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Economic Strategy for Agriculture in the Lower Mainland



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The responsibility for the report, and its findings, conclusions, and recommendations, rests with the authors (Artemis Agri-Strategy Group) and with the project steering committee. The report does not necessarily reflect the opinions of the IAFBC or the agency partners who funded the project.

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Artemis
AGRI-STRATEGY GROUP

AN ECONOMIC STRATEGY for

Agriculture in the Lower Mainland

Final Report July 2002

FINAL REPORT

**An Economic Strategy for
Agriculture in the Lower Mainland**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Get organized The key to the success of this Lower Mainland economic strategy is for agriculture's private sector to become organized. Although government agencies commissioned this planning project, government's role in implementation should be one of encouragement and active support rather than outright leadership. If this or any economic strategy is to be effective, the private sector must take ownership of it and organize itself to act on its recommendations. In this case, "organize" means that leading product/sector organizations need to (1) agree on a collective approach to improving the industry; (2) pool resources; (3) seek support and cooperation from government agencies; and (4) carry out the actions recommended in this report.

This report provides a starting point and a basis for discussion to help get this process underway. The GVRD and other report sponsors have tentatively agreed to organize an agriculture conference. Sponsors will invite area representatives to review this strategy, decide what things they are willing to do, and what kind of resources they will need for - and contribute to - this purpose. As consensus builds around these issues, delegates could then appoint an "implementation committee" or similar group with a mandate to implement the agreed strategy.

Public agencies should also provide support funds and at least one full-time staff member to serve as a secretariat for the implementation group that is formed. As implementation proceeds, it will be important to secure specialized expertise to conduct an organizational study.

The Lower Mainland features dozens, even hundreds, of organizations and associations pursuing a disparate private sector "agenda," as well as a complex array of federal and provincial agencies, regional districts and two dozen municipalities that regulate or otherwise direct the industry. This report is oriented to improving agriculture's private sector; it is not intended to be a strategy for government. Nevertheless, the considerable influence that government exerts over agriculture means that most of the recommendations contained here require joint action by both public and private sectors. At the very least, they will require active support and cooperation from public agencies in order to be implemented.

Purpose of the project

Sponsors of this strategy (Greater Vancouver Regional District; Fraser Valley Regional District; Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries; Land Reserve Commission; BC Investment Agriculture Foundation) stated that the purpose of the project was:

"To develop, through a consultative process, a unified economic strategy that will prepare the agricultural industry in the Lower Mainland to deal with its challenges and take advantage of its strengths and assets."

In addition to a strategy to enhance agriculture in the area, sponsors also called for a definition of the roles of the various players with respect to implementing the strategy.

To the best of our knowledge, this strategy is the first attempt at defining an approach and an agenda particular to this area.

A key feature of this strategy is to distinguish between major *external* influences on Lower Mainland agriculture (e.g. currency fluctuations, competitive factors and international trade agreements) that are largely beyond local control, and pertinent *internal* issues that can be influenced by an organized Lower Mainland approach.

The industry faces many challenges

Agriculture in the Lower Mainland faces a unique series of challenges to its economic viability. Its 10,000 diverse farms feel increased pressure from urbanization and free trade. Farming economics favour large-scale operations, yet small, part-time and hobby farms dominate this area. Small farming operations require efficient, value-added operations to be profitable, particularly when faced with the Lower Mainland's high costs. Such international trends as environmental awareness, globalization, and demand for healthy foods, affect local farmers and the viability of area farms. Four levels of government administer a complex and sometimes confusing web of regulations that likewise affect operating costs. BC Provincial expenditures on agriculture, on the other hand, are about 15% those of other western provinces as a proportion of industry size.

The agriculture industry has seen major change over the past few decades. Among Lower Mainland farms, the most significant changes to take place are:

- A reduction in production of commodities and increases in value-added products and intensive farming;
- The polarization of farm types into intensive operations at one end of the production spectrum, and part-time and hobbyist producers at the other; and
- The clustering of farm types in areas that support particular sectors, e.g. poultry in Abbotsford.

Any economic improvement strategy needs to acknowledge these realities and build on the experience of those sectors and businesses that have demonstrated economic success.

The vision

The vision for agriculture in the study area that emerged through consultations with local industry representatives, is:

An economically viable Lower Mainland agriculture industry that is organized, proactive and sustainable over the long term

Strategic goals and initiatives

Six major strategic goals form the core of the strategy. These goals and their associated top priority activities are described below. Second priority initiatives (to be pursued as time and resources allow) are described in *Appendix 2B*. In addition, detailed action plans are proposed for each of these initiatives.

1. Protect the agricultural resource base

- Vigorously support LRC's efforts to preserve agriculture land in the area
- Aggressively manage the rural-urban fringe to mitigate conflicts between agricultural and other land uses
- Adopt a policy of "no net loss to agriculture" re land development
- Require municipalities to attach "save harmless" clauses to property titles and uses in rural-urban fringe zones
- Encourage municipalities that have not done so to form advisory committees and appoint liaison staff

2. Streamline the regulatory process

- Adopt a "one-window" approach to enforcement
- Disseminate, assess and discuss local by-laws affecting agriculture
- Increase consistency among area by-laws and their enforcement
- Investigate and implement a screening and review process for new by-law proposals to assess impacts on agriculture; disseminate this information
- Look for ways to use the FPPA to support agriculture and mitigate disputes
- Appoint an agricultural advocate to help represent industry's interests within and to government

3. Ensure availability of labour at the producer level

- Provide adequate funds to continue the Fraser Valley Labour Exchange Project in 2002
- Form a public-private partnership of government agencies and industry to investigate and implement a labour supply initiative
- Investigate community-based agri labour pools and offshore programs such as that in Ontario

4. Develop supportive policies and plans

- Consider agriculture needs in area drainage and water use allocations
- Assess potential impacts on agriculture from new development
- Ensure additional agricultural training for planners and other public sector staff
- Suggest that municipalities designate (trained) staff to be agricultural advocates and coordinators

5. Support an expanded industry image/communications initiative

- Actively support an enhanced AgAware program
- Use local communications vehicles for agriculture messages
- Stage an annual conference on area agriculture issues
- Facilitate and promote farmers' markets within area municipalities

6. Become market oriented and proactive

- Encourage producers to target niche and specialty products, both raw materials and processed goods, and sell to world markets
- Carry out market research aimed at identifying trends and opportunities for local value-added products
- Build on current marketing initiatives by area agriculture groups to promote greater learning and involvement by producers
- Design strategies to attract processors to the area; pursue a specific opportunity to explore the "organic baby food" processing concept

Implementation is critical

These directions and actions are designed to improve the economic prospects of agriculture in the area. However, strategy without action achieves nothing. A great deal of this report deals with such implementation issues as organization, action plans and getting started.

Despite widespread consensus within the industry about *what* will improve agriculture, the record of accomplishment is thin. The problem is not selecting the *right* strategy; it is about effectively *implementing* an agreed strategy. Implementation requires focus, leadership and a coordinated approach to improvement.

The strategy suggests about two dozen initiatives, the majority of which are suitable for a joint private-public sector partnership approach such as that employed in the AEPI. Others are more appropriate for implementation by private sector organizations (e.g. market research and marketing), or by government agencies (e.g. evaluate the effectiveness of selected by-laws; endorse FPP Act principles). Many initiatives require few incremental funds, or modest reallocation of existing funds, to implement.

Private sector leadership

At present, there is a private sector leadership vacuum in Lower Mainland agriculture. No regional or area organization exists, and no one organization has the necessary mandate or the resources to implement this strategy. Hence, government (GVRD, FVRD and MAFF) will have to assist the private sector to get started. If these agencies do not initiate the process, nothing will be accomplished.

In our view, the private sector must lead implementation of this strategy. Leadership means setting out a clear case for change, and marshalling the needed resources to effect change. To do this, the private sector needs to:

- Shift its organization focus from sectors/products to an industry-wide orientation
- Become more proactive in its relationships with government, particularly municipalities. One method for doing so is for the private sector to define what it wants or expects from municipal governments, and prepare a “report card” of municipal policies affecting agriculture.

Only a united, organized approach has any chance of influencing the overwhelming control that four levels of government exert on the industry.

An agenda for getting started

The initiatives represent a large volume of work; they cannot all be launched at once. We suggest that the following items comprise an initial agenda for implementation:

- Prepare a “report card” of municipal governments’ agricultural platforms
- Carry out market research aimed at local value-added product potential. As an example, investigate the potential for an organic baby food processor in the area
- Triple the number of farmers’ markets in the GVRD in the next two years
- Implement “one window” development approval processes in 10 municipalities

I. Introduction

1. Background

Agriculture in British Columbia's Lower Mainland is a study in contrasts:

- Although the land and climate are highly favourable for agriculture, many farms are threatened by adverse economic conditions and urban development pressures.
- While BC's Agricultural Land Reserve protects considerable prime land, the amount of local land in production has steadily decreased in some areas of the Lower Mainland.¹
- At a time when the industry is amalgamating farmland to achieve economies of scale, the size of most area farms has decreased to "small lot" proportions.²
- As free trade initiatives open up BC markets to year-round, low-priced imports from southern areas, Lower Mainland producers are being forced to seek new ways to compete and sell their products to both local and export markets.
- And in a region with dozens, even hundreds, of agricultural organizations, there is no clear private sector leader and little coordination of private sector effort.

In the Lower Mainland and elsewhere, the agriculture industry continues to change and evolve. Within the past generation, agriculture has seen significant changes in such areas as land productivity (e.g. through improved drainage), impact of environmental regulations, processing technologies, reductions in protective tariffs, and consumer eating habits and food preferences.

The above contrasts also represent some of the challenges - and opportunities - facing agriculture in the study area. Within this milieu of change and uncertainty, the question facing the agriculture industry is, "How do we adapt?" What strategies must the industry pursue in order to capitalize on recent trends and ensure that agriculture is sustainable in the long term?

Governments at all levels are concerned with the outlook for agricultural businesses in the Lower Mainland. The Agriculture Advisory Committee (AAC) of the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) saw a need for an economic strategy that focused on this particular area and its unique set of challenges. Late in 2000, a partnership of agencies launched this strategy development project; the agencies included:

- GVRD
- Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (MAFF)
- Land Reserve Commission (LRC)
- Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD)
- BC Investment Agriculture Foundation

The Artemis Agri-Strategy consulting team was retained to develop the strategy under the direction of a Steering Committee that consisted of representatives of the first four agencies. This report presents the final version of the strategy. A number of background and supporting documents also form part of the strategy package, which is presented in CD format.

