

# **DRAFT Agricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) Guidelines**

Prepared for:  
Metro Vancouver

Prepared by:  
Environmental Farm Planners Ltd.

February, 2014

## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	i
List of Figures .....	i
Definitions .....	ii
1.0 Introduction .....	1
2.0 Why AIA Guidelines? .....	1
3.0 Who Should Use these Guidelines? .....	1
4.0 How can these Guidelines be used? .....	2
5.0 What is included in the AIA Guidelines? .....	2
5.1 Scope of the Guidelines .....	2
5.2 Agricultural Assessment Process .....	2
5.2.1 Step 1: Pre-Application Meeting between Commissioning Authority and Proponent .....	2
5.2.2 Step 2: Detailed Project Description .....	4
5.2.3 Step 3: Screening of the Project .....	4
5.2.4 Step 4: Review of Proponent’s Submission .....	6
5.2.5 Step 5: Decision of the Commissioning Authority .....	6
5.3 Alternatives and Mitigation Measures .....	8
Appendix A: Content of an Agricultural Impact Assessment for Non-Farm Developments on Lands designated for Agriculture .....	10
Appendix B: Content of an Agricultural Impact Assessment for Non-Farm Developments on Lands not designated for Agriculture .....	13

## List of Tables

Table 1: Detailed Project Description Requirements .....	5
Table 2: Screening Significance Indicators .....	7
Table 3: Alternatives and Mitigating Measures Checklist .....	9

## List of Figures

Figure 1: The Agricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) Process .....	3
--	---

## Definitions

**Agriculture** – defined in the widest sense to include farmland, farming activities, services to agriculture, and the sector as a whole.

**Commissioning Authority** – the government or agency with the lead responsibility for making non-farm development approval decisions.

**Farm Development** – includes secondary uses in prime agricultural areas; agriculturally related uses; development that would be considered “normal farm practices”; other permitted uses as allowed by the Agricultural Land Reserve Use, Subdivision and Procedure Regulation of the Agricultural Land Commission; and agricultural land uses as per local government bylaw.

**Impact** - direct, indirect and cumulative effects of non-farm developments on agriculture, regardless of whether the projects occur inside or outside of the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR).

**Non-farm development** – includes any project, program, policy, plan, or regulation from either within or outside the ALR with the potential to cause agricultural impacts.

## 1.0 Introduction

These Agricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) Guidelines outline the process for assessing agricultural impacts as well as to ensure that the opportunities and alternatives to farmland conversion or developments that could have adverse impacts on agriculture are understood and communicated to decision makers. These guidelines are a tool for planning, policy and regulatory use that identify and evaluate a wide range of impacts from proposed land uses and developments on the viability of farm operations and the agricultural industry.

## 2.0 Why AIA Guidelines?

All local governments in Metro Vancouver with agricultural sectors have agricultural plans to protect farmland and promote agricultural activity, recognizing agriculture's significant economic, environmental and social contributions to the community and the region. Yet significant variability exists in the way that land use affecting agriculture is assessed and decisions made. Although governments can request proponents to provide AIA information, there are currently no comprehensive requirements to assess non-farm developments from a farming perspective and many times agricultural impacts are not taken fully into account. The AIA Guidelines are a tool to:

- educate people on the potential impacts (direct, indirect and cumulative) of proposed non-farm uses and development on, or adjacent to, agricultural land;
- assist local, regional and provincial governments to better assess the impacts of non-farm development on agriculture;
- promote consistency in how impacts are examined by governments inter-jurisdictionally; and
- encourage more rigorous assessments in support of agriculture that create problem situations;
- prevent non-farm development from causing adverse impacts on farming and the agricultural sector; and
- identify significant impacts that should be avoided if at all possible and where necessary, mitigated to the fullest extent possible.

## 3.0 Who Should Use these Guidelines?

These Guidelines are targeted at developers, their consultants, planning authority staff, provincial and federal agency staff and others who are involved in promoting or appraising proposed projects or developments that are likely to have significant effects on agriculture. These roles include:

- a commissioning authority with responsibility to provide information or make decisions on non-farm developments that affect the agricultural land base, agricultural resources, agricultural activities and the agricultural sector as a whole;
- a government organization with responsibility for assessing the impact of non-farm developments in a municipality, a district, or in the Agricultural Land Reserve; and
- a project coordinator for a private developer or a consultant providing impact assessment services to a private client.

Federal and provincial proponents are required to conduct environmental assessments of projects under the requirements of the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012* and the *BC Environmental Assessment Act*, respectively. Agriculture is a component of the environment in these environmental assessment processes. Commissioning agencies (authorities) may find these AIA guidelines useful for structuring instructions to non-farm development proponents and in the assessment of impacts. It is anticipated that no significant changes in policies would be required.

