subcommittee, CRD Roundtable
 on the Environment
 FoodRoots Distributors
 Island Chefs' Collaborative
 LifeCycles Project Society
 Ministry of Agriculture and Lands
 Sierra Club of Canada, BC Chapter
 Small Scale Food Processors Association
 TLC The Land Conservancy of BC;
 Vancouver Island Health Authority
 Vancouver Island Public Interest Research Group (VIPIRG)

Special thanks to the members of the partnerships' working committee:

Janelle Hatch (VIHA), Paula Hesje (TLC), David Coney (Ministry of Agriculture and Lands), Linda Geggie (Life-Cycles), and Christina Peacock (Community Council). A special thank you to David for report writing and editing, Andrea Mercer and Teresa Waddell for logistical assistance, and to Jim Mulchinock, CRD for graphic design and report layout.



Community Food Action Initiative

Financial support for this project provided by Vancouver Island Health Authority's "Community Food Action Initiative" through ActNow BC — the government of BC's investment in promoting healthy choices through a partnership-based, community-focused approach to improve nutrition, increase physical activity and reduce tobacco use.

vancouvers
 foundation



Contacts

Further information on this food security initiative, including ways to be involved, can be obtained from either of the following web sites and contacts.

Roundtable on the Environment

www.crd.bc.ca/rte

telephone: 360-3196

CRD Hotline 360-3030

email: hotline@crd.bc.ca

Community Council

www.communitycouncil.ca

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