¹ See "An Economic Profile of Agriculture in the Lower Mainland," pages 18-21 and Appendices 1 and 2.

² Ibid

2. Purpose of the Strategy

This strategy is predicated on the view that there is value in a sustainable agricultural industry in the Lower Mainland. The aim of the strategy is to address how the industry can ensure that agriculture in the Lower Mainland is economically viable and sustainable over the long term.

The client's Request for Proposal defines the purpose of the study as:

“To develop, through a consultative process, a unified economic strategy that will prepare the agricultural industry in the Lower Mainland to deal with its challenges and take advantage of its strengths and assets.”

This and other statements made by members of the Steering Committee guiding the study essentially posed two questions to the consulting team:

- 1) What should be the strategy to enhance agriculture in the Lower Mainland?
- 2) What should be the roles of the various agriculture players in the Lower Mainland with respect to implementing this strategy?

A geographical consideration of agriculture was the clear focus of the project, namely that of the BC Lower Mainland. This study area was to be considered in the context of provincial, national and international factors, but the aim was to formulate strategies and define roles for the region³.

Initial discussions with the client group further clarified the key concerns and issues that the study should address. Among other things, these discussions gave directions to the consultants to provide straightforward and objective advice, set aside industry politics, ignore “sacred cows” and bluntly assess industry prospects and problems.

3. Methodology

Since the client group retained the consultants in late 2000, the team has carried out the following major steps in preparing this strategy:

1. Prepared [“An Economic Profile of Agriculture in the Lower Mainland”](#) report that presents a variety of data and analyses regarding the recent history and current state of Lower Mainland agriculture.
2. Conducted a survey of several hundred agriculture organizations, farmers, processors and other industry members, to solicit their preliminary thoughts on industry issues, problems and opportunities. These ideas helped to guide subsequent investigations and analyses.
3. Conducted three focus group sessions designed to provide qualitative, in-depth feedback on key issues. These sessions featured regulated and non-regulated producers as well as processors. The [Focus Group Report](#) is attached with transcripts (available should you wish to review the findings in detail).
4. Members of the consulting team personally interviewed approximately 70 industry leaders and spokespersons, in both the public and private sectors.

³ The term “region” in this report generally refers to the Lower Mainland and not to regional districts. Where appropriate, we specify by name the Greater Vancouver and Fraser Valley Regional Districts (GVRD and FVRD).

5. Researched agricultural strategies in other areas, notably in the USA and Australia.
6. Prepared and distributed a paper entitled “Proposals for Discussion” that described possible strategic directions for agriculture, and invited comment from approximately 50 Lower Mainland agriculture organizations, municipalities and agencies (a contact/ mailing list is provided in the final report package).
7. Staged a meeting of industry representatives to discuss and obtain feedback on “Proposals for Discussion.”
8. Attended five meetings of the GVRD Agriculture Advisory Committee and project sponsors to present tentative findings, discuss implications, and set out strategic options for members’ review and comment.
9. Prepared and submitted three drafts of this final report; we reviewed the drafts with the AAC, made changes and adjustments, and submitted the final report.

The several rounds of consultations, the large number of interviews and the interaction with the project Steering Committee occurred over an extended period. While the initial expectation was that the project would be completed within a year, it required 18 months. During this time, events relevant to agriculture marched on: more than a full growing season expired; an election resulted in a change of provincial government; the BC AgAware Program expanded and was recognized as the best of its kind in the country. Despite these and other events, and the elapsed time required of the project, the project team feels confident that the methodology was sufficiently thorough to support the recommendations. Furthermore, the problems that the strategy addresses did not change in any substantive way during the study period.

4. How This Report is Organized

This report attempts to incorporate a great deal of information and analyses about Lower Mainland agriculture into a strategy that meets the needs of our client. Writing the report required making many choices in such areas as the level of detail and the readability of the document; the extent of “justification” required to support our thinking; and the order in which to present our findings. Our judgments in these areas were guided by our wish to produce a report that is clear, concise and complete in addressing major strategic issues. Because the planning terminology we employ can mean different things to different people, we present below an overview of the terms and approach we use in organizing the strategy:

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Contents</u>
II. Groundwork for a Strategy	Provides <i>background</i> and the <i>rationale</i> that leads to the strategic directions	Strategic challenges Industry overview and trends Vision for the industry
III. Strategic Directions	Description of <i>what</i> needs to be done (goals) and <i>why</i>	Six broad directions or goals Current situation in each field Directions for change
IV. Implementation Strategy	Guidance to making the transition from <i>thinking</i> to <i>doing</i> ; how to get <i>organized</i> to implement the changes; <i>who</i> should do <i>what</i>	Getting organized Leadership: roles and activities Coordinating efforts Action plans: steps, sequencing, timing, start-up resources

II. Groundwork for a Strategy

1. The Strategic Challenge

Several strategic challenges emerged from the situation analysis of the agriculture industry. As a starting point, this strategy must acknowledge the realities of agriculture in the Lower Mainland - its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats or constraints. These factors are summarized in *Table 1* below; the report “Economic Profile of Agriculture in the Lower Mainland” contains more data and detailed discussions related to these factors.

Table 1
Summary of SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent land, soils, climate, access to water • Access to <i>relatively</i> large and growing population base (but not large by processing standards) • The ALR protects 130,000 ha of land, of which about half is farmed • Good quality products; wide variety; some innovative production • Healthy, expanding certified organic sector • Advanced technology is widespread • MAFF does many good things; Abbotsford office active and generally respected • Good transportation access • Plentiful supply of energy • Good educational infrastructure and programs • International perception of BC as a clean, safe, honest source of food • Some well-received PR methods, e.g. farm week, new AgAware program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small farms and area of farmland in LM; constraints on economies of scale • BC Provincial Ag budget (as % of industry size) is lowest in western Canada • Regulatory regime at times is lacking in communication, oppressive, uncoordinated • Generally poor image; no collective industry effort to address image until recently • Fragmented industry; compartmentalized organizations; no LM area presence or voice • Lack of irrigation and poor drainage in some areas inhibits viable production • Poor returns to farmers limit investment and appeal of the industry to newcomers, raises questions of succession • Poor planning has negative impacts on farming • Distinct lack of marketing activity and market-related research
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small farms are flexible; relatively easy to change products, practices • Value-added products a good fit • Unused premium ALR land (e.g. within Colony Farm Regional Park) • Co-generation of energy for greenhouses • Improved planning in support of agriculture is quite possible • Public awareness/education is well received; can be effective • Some regulations would benefit simply from improved communication and explanation • Low rates with back haul trucking to US 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of regulation and cost of compliance drives potential farmers away • Oppressive and confused regulatory regime includes four levels of gov't, many agencies and statutes; can discourage new business, investors and financial institutions • Generally negative image, particularly relating to environmental impacts • Rising, fluctuating exchange rates • Rising, fluctuating energy costs • Urban encroachment; upland development • Aging farm operators; lack of succession • Highest taxes and fees in western Canada • Poor availability of seasonal labour

The strategy must identify ways in which local industry players and decision-makers can be proactive in improving the lot of agriculture, while recognizing that resources are limited and international forces affecting the industry are difficult to influence. In short, this first-ever “area strategy” must seek ways to foster and develop an industry that:

- Consists of diverse farming operations, from relatively small, traditional or hobby farms to intensive and innovative enterprises
- Faces both new markets and new competition through free trade
- Feels increased pressure from urbanization
- Requires efficient, value-added operations to be profitable in a relatively high-cost area
- Features a fragmented private sector that lacks overall leadership and is poorly organized on a *regional* basis to implement the directions recommended in this planning report

The latter point has particular implications for choosing strategic options because it relates directly to the *capability* of the industry to implement strategy. (This organizational situation is discussed in Chapter IV: Implementation Strategy.) In brief terms, the private sector in the Lower Mainland is compartmentalized; no area organization or mechanism for action exists and the various public and private sector players have little or no experience working together on an area strategy. This situation suggests that the strategy should:

- Consider *organization* in the area as an essential component of the strategy
- Focus on building initial buy-in and ownership of the strategy
- Identify those practical things that can be done in the short to medium term within the study area to improve the industry’s profits and prospects
- In general, keep things straightforward and clear; avoid complex or protracted strategies that require sophisticated and cohesive organizations to implement.

Among other things, such considerations limited the broad strategic options that this study considered. For example, options that aimed to substantially change provincial or federal agriculture policy (one person suggested “mobilizing provincial and national interests to protect our industries like the Euros and US does”) were considered inappropriate because they are inconsistent with the latter two criteria. In other words, they represent protracted, complex initiatives that demand considerable time and resources with no assured benefit.

2. An Overview of Lower Mainland Agriculture

The BC Lower Mainland contains only 3.7% of provincial farmland but generates 56% of BC’s total Gross Farm Receipts. Ten thousand Lower Mainland farm operators working on 6,500 farms of all sizes represent 30% of the farm operators in the province.⁴

About 90,000 hectares of land is actively farmed in the Lower Mainland, or 5.2% of the study area. Approximately 54,000 ha (57%) are allocated for cropland; the balance goes to pasture and other uses. The Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) in the Lower Mainland contains 130,000 ha, half of which is comprised of active farmland; the balance is used for a variety of low-intensity

⁴ “An Economic Profile of Agriculture in the Lower Mainland” discusses these and other data in more detail.

uses such as public recreation and open space. Lower Mainland farmland increased 4.5% in the period 1990-95 even though some municipalities, such as Richmond and Pitt Meadows, saw significant decreases in their farmland during this period.

BC's Lower Mainland contains the most favorable climate and some of the richest soil for agriculture in Canada. Nevertheless, improved irrigation and drainage in some areas, and improved air quality, would enhance the resource base. Despite protective legislation, both farmland and farm practices are coming under increased pressure from urbanization as the area population expands.

The area's 6,500 farms average 14.6 ha in size, compared with the province-wide average of 115 ha. Average farm sizes in a number of municipalities, including Maple Ridge and Mission, are in the range of 5-7 ha. Nearly 90% of Lower Mainland farms measure less than 28 ha (70 acres). One-quarter of area farms have capitalization of less than \$350,000.

Gross farm receipts in the area exceed \$1 billion per year, 56% of the provincial total. Returns after farm expenses total \$1400 per hectare, compared with less than \$100 for the entire province. A full 42% of operators worked less than 20 hours/week on the farm. Nearly half the farms employed paid labour, mostly seasonal, although many field crop producers experience labour shortages.