Similarly, the ALC already requires proponents of non-farm developments in the ALR to provide information to the agency to assist in assessing impacts and identifying options to avoid, eliminate or

reduce impacts on the ALR. These AIA guidelines are envisioned as appropriate a tool to assist a more rigorous and comprehensive approach to providing relevant information for assessing and evaluating the significance of agricultural impacts.

#### **4.0 How can these Guidelines be used?**

The AIA Guidelines will help in the identification of key impacts and the significance of non-farm development on agriculture. Whether jurisdictions already have a process for agricultural impact assessment for non-farm developments or not, the Guidelines can serve as a checklist to determine if all potential agricultural issue areas have been identified and addressed. The assessment these Guidelines provide can be applied to existing non-farm development approval processes.

#### **5.0 What is included in the AIA Guidelines?**

##### **5.1 Scope of the Guidelines**

The scope of the guidelines includes identification of direct, indirect and cumulative effects of non-farm developments on agriculture, regardless of whether the projects occur inside or outside of the ALR. Agriculture is defined in the widest sense to include farmland, farming activities and the sector as a whole.

For these tasks, the AIA guidelines require:

- a description of the project to determine its location, type, nature, extent and potential adverse impacts on agriculture;
- a screening checklist of impact areas, including policy context, on-site and off-site effects, impacts on agricultural resources and economic viability indicators; and
- a process to assist in determining the AIA requirement in relation to its potential of a non-farm development to affect agriculture.

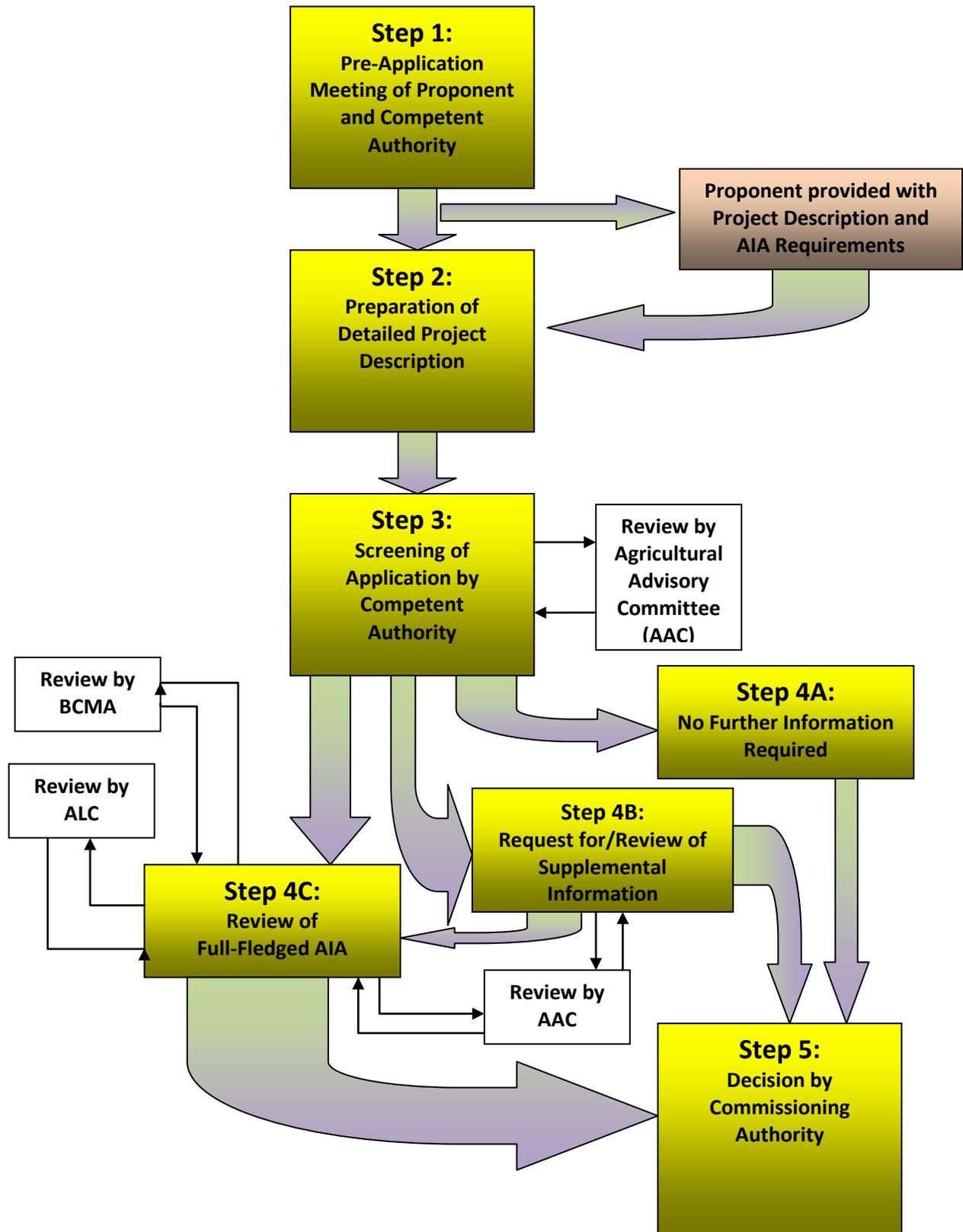
##### **5.2 Agricultural Assessment Process**