Horse farms are the most common type of farm in the Lower Mainland. However, they generate relatively small revenues since many are "tax farms" rather than real farm operations. In economic terms, the dairy, and poultry and egg sectors dominate the industry, generating 46% of study area revenues. Greenhouse flowers provide 11% and berries 10%. Horse, beef cattle and "other" types represented 48% of GVRD farms but generated only 18% of receipts.

Supply from "milk and feathers" sectors is managed through marketing board quota systems. Marketing boards govern a half dozen other sectors but do not generally manage supply for a number of reasons: barriers limit entry to the sector; production is seasonal and predictable; and markets are elastic or flexible enough to accommodate variations in production.

This document and related research point to the following global and local industry trends in agriculture.

3. Recent Agricultural Trends

A variety of economic and social factors directly affects the agricultural industry and helps to shape the nature of farming and the agri-food sector. Major trends and factors that affect Lower Mainland agriculture include:

- *Societal Concerns:* More heightened awareness and concern about such areas as environmental health, animal welfare, wildlife protection, aesthetics and reliable sources of clean, safe food
- *Demographic/Market Trends:* Urban growth and aging populations create demand for more and alternate forms of housing, including "rural estates" as well as demand for convenient, healthy, high quality foods

- *Globalization:* Free trade agreements have opened up many markets to Canadian producers as well as increased competition for many local products; agricultural commodities in particular are subject to heavy price competition from the US and other countries
- *Supply Management:* In spite of free trade initiatives, many sectors of the industry in Canada are subject to supply management provisions through marketing boards; while discouraging oversupply, these provisions can also discourage innovation and market diversification
- *Farming Economics:* In the face of rising production and input costs, farm economies are achieved by more intensive and/or larger-scale operations; farmland is often consolidated and farms become “big business”; smaller producers seek ways to become more efficient and/or add value to products; processors move towards fewer, larger, more specialized processing facilities
- *Political Priorities:* Governments have responded to these and other trends by increasing regulation and/or enforcement of, and reducing support for, agriculture sectors; at the same time, most governments have reduced overall expenditures as they attempt to balance budgets.

These trends have led to a number of changes in the Lower Mainland’s agriculture industry over the past few decades. The three most apparent changes are:

- 1) *A reduction in commodities:* The combination of decreasing prices for basic agricultural commodities and increased production and land costs (despite land costs remaining *relatively* low through the ALR), means that area producers cannot compete in pure commodity markets. Although some producers still grow commodity-type products, the overwhelming trend is towards more specialty or value-added products and intensive farming practices.
- 2) *Polarization of farm types:* Consistent with this reduction in commodity farming, many farms have “polarized” into two categories: (1) intensive operations that seek to maximize yield per acre of land; and (2) cottage, part-time and hobbyist producers who generally use traditional methods in small-scale or “tax farming” operations. These diverse approaches tend to underline the changing nature of Lower Mainland agriculture.
- 3) *Clustering of farm types:* Many producers of certain products have gathered in areas that offer climates, soil conditions, zoning or other factors that support their sector. Examples include poultry in Abbotsford, cranberries in Richmond, horse farms in Langley and Surrey, and mushroom farms in Langley.

4. A Vision for Agriculture in the Lower Mainland

A clear vision provides a foundation for an effective strategy. In this case, the vision for agriculture is:

An economically viable Lower Mainland agriculture industry that is organized, proactive and sustainable over the long term.

5. Directions for Improvement

The analyses described above and reflected in background documents generated a number of broad directions or areas for improvement. The strategy is based on initiatives grouped in six topic areas, each expressed as a goal. They are:

1. Protect the agricultural resource base
2. Streamline the regulatory process
3. Ensure availability of labour at the producer level
4. Develop supportive policies and plans
5. Support an expanded industry image/communications initiative
6. Become market oriented and proactive

The next chapter briefly summarizes the current situation in each of these areas, and describes the required direction and methods for achieving the above goals.

The final chapter discusses implementation of the strategy and suggests action plans to get started. Although presented in a separate chapter, implementation is in fact an implicit part of the strategy.

6. Initiatives Not Included

The consulting team considered a wide range of strategic ideas and proposals. We examined a number of initiatives proposed by industry representatives that we ultimately rejected as being inappropriate for a local area strategy. The rationale in part was to distinguish between major *external* influences on Lower Mainland agriculture (e.g. currency fluctuations, competitive factors and international trade agreements that are largely beyond local control), and pertinent *internal* issues that can be influenced by an organized Lower Mainland approach.

These suggestions, and the reasons they are not included in the proposed strategy, are discussed below.

Enhance agriculture's access to capital.

Access to capital is a challenge for most business sectors; it is not unique to agriculture. In the Lower Mainland, long-term financing and working capital appear to be available for sound agri-business proposals to at least the same degree as other areas of the province. No industry leaders mentioned access to capital as a major current problem. In any event, the initiatives proposed here are intended to make agricultural businesses viable and profitable, which will help them to secure capital and other financing.

Increase technical and scientific research.

The Pacific Agri-food Research Centre (PARC) in Agassiz (website: <http://res2.agr.ca/parc-crapac/english/parc.htm>) specializes in the areas of intensive farming, pest management, soils and poultry nutrition. In addition to PARC activities, a modest amount of applied research takes place in the Lower Mainland.

Most research is industry-driven and supported by federal funds. There is a demonstrated need for more technical and evaluation research in certain fields (such as environmental impacts related to manure and the effects of environmental regulations) but industry in general is not calling for major new scientific research initiatives. Part of the reason for this situation may be that research needs can be difficult to identify when no strategy or clear direction exists. As this industry strategy emerges through the current project, additional research needs will likely become apparent.

Make changes to the supply management (marketing board) system.

The supply management (marketing board) system is complex and has a long history, both in BC and in other provinces. Sound arguments are made both for and against supply management: it has produced healthy, profitable “milk and feathers” sectors in the Lower Mainland, but quota allocations can also discourage new producers. A recent example is the Fraser Valley producer of organic eggs who has experienced difficulties complying with Egg Marketing Board rules. The system is under national scrutiny as part of Canada’s free trade agreements and negotiations. Furthermore, the BC government plans to undertake a comprehensive review of marketing boards beginning in 2002. Lower Mainland industry members will undoubtedly play a role in these processes. In the meantime, there seems little point in Lower Mainland decision-makers trying to lead or affect changes on their own.

Encourage economic activity by eliminating “tax farming.”

“Tax farming” is the practice on the part of some owners of agriculture land, both in and outside the ALR, of carrying out just enough activity to qualify for the lower tax rates afforded agriculture producers. One school of thought suggests that this practice, often carried out on “rural estates,” is counterproductive because subsidizing rural lifestyles encourages competition with agricultural production. The counter argument is that “tax farming” actually helps to preserve agricultural land, which is the purpose of the ALR; long-term preservation is more important than short-term production, particularly if production is uneconomical or damages the land. Any tax farming problem belongs in the hands of the taxation authorities, not the agriculture industry; let the tax agencies deal with it. Alternately, the LRC might address the issue within the ALR by adjusting “farm use” definitions. Since there is no clear rationale to suggest that eliminating tax farming will help the industry, this strategy does not include such an initiative.

Be more proactive regarding international trade issues.

Free trade agreements affect most Lower Mainland producers, just as they affect most producers in Canada. A recent example was the 50% duty (later reduced) placed on greenhouse vegetables exported to the US. Such agreements and negotiations are managed by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (http://www.agr.gc.ca/site_e.phtml contains extensive information). Virtually all agreements are negotiated and implemented on a product/sector basis, and are monitored closely by provincial sectoral organizations and marketing boards. While several spokespersons for these groups agreed that free trade agreements and events are significant issues, none suggested Lower Mainland initiatives would impact the situation. Despite its significance and inherent challenges, international trade seems best handled by provincial product/sector organizations rather than through a Lower Mainland approach.

III. Strategic Directions

GOAL #1: PROTECT THE AGRICULTURAL RESOURCE BASE

Current Situation

- The Land Reserve Commission protects much of the Lower Mainland's remaining agricultural land, a critical factor in sustaining economically viable farms in the area.
- The Farm Practices Protection Act (FPPA) confirms farmers' rights and protects them from harassment. The Farm Practices Board established under the Act is a useful forum for dealing with public complaints.
- The Delta Farmland & Wildlife Trust (<http://www.island.net/~awpb/aware/id37.html>) has achieved some early success in pursuing agro-environmental initiatives that generate both environmental and agricultural benefits.
- Several (but not all) local jurisdictions have Agricultural Advisory Committees that advise on impacts of development.
- Crop yields continue to decline due to deteriorating air quality as well as restricted and/or expensive water supply.⁵
- While some drainage maintenance issues have recently been resolved, improving drainage remains a complex and costly challenge to many farmers in low-lying areas
- The damage and loss of income associated with wildlife habitat and pest populations on farmland are almost entirely borne by farmers; Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba (and most western US states) operate federal-provincial damage compensation programs.
- Contaminants washed from upland suburban areas, waterfowl populations, and leakage of septic systems, threaten the quality of surface water for agriculture in some areas.

Directions and Initiatives

Environment/Wildlife

- Increase application of such models as the Delta Farmland & Wildlife Trust that have instituted an effective process for discussing and identifying mutually beneficial management options for agriculture and wildlife.
- Examine and implement methods for compensating farmers for crop losses due to wildlife damage.
- Develop strategies to control pest populations, especially such non-indigenous species as starlings.
- Research area small farm environmental sustainability, e.g. organic production, wildlife management, suited varieties.

⁵ See "An Economic Profile of Agriculture in the Lower Mainland," pages 12-15.

Rural-urban Interface

- All local jurisdictions must intensively plan and identify methods to more aggressively manage the rural-urban fringe in order to reduce encroachment on farmland and farming, and effectively mediate disputes.
- Consider adopting a “no net loss to agriculture” criterion when evaluating land development proposals. Use the same criterion to plan transportation, drainage and utility corridors.
- Assist farmers to manage density, timing and conduct of recreational traffic on lands adjacent to their operations.

Air, Land and Water

- Research and pursue solutions to enhance agricultural productivity by improving air quality
- Undertake the drainage requirements and flood management needed to maintain soil productivity.
- Target small farm research aimed at more efficient irrigation systems and greater economy in water use.
- Quantify agriculture water requirements and incorporate them when planning water delivery infrastructure.
- Manage upland storm water quality so that there are no impacts or added costs to farmers in lowland areas.

GOAL #2: STREAMLINE THE REGULATORY PROCESS

Current Situation

- There is a multitude of federal/provincial/municipal regulations affecting agriculture; there is little coordination among them regarding application, enforcement or delivery.
- Regulators interviewed in this project stated that few federal and provincial regulations have changed in 30 years; however, interpretations and applications of those regulations have changed.
- Farmers are confused and frustrated with what they see as inconsistencies of application among regulations (many farmers do not disagree with the regulations themselves).
- A particularly vexing problem for farmers is that the province, federal and local governments lack a collective or coordinated process around agricultural operations and fish habitat requirements. There are a number of regulatory requirements in this area: the province regulates waste discharges and works in and around streams (Waste Management Act and Water Act requirements), Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) is concerned with impacts on fish and fish habitat (Fisheries Act), and local governments have bylaws regulating development and siting of buildings and facilities. Local governments usually will not issue development permits until provincial and federal requirements are satisfied. The *process* is onerous and delays can be costly.

- Although regulations protect wildlife habitat on farms, no mechanisms exist in BC to compensate farmers for the costs of such environmental protection.
- Many farm operators and producers maintain that regulators generally lack accountability and that few effective appeal procedures are in place, notably for rulings by DFO and local by-law enforcement personnel.
- Little evaluation of regulatory impacts or effectiveness takes place: inquiries and a literature search turned up not a single local evaluation study addressing such questions as the degree to which particular by-law(s) are effective, efficient or relevant.
- Many regulations overlap jurisdictions, some appear to be contradictory and some are based upon poor research or faulty logic. Some local regulation, on the other hand, seems to work effectively for both the regulators and the regulated (see *Table 2* for examples).
- As this report was being prepared, the province was changing its approach to reviewing applications for works in and around streams. Provincial regulators are currently pursuing a more results- and standards-based, best management approach. Proponents will have to notify the province that works will be done. The province will not issue formal approvals or referrals on behalf of other agencies; rather, it plans to spot check, monitor and enforce. DFO will still require proponents to apply for a HADD (harmful alteration, disruption or destruction) authorization for such works. Since this plan is still in the introductory stage, it is too early to determine its effects on farmers and on federal and municipal regulatory agencies and procedures.
- The regulatory situation contributes to a negative investment climate for agriculture. A knowledgeable area bank manager and long-time member of an agriculture advisory board stated that lenders and investors generally perceive that the burden is high for fees, charges, time and money involved in compliance.

Directions and Initiatives

- Find additional ways to coordinate enforcement and provide a “one-window” approach; an effective model for joint industry-government cooperation is the Agriculture Environmental Partnership Committee in the Lower Mainland, an initiative spearheaded by the BC Agriculture Council. Find methods to reduce the onerous demands of many regulatory processes on farmers and other members of the industry.
- Reduce or explain the apparent duplication and contradiction in some regulations; the most obvious example is four levels of government regulating fisheries.
- Ensure consistent application of the Farm Practices Protection Act. Although the Act is supportive of agriculture, it is still quite new; MAFF should be more proactive in explaining the Act and providing policy support for its measures.
- Carry out more research into regulatory impacts and effects; develop mechanisms for dialogue between regulators and the regulated to head off potential confrontations around controversial regulations, e.g. greenhouse operations, setbacks, development cost charges.
- Appoint an agricultural advocate to help represent industry’s interests within and to government.

Table 2
Poor Regulation of Agriculture

During consultations and interviews, we uncovered numerous examples of regulations and processes that are contradictory, poorly researched or applied in a wrong-headed fashion.

- A Fraser Valley sheep farmer uses sheep dogs on his farm. The municipality maintained that the zoning by-law permitted sheep farming but not dogs and suggested he apply for a variance. The variance, however, would still exclude the use of "guard dogs" which the municipality said includes sheep dogs. The municipality then suggested he apply to have the property re-zoned to a "R2" designation, which would allow sheep dogs but not domestic livestock such as sheep. These discussions took place over several years; as of late 2001, the matter had not been resolved.
- In Langley, the Municipality attempted to regulate transport of feed from a farmer's own feed mill to his other properties. According to local observers, the proposed by-law was based on speculative claims of traffic impacts and appeared to support rural lifestyles but discourage farming on ALR land.
- Delta introduced a development cost charge (DCC) by-law for agricultural operations. The DCC singles out intensive farming, apparently for the purpose of discouraging greenhouse development in Delta. Many local producers maintain that the municipality overlooks or ignores the economic benefits associated with such operations.
- Delta has attached covenants to greenhouse properties requiring land reclamation plans and bonds, conservation plans, operational limitations and restrictions on choice of fuel. Greenhouse operators feel that these covenants relate more to limiting development and appeasing non-agricultural interest groups than addressing science-based issues and impacts.
- DFO enforces zero tolerance of fish habitat impacts, which translates to very limited maintenance of agricultural drainage ditches. This approach not only means loss of drainage for farmers' fields, but eventually the plugged ditches become unsuitable for fish. In the late 1990's, the "Ditch Maintenance Committee" (made up of MAFF, MELP, Chilliwack and Abbotsford municipalities, and farmers) agreed on acceptable ditch maintenance practices and time windows to minimize fish habitat impacts. For two years, however, DFO refused to let ditch maintenance take place as recommended by this committee.

Good Local Regulation: The Surrey Example

The municipality of Surrey is considered to have a set of by-laws relative to agriculture that are clear, fair and consistent with the FPPA. A number of Surrey farmers mentioned that they consider the Surrey Council supportive of agriculture, and the City has a good working relationship with the industry. Some key provisions include:

- Agriculture receives due consideration in the OCP and other planning documents.
- Covenants are required and are registered on the title of property adjacent to agriculture land.
- No linear parks are permitted in the Agriculture Land Reserve.
- An Environmental Review Committee that includes local, provincial and federal representatives reviews all development permit applications.
- An elected councillor and a city planner sit on the Agriculture Advisory Committee.

GOAL #3: ENSURE AVAILABILITY OF LABOUR AT THE PRODUCER LEVEL

Current Situation

- The Agriculture Workforce Policy Board (AWPB) and focus group research have clearly shown that there is a pending labour crisis in BC agriculture. This is especially apparent in the small fruit and field vegetable sectors that face a brief harvesting “window” and a dwindling supply of workers.
- AWPB research indicates that the Lower Mainland has approximately 5,000+ seasonal workers; 97% are Punjabi. Recent changes in immigration law regarding family sponsorship have resulted in fewer immigrants. Many analysts in the field maintain that changes to these immigration laws are unlikely because opinion polls show that the Canadian public does not support them.
- The above sources also indicate that skilled workers are difficult to attract and retain in the industry, and human resource management practices are generally poor.
- The potential for greater mechanization in agriculture field operations is limited in Lower Mainland sectors; furthermore, much of our competitive advantage is due to high quality products such as hand-picked berries.

Directions and Initiatives

- Build on the existing pilot project (2001 Fraser Valley Labour Exchange Project), which reduces barriers and streamlines communication among various parties involved in agricultural seasonal labour.
- Develop an offshore labour program similar to Ontario, where 14,000 farm labourers from Mexico and the Caribbean are imported annually; this offshore model requires participating farmers to:
 - Provide evidence that insufficient Canadians are available for the work
 - Pay for transportation and supply accommodation
 - Guarantee a federally-set minimum number of hours of work
 - Pay workers the minimum or the going wage for the type of work they perform
- Community based agri labour pools have potential; a good recent example is the Oliver project, a joint venture between Oliver, MAFF, Human Resource Development Canada (HRDC) and the Chamber of Commerce. The Mayor of Oliver played a critical leadership and “champion” role in initiating this program. It required agreement (through memorandums of understanding) from all parties before workers from outside the area - mostly eastern Canadians - were hired. Although the program proved effective in meeting Oliver’s needs, further study is required to determine if the concept would work in the Lower Mainland.
- Train and educate agricultural employers in order to upgrade human resource management skills.

GOAL #4: DEVELOP SUPPORTIVE POLICIES AND PLANS

Current Situation

- A number of tools are available to support agriculture and protect the right of farmers to farm, e.g. the existence of the Agricultural Land Reserve, the Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act and Local Government Act (e.g. Official Community Plans, bylaws).
- Nevertheless, encroaching urban developments and some local policies threaten agricultural land and farming operations; there are a growing number of by-laws aimed at restricting farm operations (see Table 2), as well as mounting challenges by urban residents towards the sights, sounds and smells of farming on adjacent land.
- By-laws that affect agriculture are remarkably inconsistent among Lower Mainland municipalities in such areas as setbacks, lot coverage, development cost charges, urban-rural greenbelts, and property and other taxes.
- There is a limited exchange of information on government agriculture policies across the Lower Mainland. The two regional districts (which are comprised of municipal members) have no mandate in this regard. Individual municipal staff members occasionally exchange relevant information but no formal discussions or coordination exists.
- In spite of the significance of agriculture in their jurisdictions, few municipalities have staff dedicated to agriculture and often lack relevant expertise. Little agricultural training is available for planners and other local government staff; one planner who researched this issue stated that not a single agriculture-oriented course existed in any Canadian university planning program. [See “[The Food System: A Stranger to the Planning Field](#)”]

Directions and Initiatives

- Recognize and confirm the right to farm principle in Regional Growth Strategies; support it through Official Community Plan policies, including protecting the integrity of the ALR.
- Encourage municipalities to work in tandem with the province to implement the intent of the FPPA and ensure by-laws are consistent, rather than waiting for legal challenges to be made under the Act. Although the Act enshrines the right to farm principle in law, ramming the law from the top down will not make residents more willing to accept farming activities adjacent to their properties. An example is Alberta’s Intensive Livestock Operation (ILO) initiative, in which a provincial body determines whether regional projects proceed. There is currently a groundswell of outrage in Alberta claiming that the approach is undemocratic. A more effective approach seems to lie in using knowledge, education, research and innovative solutions combined with stronger linkages between farmers and the local community; hence the municipal role.
- Adopt development approval processes that assess potential impacts on agriculture from new development.
- Require “save harmless” clauses attached to property titles and uses in rural-urban fringe zones that protect farmers from frivolous challenges to their farming operations.
- Require developers to include “disclosure clauses” in sales literature relating to properties adjacent to agricultural areas, and farming sights, sounds and smells.