An AIA process would be required for all proposed non-farm developments to determine if they have the potential to have adverse impacts on agriculture. The following procedure is proposed to guide commissioning authorities and the proponent through the AIA process. Commissioning authorities may consist of municipal staff responsible for non-farm developments, or federal or provincial regulators responsible for assessing the impacts of non-farm developments affecting agriculture. The Agricultural Impact Assessment Process is described graphically in Figure 1.

###### **5.2.1 Step 1: Pre-Application Meeting between Commissioning Authority and Proponent**

The first step is for the proponent to meet with the commissioning authority to discuss the project at the earliest point possible. The proponent should be prepared to describe the location of the project, nature and extent, timeframe and any preliminary investigations they may have undertaken. For local governments, if the project may fall within a Development Permit area, or if an OCP amendment, zoning amendment, or if a subdivision approval is required, then the AIA process would be triggered. Individual municipalities may also have other policy or regulatory requirements which could trigger the AIA process. Staff can advise the proponent on the federal, provincial and municipal policies, regulations and processes that apply to the project. At this stage, staff can advise the proponent of the requirements for a non-farm development application to be considered for an AIA, and the commissioning authority's concerns relating to impacts on agriculture.

**Figure 1: The Agricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) Process**



### **5.2.2 Step 2: Detailed Project Description**

This step involves the preparation of a detailed project description by the Proponent of the non-farm development, describing the nature and extent of the proposed project and containing an assessment of the agricultural impacts related to the non-farm development. Commissioning authority staff can advise the proponent about the affected interests that may need to be consulted as part of the process including, but not limited to, property owners, provincial and federal agencies, First Nations, and community organizations.

A list of project description requirements should be supplied to the proponent to guide the preparation of the application. For example, the project description should include, at a minimum, the information indicated in Table 1. It is the proponent's responsibility to provide the appropriate level of response to the requirements of the AIA Guidelines, in consideration of the type and nature of the non-farm development proposed.

The detailed information requirements for describing the context of the non-farm development are contained in the Appendices. Appendix A contains the Guidelines for an Agricultural Impact Assessment of non-farm development on lands designated or agriculture, such lands in the ALR or in other municipally zoned agriculture areas. Appendix B presents AIA requirements for non-farm developments located outside land designated for agriculture, such as Development Permit Areas and any other areas that the commissioning authority may specify for AIA treatment.

The AIA shall be prepared by qualified professionals working for the proponent with established expertise and credentials in the fields of agriculture and planning. Other professionals may also be required depending on the nature of the project and its potential impacts (e.g., engineering, hydrology, geology, economic).

### **5.2.3 Step 3: Screening of the Project**

Following submission of the Project Description, staff reviews this information and determines whether the project should proceed to a more detailed AIA (Steps 4A, 4B or 4C). In most local jurisdictions, the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) will assist the commissioning authority by advising on the significance of agricultural impacts identified.

If staff requires more information, then the proponent will be notified. The list of questions in the Screening Checklist (see Table 2) is part of the AIA information the proponent needs to provide. The checklist contemplates key indicator questions and asks whether the non-farm development proposal is adequate to avoid or mitigate agricultural impacts. If residual impacts are indicated, the checklist asks whether they are significant.

The user is prompted to first consider whether the project is expected to involve any of the activities or features listed in the checklist and to answer with one of three responses in Column B:

- yes - if the activity is likely to occur;
- no - if the activity is not expected to occur; or
- ? - if it is uncertain whether the activity will occur or not.

In general, if the answers in Column C of the Table 2 are all "Yes" responses, further information will not be required (Step 4A). "No" or "?" answers will require additional information and a finding of significance for any indicator (Column D) triggers a request for further information and moves the application to Step 4B or Step 4C.