- Municipalities with large agricultural sectors could designate staff to be agricultural advocates or liaise with the industry; Surrey, for example, appoints both an elected councillor and a staff planner to work with their Agricultural Advisory Committee.
- Official Community Plans could help address agriculture areas and by-law issues by setting out principles and guidelines related to farm operations.
- Encourage more agricultural training for planners and other public sector staff.
- GVRD/FVRD/provincial government and industry could host an annual agricultural conference that focuses on local planning, policy or other issues, perhaps at the time of the Pacific Agricultural Show. Agriculture alliances on southern Vancouver Island and elsewhere in BC have regional events but there is no equivalent in the Lower Mainland.

GOAL #5: SUPPORT AN EXPANDED INDUSTRY IMAGE/COMMUNICATIONS INITIATIVE

Current Situation

- Now three generations removed from its agricultural roots, the public's regard for agriculture seems to be waning. Lower Mainland resident awareness of negative issues seems high but awareness of benefits of agriculture seems low.
- Some good image building and communication measures are underway (the recently-launched AgAware program and annual farm visits are effective examples); however, they can be overwhelmed by issues with a negative public image, such as impacts of farm waste on water supply and pesticide use.
- The industry is fragmented in the Lower Mainland and lacks a common public message. Until the recent arrival of AgAware (a province-wide program), there was no coordinated, proactive voice for agriculture. The sector's small numbers and fragmented message mean it has limited political power and a diffuse public image.
- As a result, agriculture generally receives less positive attention than in the past, and a decreasing proportion of public resources; a 1998 study⁶ concluded "that BC agriculture is placed at a disadvantage with the other three western provinces; taxes and fees being generally higher, while benefits returned to the industry are significantly lower." The same study concluded that, in recent years, BC provincial agriculture expenditures have been about one-seventh those of other western provinces.
- Although public opinion is difficult to measure, feedback from many industry representatives suggests that public attention in the Lower Mainland is preoccupied with regulating or limiting the growth of agriculture, rather than promoting or enhancing it.

Directions and Initiatives

- Form an "Ag-image/communications" team to develop a strategy for a major agriculture communications initiative or campaign: consistent, long-term, funded and cooperative.
- The initiative should combine public and private sector resources in order to target and influence consumers (voters), political leaders, regulatory bodies and media.

⁶ Comparative Study of Provincial Taxes, Fees and Government Programs in British Columbia Agriculture; KPMG Consulting; October 1998

- Focus on agriculture's ongoing contributions to health and well-being, the economy and the environment; develop an appropriate theme to deliver this message in the program.
- Build both the public and internal industry image; build cohesion and reduce fragmentation among industry sectors, including both food and non-food processors.
- Through communication, encourage strategies for individual sectors and commodities that support a universal theme of sustainable, modern agriculture.
- Foster opportunities for positive interaction between agriculture and the public, e.g. through direct farm sales, farmers' markets, interpretive facilities, demonstration sites.

GOAL #6: BECOME MARKET ORIENTED AND PROACTIVE

Current Situation

- Relatively small farms and a relatively small local/provincial market dominate the area. Few operations achieve the economies of scale available to larger producers in terms of mechanization, efficient use of labour, cost reductions, and the like. The exception is the greenhouse, chicken and egg producers that have built up intensive, profitable operations on small plots of land, and represent successful strategies for adapting to local conditions.
- Prices for *commodity-type* farm products are generally depressed and margins are low; smaller farms simply cannot compete in the commodity field because margins are generally too small to cover fixed costs in a small-scale operation. Consumers have proven willing, on the other hand, to pay high prices for such value-added products as organics, fresh or top-quality produce, exotics and others aimed at niche markets.
- The secondary food processing sector has been virtually eliminated from the Lower Mainland⁷, further limiting the market for locally-grown products.
- There is a distinct lack of market or end-user orientation within the agriculture community; with few exceptions (such as backward looking sales data), virtually no market-oriented research takes place.
- There are encouraging signs: there is increasing recognition of the need to add value and avoid commodities; value-added products and exports have increased in recent years; and a number of producers have proven adaptable to market forces by changing their product-market orientation to be consistent with current realities.
- BC's and Canada's safe, clean, healthy environmental image as well as other advantages (see Chapter II) make the Lower Mainland well-positioned to pursue export markets.
- International consumer trends towards healthy food, safety, convenience, selection and quality represent a continuing opportunity for local producers and processors.

Directions and Initiatives

- Encourage producers to target higher margins by supplying niche and specialty products, both raw materials and processed goods, to world markets.
- Continue to reduce production of pure commodities, and look beyond local markets.
- Determine ways to increase the number and contribution of value-added products.

⁷ "An Economic Profile of Agriculture in the Lower Mainland;" Chapter 8

- Carry out market research to identify trends and opportunities for local value-added products; focus on end user needs; observe and proactively exploit consumer trends.
- Build on current marketing initiatives by area Ag groups to promote greater learning and involvement by producers.
- A useful program model in this regard is the US “Small Farms Program” or **Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems (IFAFS)**.
- Provide incentives and remove disincentives to encourage selected processors to locate in the Lower Mainland. As an example, pursue a specific opportunity to explore the “organic baby food” processing concept (see *Table 3* below).

Table 3
The Organic Baby Food Concept

Although this concept has not been thoroughly researched, we offer it as an example of how to "become market oriented and proactive." The idea has sufficient merit to justify the initial research required to explore the opportunity. It holds significant potential benefits for Lower Mainland agriculture and agri-food processing, and could help reverse the recent exodus of food processors from the area.

BC Lower Mainland Advantages

- Now produce 250+ products of potential application
- Ability to draw suitable product from other areas of the province
- Positive world perception of BC's clean environment and integrity as source of safe food
- Established organic culture; large number of full-time certified and certifiable operators
- Large number of small farms suitable for organic production
- Large and growing hothouse capabilities that could expand for this purpose
- Proximity to year-round sources of raw product and markets, e.g. Oregon and California
- Suitable transportation, distribution and business support infrastructure
- Attractive exchange rate with U.S.
- Semi-skilled labour is generally available to meet processors' needs

Market Factors and Trends

- Strong international demand for convenience, easy preparation, taste with purity and nutrition
- Families have fewer children than in the past but shower them with more purchases of goods
- World trend towards organics has grown steadily and is expected to continue
- Suitable supply environments for organic production seem to be shrinking
- UK now imports 70% of organic food
- France has very low consumption of organics but high consumption of organic baby food

Product Category Factors and Trends

- One of very few niche food market segments with worldwide relevance and scale
- Nine major processors in the world from which to court a suitable strategic partner(s)
- Parental instinct drives decisions to do what is perceived as "best for my baby"; most decisions are based on safety, health and quality rather than price
- Organic baby food demands relatively small quantities of many raw material inputs - ideally suited to the Lower Mainland stock of small farms
- Long shelf life of processed products extends selling season and stabilizes prices
- This sector features high margins on several fronts:
 - processed foods (unlike commodities or "sell it or smell it" fresh products)
 - small packaged goods in year-round repeat purchase cycle
 - organics
- High margins and small package sizes support distance travel and access to world markets

IV. Implementation Strategy

Strategy is an abstract concept that in itself involves no action. The previous chapter suggested goals, directions and initiatives for enhancing the economic viability of agriculture in the Lower Mainland - the “big picture” of *what* the industry needs to do. This chapter discusses *how* to do these things: how stakeholders should organize, who should do the work, the steps they should take and the initial resources they will need.

1. Issues Affecting Implementation

Throughout this project, industry leaders expressed their frustration and discouragement at the past lack of action on industry issues. Despite numerous studies and widespread consensus about *what* needs to be done to improve agriculture, the record of accomplishment is thin. The problem seems to be less about *identifying* an effective strategy than about *implementing* the strategy. When considering implementation of this strategy, the consulting team faced a number of issues:

a) No Area Organization

Perhaps the largest barrier facing implementation of this strategy is a leadership vacuum: no single organization represents the industry, and no leader or coordinating body speaks for agriculture in the Lower Mainland. There is neither a “Lower Mainland Agriculture Association” nor area chapters of the BCAC. No area forum exists for discussing common issues and concerns and no mechanisms integrate the many product-sectors that make up the industry. No single private sector organization has a mandate to consider, approve, amend or implement the strategy suggested here.

Rather, the industry consists of a patchwork of businesses, associations, federations, cooperatives, groups, boards, councils, committees and individuals. In addition, a complex array of federal and provincial agencies, regional districts and twenty-odd municipalities regulate or otherwise direct the industry. Simply contacting and talking to such a diverse lot is a challenge. Identifying who should do what with respect to implementing this strategy is problematic.

As background information, *Appendix 1* presents a brief assessment of the private sector players involved in Lower Mainland agriculture, as well as some recent organizational events.

b) Little Ownership of the Strategy

The strategy is a navigational chart in search of a ship. No one organization or agency “owns” this strategy; it follows that no one has accepted responsibility for its implementation. The project sponsors are public agencies, primarily the GVRD and FVRD, MAFF, and LRC; but this is not a strategy for these agencies. While the private sector endorsed the directions recommended in this report, endorsement does not necessarily mean ownership. Consultations carried out during the study process had little chance of building private sector ownership of the strategy for two reasons: (1) as noted above, the Lower Mainland private sector has no clear leader with a mandate to claim or refuse “ownership”; and (2) it neither commissioned nor directed the study. This situation raises a critical question: who is prepared to do the work involved in implementation?

c) *Dealing with Government*

Government has a pervasive influence over Lower Mainland agriculture. Four levels of government, dozens of individual agencies and more than 20 municipalities are actively involved in the industry. Their scope of activity is broad, from legislative and policy initiatives to regulation to support activities in such areas as business operations, finance, research and marketing. Municipalities in particular exert considerable influence because (1) virtually *all* Lower Mainland agricultural production takes place on municipal land, and (2) so many issues relating to farm operations and the rural-urban interface fall under municipal jurisdiction. Furthermore, area municipalities adopt markedly different approaches to agriculture, ranging from supportive to obstructionist. Since the private sector is not set up on an area basis to deal with such issues, its dealings with municipalities are often less than effective.

d) *A Need to Get Organized*

In simple terms, the Lower Mainland agriculture industry - both public and private sectors - needs to get organized before it can consider implementing this or any area strategy. In particular, the private sector must organize itself, for several reasons:

- (1) The private sector - not government - must lead the process of industry improvement;
- (2) The sector can help itself in many ways, but only if it takes a united approach, pools resources and takes an industry-wide perspective; and
- (3) Only a united, organized approach has any chance of influencing the overwhelming control that four levels of government presently exert on the industry.

In this case, organization means three things:

- *Leadership* - fill the current vacuum, and agree on roles and responsibilities
- *Focus* - select key issues to be addressed in the short term
- *Coordination* - coordinate efforts among those responsible for implementation

This chapter addresses such organization and implementation issues, and is an essential component of the strategy.

As an agricultural area, the Lower Mainland is unique in the province and perhaps in Canada. Its particular circumstances and challenges, as well as its significant economic contribution, form part of the rationale for preparing this strategy. Our analysis suggests that the area also requires a distinct organizational approach, an issue that is beyond the scope of this plan to address. Some organizational concepts and alternatives that further study might explore are:

- *BCAC Lower Mainland Chapter*: Investigate the potential to build on BCAC's province-wide approach with an area "chapter" that represents all product-sectors.
- *Lower Mainland Agriculture Federation*: Establish an "umbrella" organization comprised of area associations, with a mandate and sufficient resources to implement industry-wide initiatives such as those identified in this strategy.
- *Lower Mainland Agricultural Authority*: Transform the MAFF Abbotsford office into a semi-autonomous authority with a mandate to deliver policies and programs specific to the Lower Mainland, and headed by a Board with a majority of area private sector members.

2. Leadership and Roles: Who Should Do What?

An important factor in implementing a strategy such as this is agreement by the various industry players on the role each will play. These roles vary and could include:

- Leadership on behalf of the initiative
- Support for the implementers: providing resources, technical or policy support
- Active participation: serve on a committee or working group; comment; provide feedback
- Indirect support: get out of the way

The majority of initiatives suggested in this report lend themselves to some form of joint private-public sector partnership (PPP) approach. Although the private sector should lead the process (as discussed below), public agencies have critical roles to play in being engaged, and providing such things as technical and logistical support, resources and policy analyses. Hence, much of the initial implementation work will involve (1) setting up joint working groups comprised of appropriate private and public sector representatives; and (2) providing clear direction on what is expected. Specific tasks to get this process underway are described in the “Initial Steps” section.

a) The Private Sector Role

In order for this strategy to be implemented, the private sector must take ownership of and lead the process. Leadership neither implies nor requires control over the initiative; it means setting out a clear case for change, and marshalling the means and the resources needed to effect that change. Government agencies such as MAFF can and should support the initiatives but they cannot and should not lead the entire process. To lead in this sense, the private sector needs to collectively change its organizational focus and its relationship with government; the key changes required are:

<u>FROM</u>	<u>TO</u>
Many small, fragmented, isolated organizations	Larger, coordinated, cohesive organizations with common goals and pooled resources
<i>Product/sector</i> focus on issues	<i>Industry-wide</i> focus, with individual product/sector needs taken into account
<i>Reactive</i> attitude to government policies, regulations, programs, initiatives	<i>Proactive</i> attitude: define needs, describe expectations, make justifiable demands, hold government accountable (see “ <i>Working with Municipalities</i> ” below)
Government-run assistance programs	Industry-led and -run programs (like BCAC)

These shifts suggest the necessity for a strong private sector role in implementing this strategy, namely to take charge of and lead *all* the initiatives suggested:

- Establish boards and committees in partnership with appropriate government agencies, with a mandate to implement selected initiatives and actions
- Secure resources *from* industry and public sources and allocate them *to* selected priorities
- Manage the process: set goals, objectives and priorities; monitor activities; direct the work of paid staff and volunteers
- Coordinate activities with other agencies and organizations (discussed further below)

Fulfilling this role will require an organizational body or structure of some sort; however, the initial form it takes is less important than ensuring that it has a clear mandate to implement this strategy. In other words, it isn't necessary to immediately form a "Lower Mainland Agriculture Association" or similar group. It is necessary to get the right players together and have them agree to coordinate their efforts.

b) Government Roles

Implementation of the suggested initiatives obviously requires the involvement and active participation of government. Each of the four levels of government, and each individual agency, has a specific mandate with regard to agriculture. These mandates imply certain roles for the various levels of government regarding implementation of this strategy; the suggested roles are described in *Table 4* below.

Table 4
Suggested Implementation Roles for Government

Level or Agency	Proposed Role
Federal: AAF Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to provide ongoing services in such areas as research and exporting • Funding assistance for implementation of selected area initiatives
Provincial - MAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lead provincial agency; Abbotsford office is the ongoing primary contact and coordinator for provincial-oriented issues • The lead provincial partner with private sector for joint initiatives; serve on planning and program groups as appropriate • Funding assistance for organization development and implementation of selected initiatives
- LRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead provincial agency for issues regarding the Agricultural Reserve • Lend expertise where appropriate to land planning initiatives
GVRD & FVRD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorse this strategy in principle; encourage municipalities to do likewise • Lead in disseminating the strategy; facilitate initial implementation discussions with public and private organizations • Provide initial leadership, start-up and organizational assistance to help fill the private sector mandate "vacuum" • Organize and host an annual conference • Commit to addressing region-oriented issues identified in the strategy, e.g. drainage, water use, air quality, regional planning
Municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorse this strategy in principle • Assist in disseminating the strategy and participate in initial discussions • Where appropriate, appoint advisory boards and liaison personnel • Commit to addressing municipal-oriented issues identified in the strategy, e.g. planning, by-laws, development impacts

These suggested roles are general in nature. Below, we discuss ways in which industry can break down implementation tasks and focus its efforts, namely by designating priorities; deciding what approaches fit which initiatives; and defining with each level of government the nature of its involvement in specific activities and initiatives.

3. A Focus for Implementation

a) Priorities

The previous chapter lists many initiatives of many types. Such a comprehensive list is far too extensive to be implemented immediately. Hence, industry requires more focused short and longer-term priorities. A high implementation priority, for example, is those measures that will help to get the private sector organized and talking about regional issues that relate to many product lines and sectors. Another factor is determining which initiatives are urgent, or have the potential to contribute short-term benefits, versus those that involve longer-term activity.

Appendix 2 suggests two sets of priorities for the initiatives:

- A - Items that should be pursued immediately; and
- B - Items to be addressed as time and resources allow

It is a *tentative* division because it is a starting point and subject to change by those who implement the strategy. As this initial list gets underway and as resources allow, decision-makers can and should include additional items, and adjust the suggested priorities to reflect current preferences and opportunities.

b) Different Initiatives Require Different Approaches

There are several different categories of initiatives identified in Chapter II, implying that industry should consider different approaches when addressing them. Some areas are currently being addressed and require little additional action by Lower Mainland participants, e.g. the work of the area Agriculture Environment Partnership Committee. Other issues would benefit from greater Lower Mainland support and participation, such as the AgAware program under the direction of the BC Agriculture Council. Finally, some represent entirely new initiatives, e.g. the idea of attracting food processors to the area, or developing an agricultural attraction.

Another factor to consider is the level of government involved in a particular issue. Since the focus of this strategy is the Lower Mainland, those issues that fall under local (municipal or regional district) jurisdiction can be attributed directly to the GVRD and FVRD, and/or the twenty or so municipalities that feature agricultural operations. A number of issues involve provincial and federal programs and policies; examples include the Agriculture Land Reserve, FPP Act, certain regulations, exports and market research. In these cases, it is important to determine if a local approach to the issue is appropriate (i.e. local private sector working with the MAFF Abbotsford office) or if the matter would be better suited to a province-wide approach, perhaps under the direction of the BCAC.

When considering its implementation approach, the private sector's aim should be to work with those agencies that have jurisdiction and those individuals who have authority to act, and avoid duplication of effort.

These diverse situations and approaches are summarized in *Table 5*. We subsequently suggest specific activities for the three levels of government, as well as a more proactive approach by the private sector in dealing with Lower Mainland municipalities.

Table 5
Different Private Sector Implementation Approaches

<i>Type of Initiative</i>	<i>LM Area Approach</i>	<i>Examples of Initiatives</i>
Local issues not yet underway	Assume leadership role; secure resources and aggressively pursue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal by-laws, OCP's, regional planning • Impacts of development on agriculture • Drainage and water use issues • Agri-labour pool concept • Attract food processors
Underway in some form on a local basis	"Plug in," support, influence and contribute to the effort as appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture Environment Partnership Committee • Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust
Underway in some form on a provincial basis	Ensure Lower Mainland interests are represented; support and contribute as appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Image and communications project (an enhanced AgAware) • Implementation of FPPA
Not being pursued but perhaps best tackled at a provincial or other level	"Champion" the initiative; lobby/push to ensure it appears on the appropriate agenda; coordinate efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamlining provincial/federal ag regulations • The "one window" concept of regulation • Agricultural Advocate
Not being pursued and no obvious sponsor	Assume leadership role; seek appropriate sponsors or an organization to implement the initiative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market and user/consumer research • Attracting processors to BC; removing investment disincentives • "Save harmless" clause in property titles to protect farming operations

c) Specific Activities by Government

As stated previously, the private sector's responsibility is to lead the implementation of the entire list of recommended initiatives, regardless of the degree of control they may have over certain issues. Government agencies, on the other hand, are able to address only those matters that fall within their jurisdiction. *Table 6* suggests a breakdown of initiatives according to current government mandates.

Some initiatives are attached to more than one agency to reflect shared jurisdiction or responsibilities. Many of the initiatives will require consultation with or discussion among several agencies and even several levels of government; examples include most regulatory matters, and attracting additional processors to the area.