**Table 1: Detailed Project Description Requirements**

Item	Description	Detail
1	Contact Details of the Developer	Please provide the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Name of the company; main contact person and contact details</li> </ul>
2	Characteristics of the Proposed Non-Farm Development	Please provide the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brief description of the proposed non-farm development;</li> <li>Reasons for proposing the non-farm development;</li> <li>A plan showing the boundary of the non-farm development including any land required temporarily during construction;</li> <li>The physical form of the development (layout, buildings, other structures, construction materials, etc);</li> <li>Description of the main processes including size, capacity, throughput, input and output;</li> <li>Any new access arrangements or changes to existing road layout;</li> <li>A work program for construction, operation and commissioning phases, and restoration and after-use where appropriate;</li> <li>Construction methods;</li> <li>Resources used in construction and operation (materials, water, energy, etc.);</li> <li>The relationship with other existing/planned projects;</li> <li>Information about alternatives that are being considered;</li> <li>Information about mitigating measures which are being considered;</li> <li>Other activities which may be required as a consequence of the project (e.g., new roads, extraction of aggregate, provision of new water supply, generation or transmission of power, increased housing and sewage disposal);</li> <li>Details of any other permits required for the non-farm development.</li> </ul>
3	Location of the Proposed Non-Farm Development	Please provide the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maps and photographs showing the location of the non-farm development relative to surrounding agricultural sector activity;</li> <li>Soils description and mapping of the site and surrounding area;</li> <li>Unimproved and improved land capability ratings, including climate, aspect, slope and drainage details and associated limitations;</li> <li>Status of the agricultural land affected by the proposed project;</li> <li>Existing agricultural land uses on and adjacent to the site and any future planned land uses;</li> <li>Applicable local government zoning, bylaws, and land use policies;</li> <li>Applicable federal, provincial and regional regulations and policies;</li> <li>Details of any alternative locations or design measures which have been considered that could lead to no or minimal impacts on agriculture.</li> </ul>
4	Characteristics of the Potential Impact	A description of the likely impacts of the non-farm development considering the following factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Possible adverse impacts on agriculture;</li> <li>Possible impacts on agricultural growth and expansion adjacent to the non-farm development;</li> <li>Impacts (negative and positive) on agricultural community, farmer health, fauna and flora, soils, land use, material assets, water quality and hydrology, air quality, climate, noise and vibration, the landscape and visual environment, agricultural historic and cultural heritage resources, and the interactions between them;</li> <li>Nature agricultural impacts (i.e., direct, indirect, secondary, cumulative, short, medium and long-term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative);</li> <li>Extent of the impact (geographical area, number of farmers affected, farmland area affected, farm cropping and livestock activities affected);</li> <li>Magnitude and complexity, probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact;</li> <li>Trans-boundary nature of the impact;</li> <li>Consistency of the proposed non-farm development with agricultural policies and regulations;</li> <li>Mitigation incorporated into the project design to reduce, avoid or offset significant adverse impacts on agriculture.</li> </ul>

#### **5.2.4 Step 4: Review of Proponent's Submission**

The proponent's AIA submission should be circulated for comment to referees that may include other government agencies such as the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) and BC Ministry of Agriculture (BCMA). The commissioning authority may conduct further discussion with the developer and referees about new issues or new information raised. The commissioning authority will receive comments and complete the review by issuing a Summary Response. The Summary Response will itemize the agricultural impacts identified in the proponent's submission, the conclusions reached in the screening stage in terms of significance of impacts, the reasons for reaching the conclusions, and a recommendation for proceeding with Step 4A, 4B or 4C. There should be provision for dissemination of information to the public and keeping interested parties up to date during this stage. Reporting out may be combined with public forum to discuss the development, as per local government requirements.

There are three possible outcomes from the screening process in Step 3:

1. If the commissioning authority concludes that the application has provided the necessary information to assess agricultural impacts, then the decision can be made on the basis of the information submitted (Step 4A);
2. If the commissioning authority requires clarification of issues contained the application, then the proponent will be notified and asked to submit additional information. The AAC may assist in reviewing this new information (Step 4B). If the request for new information identifies a need for more comprehensive impact assessment, the process may re-route to Step 4C for a partial AIA on outstanding issues of concern; or
3. If the commissioning authority concludes that significant impacts to agriculture have been identified for a number of issues that require more comprehensive assessment, the assessment will proceed to a full- fledged AIA (Step 4C). In the review process, it is expected that the BC Ministry of Agriculture (BCMA) and the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) may be utilized to provide information to assist the commissioning authority in the decision-making pertaining to the non-farm development.

The Screening Checklist (Table 2) provides a list of questions about the project and its environment which can be used to help answer the question "Is this project likely to have a significant effect on agriculture?"

When the decision is made to require further assessment, it should be recorded by the commissioning authority and the reasons for it should be made available to the public, so that it is apparent that the impact on agriculture has been properly considered.

#### **4.2.5 Step 5: Decision of the Commissioning Authority**

The decision by the commissioning authority on the non-farm development will be based on the findings of the AIA, including reviews provided by consultee agencies, such as the ALC and BCMA. Avoidance and complete mitigation of non-farm development impacts on agriculture should be the first priority for approving these proposed projects in the ALR and other land designated by for agriculture, reflecting the significance of protecting this land to the agricultural sector. Decisions pertaining to non-farm developments on lands not designated for agriculture will use the AIA to consider potential proximity, indirect, and cumulative impacts on agriculture.

The review and decision should be recorded by the commissioning authority and the reasons for it should be made available to the public, so that it is apparent that the impact on agriculture has been properly considered.

**Table 2: Screening Significance Indicators**

<b>A</b>		<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
<b>Question</b>		<b>Is impact present? (yes/no/?)</b>	<b>Can agricultural impact be avoided or completely mitigated? (Yes /No/?) Explain How?</b>	<b>Is there a residual effect? (Yes /No/?) Is it significant?</b>
<b>Physical Impacts</b>				
<b>1</b>	Will the non-farm development cause loss of agricultural land or restrict its use in areas designated for agriculture?			
<b>2</b>	Will the non-farm development cause changes in the quantity or quality of soil, air or water resources used by agriculture?			
<b>3</b>	Will spoil from the non-farm development be deposited on land designated for agriculture?			
<b>Operational Impacts</b>				
<b>4</b>	Will the non-farm development limit, restrict, or prevent existing “good” agricultural practices?			
<b>5</b>	Will current farming operations be put out of business by the non-farm development?			
<b>6</b>	Will the non-farm development fragment, isolate, or otherwise impair the use of farmland so as to compromise its utility for agriculture?			
<b>7</b>	Are there potential trans-boundary effects on agricultural operations and/or the supply of agricultural services in other jurisdictions created by the non-farm development?			
<b>8</b>	Will there be a large change in agricultural conditions that could affect agricultural economic viability?			
<b>Regulatory Impacts</b>				
<b>9</b>	Does the non-farm development comply with all federal, provincial and local government agricultural policies and regulations?			
<b>10</b>	Will the non-farm development create additional regulation of farming practices or operations?			

<b>Indirect and Secondary Impacts</b>				
<b>11</b>	Will the non-farm development create traffic congestion, delays, safety, or rerouting issues for farm operators?			
<b>12</b>	Will the non-farm development affect access to, the availability of, or the provision of agricultural services used by existing agricultural operations?			
<b>Cumulative Impacts</b>				
<b>13</b>	Does the non-farm development require exemptions from, or to changes to, agricultural policies or regulations in order to proceed?			
<b>14</b>	Does the non-farm development create land loss impacts that threaten the future viability of the agricultural sector?			
<b>15</b>	Does the non-farm development reduce the flexibility of farmers to adopt or convert to other farming options in the future?			
<b>16</b>	Does the non-farm development threaten to diminish or reduce the supply and/or availability of services to the agricultural sector?			
<b>17</b>	Will the non-farm development create additional wildlife pressure on farm crops and cropping patterns?			
<b>18</b>	Are the agricultural effects from the non-farm development reversible?			

### 5.3 Alternatives and Mitigation Measures

In the AIA review stage, communication with the proponent could lead to consideration of alternatives and mitigation measures. Discussion of alternatives and mitigation measures may be most likely to come into play where there is willingness to accommodate the non-farm development project, if possible. The proponent's submission and the impact assessment can identify alternatives and mitigation measures which it may be appropriate for the commissioning authority to consider in finalizing the project proposal. A mitigation plan would form part of the AIA submission and would include a timeline for mitigation and measures for ongoing monitoring of implemented mitigation measures, with the ability to modify measures that do not appear to be effective.

The following checklist (Table 3) provides examples of the types of alternatives and measures which may be available and which could mitigate the impact of the non-farm development on agriculture. The user should work with the proponent to fill in Column C and with consultees and reviewers to complete Column D.

**Table 3: Alternatives and Mitigating Measures Checklist**

Item	Measure	Practicality/Feasibility?	Significance of Benefit/Cost to Agriculture - How/Why?
	B	C	D
<b>Preserve Agricultural Resources and Capability</b>			
1	Minimize loss of agricultural land and replace unavoidable losses with other land of comparable size and quality		
2	Prevent stormwater from non-farm development reaching farmland and agricultural drainage systems		
3	Ensure agricultural drainage, flood control, ground water, and irrigation potentials are not diminished		
4	Make waste disposal arrangements to avoid contaminating agricultural land and resources		
5	Control pollution near farmland and crops caused by non-farm development , construction, and operation		
<b>Protect Capacity to Carry out Farming Practices and Operations</b>			
5	Maintain agricultural levels of drainage, flood control, ground water, and irrigation throughout construction and operation of the development		
6	Adjust timetables for construction, operation and decommissioning, including any phasing of the project, around agricultural requirements, seasonal and otherwise		
7	Manage non-farm development site access to avoid congesting agricultural access and transportation corridors		
8	Design site to setback non-farm development from agricultural operations to prevent infringement on farming practices		
<b>Minimize Indirect and Cumulative Impacts</b>			
9	Protect biodiversity and beneficial insects habitat adjacent to farm fields		
10	Take steps to prevent increased public access due to non-farm development causing trespass, vandalism and theft		
11	Manage wildlife populations to prevent wildlife depredation of farm crops and keep cropping options open		
12	Consolidate fragmented properties so as to facilitate agricultural activity		
13	Use practical science-based criteria in managing and regulating agriculture in the vicinity of fish and fish habitat programs		
14	Where the disturbance is temporary, restore the site to productive agricultural state		
15	Monitor changes and commit to making adjustments to mitigations of significant impacts that cannot be fully predicted or for which the most effective mitigations are not known.		