Table 6
Recommended Initiatives for Government Agencies

Agency	Recommended Initiatives
MAFF	<p>PRIORITY “A”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide funds to continue the Fraser Valley Labour Exchange Project in 2002 • Adopt a “one-window” approach to enforcement • Form a public-private partnership of government agencies and industry to investigate and implement a labour supply initiative • Investigate community-based agri labour pools & offshore programs, e.g. in Ontario • Appoint an agricultural advocate to help represent industry’s interests within and to government • Look for more ways to use the FPPA to support agriculture and mitigate disputes • Encourage producers to target niche and specialty products, both raw materials and processed goods, and sell to world markets • Carry out market research aimed at identifying trends and opportunities for local value-added products • Build on current marketing initiatives by area ag groups to promote greater learning and involvement by producers • Design strategies to attract processors to the area; e.g. pursue a specific opportunity to explore the “organic baby food” processing concept (see Table 3) <p>PRIORITY “B”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine methods for compensating farmers for crop losses due to wildlife damage • Investigate authorities and possible methods for controlling pest populations, especially such non-indigenous species as starlings • Research area small farm environmental sustainability, e.g. organic production, wildlife management, suited varieties • Target small farm research aimed at more efficient irrigation systems and greater economy in water use • Train/educate employers; upgrade human resource management skills • Investigate options and opportunities to reduce production of pure commodities and access non-local markets • Identify and remove disincentives to encourage selected processors to locate in the LM
GVRD & FVRD	<p>PRIORITY “A”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide initial leadership and start-up assistance for implementation of this strategy to help fill the private sector mandate “vacuum” • Stage an annual conference on area agriculture issues • Actively support an enhanced AgAware program • Use local communications vehicles for agriculture messages • Facilitate and promote farmers’ markets within area municipalities • Consider agriculture needs in area drainage and water use allocations • Vigorously support LRC’s efforts to preserve agriculture land in the LM <p>PRIORITY “B”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and pursue solutions to improve air quality (agricultural productivity) • Undertake the drainage requirements needed to maintain soil productivity • Manage upland storm water quality to reduce impacts and costs to lowland area farms • Recognize and confirm the right to farm principle, and continue to consider agriculture, in OCP’s and Regional Growth Strategies • Develop local experiential attractions with agriculture themes

<p>Individual Municipalities</p>	<p>PRIORITY “A”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vigorously support LRC’s efforts to preserve agriculture land in the Lower Mainland • Aggressively manage the rural-urban fringe to mitigate conflicts between agricultural and other land uses • Adopt a policy of “no net loss to agriculture” re land development • Require “save harmless” clauses attached to property titles and uses in rural-urban fringe zones • Disseminate, assess and discuss local by-laws affecting agriculture • Seek ways to increase consistency among area by-laws and their enforcement • Carry out more research into and head off potential confrontations around controversial regulations, e.g. greenhouse operations, setbacks, DCC’s • Adopt a “one-window” approach to enforcement • Adopt processes that assess potential impacts on agriculture from new development • Investigate and implement a screening and review process for new by-law proposals to assess impacts on agriculture; disseminate this information • Municipalities that have not done so develop agriculture strategies and ensure that agricultural factors are researched and considered in OCP’s • Municipalities that have not done so form advisory committees and appoint liaison staff • Increase agricultural training for planners and other public sector staff • Municipalities could designate (trained) staff to be agricultural advocates and coordinators • Facilitate and promote farmers’ markets within area municipalities <p>PRIORITY “B”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and formally evaluate the effectiveness of selected area by-laws • Connect agricultural operations to local sewer systems wherever possible, to help reduce food safety risks • Assist farmers to manage density, timing and conduct of recreational traffic on lands adjacent to their operations • Require developers to include “disclosure clauses” in sales literature re properties adjacent to agricultural areas • Develop local experiential attractions with agriculture themes • Foster opportunities for direct farm sales, farmers’ markets, interpretive facilities and demonstration sites
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d) Working with Municipalities

One particular challenge involves the large number of municipalities in the Lower Mainland. Of the 26 member municipalities of the GVRD and FVRD, more than 20 feature agricultural operations. Most seem to respect and support agriculture; others appear at times to want to discourage or stifle the industry. Municipalities reflect widely divergent policies towards agriculture. In addition, agricultural operations differ substantially among municipalities.

The aim is not to convince these municipalities to have identical policies and by-laws. Rather, it is to ensure that (1) each municipality respects agriculture and implements the right-to-farm principle enshrined in the FPP Act, and (2) each municipal agricultural “platform” contains policies, by-laws and procedures that are fair and balance the needs of producers and agri-business with the interests of other citizens.

One approach for accomplishing this goal is for the private sector to identify what it wants from municipalities. Prepare a checklist of objective agriculture industry criteria and standards applicable to all municipalities; the municipal initiatives contained in *Table 5* provide a good start

for this list. When the list of criteria is complete, prepare a simple “report card” on how each Lower Mainland municipality is doing. This method will accomplish several things:

- Clarify in simple terms what the agricultural industry expects from municipal governments
- Create an “agenda” for discussions with the municipalities
- Generate objective feedback to each municipality on its agriculture “platform”
- Provide a positive basis for discussion, as opposed to the common scenario of industry groups reacting (usually objecting) to municipal by-laws and other proposals.

From the private sector’s point of view, there are many municipalities in the Lower Mainland, but they are quite different in their treatment of agriculture. The “report card” approach identifies both positive features and problem areas, and provides a basis for more detailed strategies. By being proactive in this manner, industry representatives can demonstrate leadership and initiative in their dealings with municipalities.

4. Coordinating the Implementation Process

Another challenge within the study area is *coordination*: regular exchanges of information for the purpose of keeping participants informed of what is happening, ensuring consistency of approach, avoiding overlap and tracking progress. As discussed in a previous section, the agriculture industry in the Lower Mainland is a mulligan stew consisting of hundreds of businesses, organizations, agencies and stakeholders. Communicating and coordinating activities within this milieu is a tall order. As a starting point, three primary areas requiring coordination are:

- Internally - within the private sector organization that assumes responsibility for implementing this strategy; it needs to coordinate a wide range of diverse projects that feature multiple participants and stakeholders.
- This body also needs to coordinate its efforts with those of other industry organizations such as BCAC, AgAware, joint industry-government committees, and dozens of product/sector groups carrying out related projects and programs.
- Finally, the organization needs to coordinate activities with government agencies that affect agriculture such as MAFF, LRC, AAFC, the Regional Districts and municipalities; the nature of this coordination will vary according to the nature of the initiative.

Such coordination needs should influence design of the organization that ultimately implements this strategy. As discussed previously, many private sector agriculture organizations may be sensitive to suggestions about forming yet another “umbrella” organization. The key requirement is to coordinate efforts; this does *not* necessarily require forming a “Lower Mainland Agriculture Association” or similar formal body. In fact, a good first step in organizing would be to simply establish a “coordinating body” to guide strategy implementation. Discussion of a more permanent or formal body can wait until the group has some experience and develops some momentum.

Although the existing AAC of the GVRD should advise on the implementation process, it should *not* be the coordinating body that oversees implementation of the strategy because it lacks the mandate and the resources to do so.

Coordination requires an appropriate mandate, resources and authority to do the job. Resources must include dedicated staff members; the workload and the attention required to implement this strategy are far too great to be carried out solely by private sector volunteers.

5. Suggested Action Plans

In summary, implementing this strategy for Lower Mainland agriculture requires three things:

- 1) *A body or bodies* that will assume responsibility for implementing one or portions of the six strategic initiatives, as discussed above, and then carry out the necessary work
- 2) *Resources*, primarily people's time, and relatively small amounts of program funds
- 3) *Coordination* of the various initiatives to ensure consistency of approach, avoidance of overlap and tracking progress, as discussed above.

Appendix 3 presents suggested action plans designed to implement each of the six sets of initiatives. These plans identify proposals, objectives and specific activities designed to pursue each goal, and suggest "order of magnitude" levels of resources required. For the sake of simplicity, the "Timing" column refers to timing *after* an implementation body is created. Although the suggested steps or tasks focus on the initial six to twelve months of activity - the start-up phase -

- Not all of these tasks will necessarily be completed in 6-12 months; and
- Additional notes on these plans indicate a realistic period for achieving the objective; for example, it will likely take 3-5 years to plan and implement an offshore labour program for the Lower Mainland.

Many of the proposals require few incremental funds, or perhaps a modest reallocation of existing funds, to implement. More important requirements than money include willingness to take responsibility for implementation, coordinate efforts, and provide initial support to get new measures underway.

6. The Initial Steps

a) Getting Started

The following section suggests initial steps towards implementation. Although the aim is for the private sector to lead the implementation process, the sector will require some assistance from government to get started, in the form of some organizational help and related (modest) resources.

Of the project sponsors, the agencies in the best position to get this process underway are the GVRD, FVRD and MAFF. Whether or not these agencies see themselves as "owners" of this strategy, they have a duty to initiate the process for the simple reason that there is no other leadership candidate within the study area. If they do not, it is virtually certain that nothing will be done. These agencies should therefore carry out the steps described below.

- 1) The AAC should formally receive the strategy report and approve it in principle (i.e. endorsing its general direction without necessarily approving all recommendations).

- 2) Disseminate the strategy within the Lower Mainland (a list of relevant agriculture groups is provided). In addition to sending out the CD version of the final report package, this process should involve debriefing sessions for both government and industry groups. Such sessions are important to build awareness and support for subsequent implementation steps. AAC members could assist in building awareness of the strategy by making presentations and discussing implementation requirements with concerned organizations.
- 3) Stage a first “Lower Mainland Agriculture Conference” and use this strategy as the framework for the conference program. Design both plenary and breakout sessions to promote discussion and ownership of the strategy by the private sector. Form a committee with a mandate to organize the conference and follow up its decisions and recommendations; members should include MAFF, GVRD, FVRD and private sector representatives from the major Lower Mainland advisory bodies such as those for the GVRD, Abbotsford and Surrey.
- 4) The conference should generate interest and even excitement in pursuing the strategy; subsequent steps should build on this momentum. To do so, implementers must secure sufficient resources to carry on the initial work of strategy implementation. At the very least, this requires a dedicated staff person with administrative support and modest operating funds; a budget of \$100,000 for the first year would be appropriate. A good model to follow in this regard is BCAC’s AgAware program, which involves a contracted individual operating out of his house with an annual operating budget provided by Investment Agriculture Foundation.