# Appendix A: Content of an Agricultural Impact Assessment for Non-Farm Developments on Lands designated for Agriculture

An Agricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) will include the following:

## A.1 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

- a) identify the type of application and describe the nature of the proposal including a site plan and a plan showing the location of the proposal in the context of the surrounding area; and
- b) describe any activities or processes associated with the proposal and indicate the range of possible uses and activities that may cause the maximum adverse impacts on agriculture.

## A.2 APPLICABLE PLANNING POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

- a) a review of the policy context and regulatory framework in which the development is proposed, from an agricultural perspective, including relevant provisions of the Agricultural Land Reserve, Official Community Plan (OCP), the local Agricultural Plan, Development Permit Area designations (if applicable), and local by-laws;
- b) identification of the existing and proposed OCP designations and zoning on the property; and
- c) a demonstration of how the proposed development is consistent with these policies or when the application is for an OCP amendment justification of why a change in designation should be approved.

## A.3 ON-SITE PHYSICAL RESOURCE INVENTORY

- a) **Agricultural Capability:** Provide a detailed description of the agricultural resources capability of the site and surrounding area for agriculture, including:
  - a. A detailed description of soils, including mapping, and capability ratings based on a site-specific assessment;
  - b. A description of climate features.
- a) **Drainage, Flood Control, and Irrigation Improvements:** Describe on-site and surrounding land improvements on properties surrounding the site of the proposed non-farm development
- b) **Slope / Topography:** A general description of slope and topographic features including contour mapping of the site and surrounding area will be provided;
- c) **Drainage Details:** Drainage including existing or past improvements will be provided, including whether and how site drainage has the potential to affect drainage systems serving adjacent agricultural lands. If no system exists, the need for one and the potential improvements that could be achieved through drainage will be addressed; and
- d) **Groundwater and Irrigation:** Describe current use of water for agricultural domestic supply and irrigation in the area surrounding the site.

## A.4 ON-SITE FEATURES

- a) **Past Farming Practices:** Outline the history of the type and extent of agricultural operations on the site, including any recent changes;
- b) **Describe Existing Agricultural Production:** Include current cultivation patterns, livestock operations, and other land use.;
- c) **Non-Agricultural Land Use On-Site:** Describe on-site non-agricultural lands uses. Indicate conflicts with existing and potential on-site agriculture;
- d) **Parcel Size, Configuration, and Agricultural Accessibility:** Describe fields on the site, and their accessibility by farm machinery and indicate any limitations on farming efficiency created by these factors;
- e) **Existing Farm Management:** Describe land tenure and management on-site ,i.e., leased or owner-operated, on or off-site residence, size of the total operation of which property is part,

including the juxtaposition of the site to current operations and the potential to find other similarly capable replacement lands;

- f) **Capital Investment in Agriculture:** Describe and assess of the degree of investment in land improvements, irrigation systems, tile drainage, rootstocks, facilities, buildings, machinery, etc., in relation to similar types of operations on adjacent farmland and in the region; and
- g) **Local and Regional Context:** Describe current land use and the contribution of the agriculture on-site and in surrounding area to the regional agricultural sector.

#### **A.5 OFF-SITE FEATURES**

- a) **Surrounding Land Use Types:** Provide location and a description of the type and intensity of surrounding agricultural and non-agricultural land uses and proposed land use changes up to a distance of 1 km from the property boundary of the site.<sup>1</sup> These should be indicated on a map with details about the history of surrounding agricultural uses;
- b) **Existing and Potential Constraints to On-site Agriculture:** Assess constraints on agricultural production on-site arising as a result of existing and proposed non-agricultural uses in the area, including Minimum Distance Separation, nutrient management, traffic impacts, access, etc.;
- c) **Regional Land Use, Lot and Tenure Patterns:** Provide an overview description of the broad rural area containing the site, identifying key factors such as the extent of the area potentially affected, fragmentation and tenure (absentee, non-farm) characteristics, non-agricultural land uses, the general agricultural (soil and macroclimatic) capability, and a review of other commitments to non-farm developments in the immediate area; and
- d) **Availability of Agricultural Services:** Indicate the availability of agricultural support services to the site.

#### **A.6 AGRICULTURAL VIABILITY**

- a) provide an assessment of the viability of the site property as an agricultural operation on its own and in consolidation with a larger existing operation. The flexibility of the site for different types of agricultural operations must be considered in the viability assessment. This review needs to include considerations related to alternative agricultural operations that could occur into the future; and
- b) assess the impact on the viability of neighbouring agricultural operations resulting from increased restrictions that may occur as a result of the proposed development.

#### **A.7 IMPACTS ON AGRICULTURE**

- a) indicate the land loss effects of the proposed non-farm development on the agricultural community, including a description of the quantity and quality of land lost from agricultural production, and effects on existing or potential operations on the site;
- b) indicate the potential effects of the proposed non-farm development on existing and potential farming operations on surrounding lands. The discussion should consider Minimum Distance Separation criteria, Nutrient Management issues, the compatibility of the proposal with agricultural operations, and the effects on the flexibility of surrounding lands to accommodate both changes in types of farming, such as from cash crops to livestock, and expansions to livestock operations;
- c) consider the proposal's impact on the existing agricultural character of the general area including such matters as precedence issues or other implications of land use, tenure or

---

<sup>1</sup> The study area will be confirmed during the pre-application process based on area features including property ownership configuration, pattern of farming operations, road system and other infrastructure, topographic features, and planning designations.

fragmentation patterns. The effect of the proposal as an intrusion in an agricultural area or on the continuity of agricultural activity should be considered;

- d) consider the impact on services to agriculture in the surrounding area and region as a whole and how their activities may be affected by the non-farm development;
- e) consider the potential cumulative impacts of this proposed development in the context of other existing and future non-farm developments.

#### **A.8 ALTERNATIVE LOCATION ANALYSIS**

An alternative location analysis should be completed to demonstrate that the proposed non-farm development location has the least impact on agriculture and to demonstrate the need, within an appropriate planning horizon, for additional land to be designated to accommodate the proposed use.

#### **A.9 MITIGATIVE MEASURES**

- a) indicate any measures that could be taken to reduce the impacts of the proposal on off-site agriculture and the degree to which the impacts would be reduced (e.g., establishing appropriate buffers on the development site so as not to impact the ability of abutting operations to expand);
- b) identify the impact of removal and /or mitigation measures the proponent proposes to undertake as part of the proposal; and
- c) identify any notices that could be included as conditions of development to ensure that the presence of surrounding agricultural operations are recognized and to advise future land owners that those operations may be subject to future expansion or shifts in production.

#### **A.10 CONCLUSIONS**

The main findings from the study should be summarized. Net potential impacts to agriculture resulting from approval of the proposed development after implementation of agreed to mitigation measures will be identified. Opinions, regarding the implications for the regional agricultural sector of proceeding with the proposal as described, will be provided. If appropriate, mitigation measures to reduce any negative impacts on the agricultural sector will be proposed.

The report shall include professional opinions as to the extent to which the development supports the directions of the Agricultural Land Commission, the Regional Growth Strategy, the Regional Food Strategy, and the agricultural development policies of the local OCP, and why the proposal represents good planning.

#### **A.11 BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AIA**

The study should be supported with the following background information:

- a) literature cited;
- b) all background data sources;
- c) a list of people contacted during the study;
- d) a description of the methodologies and survey techniques employed in the study, including method of viability impact assessment;
- e) source of physical resource inventory data (e.g., soil descriptions, climate and slope measurements); and
- f) resumes of study team members.

#### **A.12 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Include a summary at the front of the report containing a description of the proposal, its effects on agriculture and all conclusions and recommendations arising from the study.

## Appendix B: Content of an Agricultural Impact Assessment for Non-Farm Developments on Lands not designated for Agriculture

An Agricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) will include the following:

### **B.1 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL**

- a) identify the type of application and describe the nature of the proposal including a site plan and a plan showing the location of the proposal in the context of the surrounding area; and
- b) describe any activities or processes associated with the proposal and indicate the range of possible uses and activities that may cause the maximum adverse impacts on agriculture.

### **B.2 APPLICABLE PLANNING POLICIES AND REGULATIONS**

- a) a review of the policy context and regulatory framework in which the development is proposed, from an agricultural perspective, including relevant provisions of the Agricultural Land Reserve, Official Community Plan, the local Agricultural Plan, Development Permit Area designations (if applicable), and local by-laws;
- b) identification of the existing and proposed OCP designations and zoning on the property; and
- c) a demonstration of how the proposed development is consistent with these policies or when the application is for an OCP amendment justification of why a change in designation should be approved.

### **B.3 ON-SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA PHYSICAL RESOURCE INVENTORY**

- a) **Provide a general description** of the agricultural resources capability of the surrounding area for agriculture, including a description of soils and climate, with special consideration of the contribution of the surrounding area to the regional agricultural sector;
- b) **Drainage, Flood Control, and Irrigation Improvements:** Describe land improvements on properties surrounding the site of the proposed non-farm development;
- c) **Slope / Topography:** A general description of slope and topographic features including contour mapping of the site and surrounding area will be provided;
- d) **Drainage Details:** Drainage including existing or past improvements will be provided, including whether and how site drainage has the potential to affect drainage systems serving adjacent agricultural lands. If no system exists, the need for one and the potential improvements that could be achieved through drainage will be addressed; and
- e) **Groundwater and Irrigation:** Describe current use of water for agricultural domestic supply and irrigation in the area surrounding the site.

### **B.4 OFF-SITE FEATURES**

- a) **Non-Agricultural Land Use On-Site:** Describe on-site non-agricultural land uses and indicate interactions with existing and potential off-site agriculture; and
- b) **Surrounding Land Use Types:** Include location and a description of the type and intensity of surrounding agricultural and non-agricultural land uses and proposed land use changes up to a distance of 1 km from the property boundary of the site.<sup>2</sup> These should be indicated on a map with details about the history of surrounding agricultural uses.

---

<sup>2</sup> The study area will be confirmed during the pre-application process based on area features including property ownership configuration, pattern of farming operations, road system and other infrastructure, topographic features, and planning designations.

- c) **Parcel Size, Shape, and Accessibility:** Describe how the site is served by transportation routes and how accessibility to neighbouring farm properties by farm machinery and farming efficiencies will be affected by the proposed non-farm development;
- d) **Existing Farm Management:** Describe farmland tenure and management (i.e., leased or owner-operated, on or off-site residence, size of the total operation) of agricultural parcels within 1 km of the non-farm development; and
- e) **Capital Investment in Agriculture:** Description the degree of investment in land improvements, irrigation systems, tile drainage, rootstocks, facilities, buildings, machinery, etc. within 1 km of the proposed non-farm development.

#### **B.5 IMPACTS ON AGRICULTURE**

- a) assess impact on the viability of neighbouring agricultural operations resulting from increased restrictions that may occur as a result of the proposed development;
- b) indicate the potential effects of the proposal on existing and potential farming operations on surrounding lands. The discussion should consider Minimum Distance Separation criteria, Nutrient Management issues, the compatibility of the proposal with agricultural operations, and the effects on the flexibility of surrounding lands to accommodate both changes in types of farming, such as from cash crops to livestock, and expansions to livestock operations;
- c) consider the proposal's impact on the existing agricultural character of the general area including such matters as precedence issues or other implications of land use, tenure or fragmentation patterns. The effect of the proposal as an intrusion in an agricultural area or on the continuity of agricultural activity should be considered;
- d) consider the impact on services to agriculture in the surrounding area and region as a whole and how their activities may be affected by the non-farm development; and
- e) consider the potential cumulative impacts of this proposed development in the context of other existing and future non-farm developments.

#### **B.6 ALTERNATIVE LOCATION ANALYSIS**

An alternative location analysis should be completed to demonstrate that the proposed non-farm development location has the least impact on agriculture and to demonstrate the need, within an appropriate planning horizon, for additional land to be designated to accommodate the proposed use.

#### **B.7 MITIGATIVE MEASURES**

- a) indicate any measures that could be taken to reduce the impacts of the proposal on off-site agriculture and the degree to which the impacts would be reduced (e.g., establishing appropriate buffers on the development site so as not to impact the ability of abutting operations to expand);
- b) identify the impact of removal and /or mitigation measures the proponent proposes to undertake as part of the proposal; and
- c) identify any notices that could be included as conditions of development to ensure that the presence of surrounding agricultural operations are recognized and to advise future land owners that those operations may be subject to future expansion or shifts in production.

#### **B.8 CONCLUSIONS**

The main findings from the study should be summarized. Net potential impacts to agriculture resulting from approval of the proposed development after implementation of agreed to mitigation measures will be identified. Opinions, regarding the implications for the regional agricultural sector of proceeding with the proposal as described, will be provided. If appropriate, mitigation measures to reduce any negative impacts on the agricultural sector will be proposed.

The report shall include professional opinions as to the extent to which the development supports the directions of the Agricultural Land Commission, the Regional Growth Strategy, the Regional Food Strategy, and the agricultural development policies of the local Official Community Plan, and why the proposal represents good planning.

**B.9 BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AIA**

The study should be supported with the following background information:

- a) literature cited;
- b) all background data sources;
- c) a list of people contacted during the study;
- d) a description of the methodologies and survey techniques employed in the study, including method of viability impact assessment;
- e) source of physical resource inventory data (e.g., soil descriptions, climate and slope measurements); and
- f) resumes of study team members.

**B.10 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Include a summary at the front of the report containing a description of the proposal, its effects on agriculture and all conclusions and recommendations arising from the study.