This individual should be in place prior to the above conference in order to:

- Help organize and participate in the conference
 - Demonstrate that initial resources are available for implementation, and that this project is not “just another study” that is received but never implemented
 - Approach potential sponsors of initiatives (as indicated in the Action Plans) to gauge their interest and enlist their support
 - Discuss with concerned organizations the implementation process and coordination issues described in this report
 - Prepare application(s) for funds to help implement the strategy, e.g. to MAFF, BC Investment Agriculture Foundation, the federal Canadian Agricultural Rural Communities Initiative [CARCI] or Canadian Adaptation and Rural Development Fund [CARD] and related programs.
- 5) Following the conference, as interest in implementation builds, meet with interested groups to
 - Clarify the strategy, answer questions, continue building support for implementation
 - Provide updates on what has transpired to date
 - Develop consensus around key implementation issues
 - Seek agreement on actions: who will take responsibility for what
 - Design mechanism(s) to coordinate efforts
 - Assess resource needs and how they could be met
 - Continue to refine action plans for proceeding with the agreed-upon initiatives

- 6) As this process unfolds, interested industry leaders and non-government organizations (NGO's) should organize themselves into a "coordinating" or similar interim body to guide implementation measures in the short term. In the longer term, they will require a more formal organization. At this point, it would be useful to undertake an organizational study to consider such issues as mandate, roles and relationships, internal procedures (e.g. for decision-making, control, member involvement), structure, and resource allocation.

b) Select 3 to 5 Initial Projects

The "A-list" priorities suggested early in this chapter represent a considerable body of work. No organization can do all of these things at once. Rather than considering (and perhaps getting discouraged by) the entire list, private sector representatives may wish to select a short list of 3 to 5 priority projects or goals that:

- Represent opportunities or important issues for *many* products/sectors
- May lead to a unified approach to action by several agricultural organizations
- Offer opportunities for public-private partnerships
- Have the potential to be resolved in the short term (1 to 3 years)
- Require money and other resources that are reasonably attainable.

The projects may stem from the agenda suggested earlier, or they may be related ideas that arise from discussions about what can be done now. Project ideas or goals that meet the above criteria include the following:

- 1) Organize and stage an annual Lower Mainland agriculture conference (see below)
- 2) Prepare a "report card" of municipal governments' agricultural platforms
- 3) Investigate the potential for an organic baby food processor in the Lower Mainland
- 4) Carry out market research aimed at local value-added product potential
- 5) Triple the number of farmers markets in the GVRD in the next two years
- 6) Implement "one window" development approval processes in 10 municipalities

In Conclusion

Activity in the initial six to twelve months is the critical period in the launch of any new strategy, and this agriculture strategy is no exception. The "getting started" steps and action plans are designed to build private sector ownership and create the necessary momentum. If the industry and its leaders get organized and behind this strategy, it has the potential to significantly improve the economic prospects of agriculture in the Lower Mainland.

Appendix 1

A Brief Assessment of Area Agriculture Organizations

The BC Agriculture Council (BCAC) is the provincial body whose purpose is to enhance, promote and ensure the economic viability of the agriculture industry. Headquartered in Kelowna, the Council's activities focus on industry-wide initiatives within the Province. These include coordinating the various sectors, developing policies, working with government agencies, and implementing programs and services. Major programs launched by BCAC include AgAware BC, the Agriculture Environment Protection Initiative (AEPI), and the Farm and Ranch Safety & Health Agency (FARSHA). Since it was founded only in 1997, the Council is a relatively new organization, and many of its programs and services are in development mode.

Agriculture organizations active in the Lower Mainland can be considered in three groups:

1. *Advisory committees* established by local governments with corresponding geographic mandates, including the GVRD's Agriculture Advisory Committee and approximately six municipal committees (several were announced or being formed during the course of this study). In addition, the FVRD is considering appointing an agriculture advisory committee.
2. *Marketing-oriented*: Marketing Boards, co-operatives, sales and promotion groups
3. *Product/sectoral organizations*: dozens of groups formed along product lines to represent the interests of growers/producers and related businesses. While such groups may also serve as the marketing arm for the product/sector, they are distinguished from the marketing-oriented groups by the fact that they carry out non-marketing activities, e.g. lobbying, technical support, and research.

[A detailed listing of agricultural organizations located in and of interest to the Lower Mainland is included in the final strategy package.]

The industry has a "vertical" structure that is divided strictly along product lines. Most product/sectoral groups essentially operate in isolation from one another. Many sectors in fact have little in common - and sometimes conflict with - neighbouring product groups because they face different issues and concerns regarding regulations, operations, marketing, and so on.

The only *regional* agricultural body is the GVRD's advisory committee that guided this strategic planning project. The AAC represents the only formal link between regional government and the private sector. Like all advisory bodies, however, it has no authority to implement programs or change policies. In fact, the GVRD and FVRD situations are similar: neither has a mandate from their member municipalities to implement programs, develop policies, provide funding or otherwise proactively enhance the industry.

In the absence of a common voice or a coordinated approach, dozens of sectoral organizations attempt to fill the role of industry representatives. They serve on committees, attend meetings, review legislation, assess studies, compile background information, present position papers, and lobby decision-makers. Every group gets contacted about virtually every issue and most feel the need to respond. Leaders spend extraordinary amounts of time on industry-wide issues on behalf of their sector. At best, this situation is inefficient because it leads to duplication and redundancy.

At worst, it can be confusing and counterproductive because sectoral associations typically have no mandate and insufficient resources to act as a representative for the entire industry.

Recognizing these limitations, some leaders have attempted in recent years to organize the private sector in different ways. Examples include:

- (1) Various local farmers institutes whose memberships cut across product lines; an example is the Delta Farmers Institute, a coalition that is currently opposing certain municipal by-laws in Delta that have negative implications for farmers.
- (2) A number of sectoral associations have gathered their offices in one building in Abbotsford as a means of increasing communication and coordination. While this is generally viewed as a positive development, the building is now full and cannot accept more tenants.
- (3) The BC Horticultural Coalition was formed to represent the various sectors and individual associations that make up this field. It encountered start-up problems, however, and closed its office after two years. It continues to function in the absence of full-time staff or office.
- (4) A group of Vancouver Island producers recently formed a group to launch the "Island Farms" label that helps to market a variety of local products. The group is now considering ways to extend their role beyond this marketing function into area-specific industry support programs and activities. Representatives are in contact with the BCAC to discuss how such a "regional" approach could work. While the BCAC is interested in the Vancouver Island experiment, it has no plans to launch or even actively support regional chapters or programming.

The key implication from this situation is that no area agricultural organization or mechanism exists in the Lower Mainland. With the exception of the fledgling movement on Vancouver Island, no such organizations exist in the Province. Planning such area or regional approaches remains an idea in its infancy.

Appendix 2A
Industry Initiatives for Lower Mainland Agriculture
Immediate Priority

<i>Goal</i>	<i>Initiative*</i>
1. Protect the agricultural resource base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vigorously support LRC's efforts to preserve agriculture land in the Lower Mainland • Aggressively manage the rural-urban fringe to mitigate conflicts between agricultural and other land uses • Adopt a policy of "no net loss to agriculture" re land development • Municipalities require "save harmless" clauses attached to property titles and uses in rural-urban fringe zones • Municipalities that have not done so form advisory committees and appoint liaison staff
2. Streamline the regulatory process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt a "one-window" approach to enforcement • Disseminate, assess and discuss local by-laws affecting agriculture • Increase consistency among area by-laws and their enforcement • Investigate and implement a screening & review process for new by-law proposals to assess impacts on agriculture; disseminate this information • Look for ways to use the FPPA to support agriculture and mitigate disputes • Appoint an agricultural advocate to help represent industry's interests within and to government
3. Ensure availability of labour at the producer level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide adequate funds to continue the Fraser Valley Labour Exchange Project in 2002 • Form a public-private partnership of government agencies & industry to investigate and implement a labour supply initiative • Investigate community based agri labour pools and offshore programs such as that in Ontario
4. Develop supportive policies and plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider agriculture needs in area drainage and water use allocations • Adopt processes that assess potential impacts on agriculture from new development • More agricultural training for planners and other public sector staff • Municipalities could designate (trained) staff to be agricultural advocates and coordinators
5. Support an expanded industry image/communications initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund greatly enhanced AgAware program through universal partnerships • Use local communications vehicles for agriculture messages • Stage an annual conference on area agriculture issues • Facilitate and promote agri- / horticultural tourism
6. Become market oriented and proactive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage producers to target niche & specialty products, both raw materials and processed goods, and sell to world markets • Learn what we should produce to satisfy market needs. Carry out market research to identify trends / opportunities for local value-added products • Build on current marketing initiatives by area ag groups to promote greater learning and involvement by producers • Design strategies to attract processors to the area; e.g. pursue a specific opportunity to explore the "organic baby food" processing concept

*See Chapter II for a more detailed description of initiatives.

Appendix 2B

Industry Initiatives for Lower Mainland Agriculture
Second Priority: Address as time and resources permit

<i>Goal</i>	<i>Initiative*</i>
1. Protect the agricultural resource base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and pursue solutions that will reverse deteriorating air quality and improve agricultural productivity • Examine and implement methods for compensating farmers for crop losses due to wildlife damage • Develop strategies to control pest populations, especially such non-indigenous species as starlings • Connect agricultural operations to local sewer systems wherever possible, to help reduce food safety risks • Research area small farm environmental sustainability, e.g. organic production, wildlife management, suited varieties • Assist farmers to manage density, timing and conduct of recreational traffic on lands adjacent to their operations • Undertake the drainage requirements needed to maintain soil productivity • Target small farm research aimed at more efficient irrigation systems and greater economy in water use • Manage upland storm water quality so that there are no impacts or added costs to farmers in lowland areas
2. Regulatory process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and evaluate the effectiveness of selected area by-laws • Carry out more research into and head off potential confrontations around controversial regulations, e.g. greenhouse operations, setbacks, DCC's
3. Labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train/educate employers; upgrade human resource management skills
4. Supportive policies and plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider agriculture, and recognize and confirm the right to farm principle, in OCP's and Regional Growth Strategies • Require developers to include "disclosure clauses" in sales literature re properties adjacent to agricultural areas
5. Ag-image Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stimulate construction and facilitate operation of farmers' markets • Encourage and support a theme of sustainable, modern agriculture • Build public and internal industry image; build cohesion and reduce fragmentation among industry sectors • Develop local experiential attractions with agriculture themes • Foster opportunities for direct farm sales, farmers' markets, interpretive facilities and demonstration sites
6. Market Oriented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in continued search for options and opportunities to reduce production of pure commodities and to allow access to non-local markets • Identify and remove disincentives and encourage selected processors to locate in the Lower Mainland (such as an organic baby food facility).

*See Chapter II for a more detailed description of initiatives.

Appendix 3
ACTION PLAN

GOAL #1: Protect the agricultural resource base						Municipality	GVRD/FVRD	Prov. Gov't	Fed. Gov't	Industry	Other
						Responsibility					
Proposal	Objective	Activity	Resource Implications	Timing							
1. Reduce environment/wildlife conflicts with agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote mutually beneficial environment/ agriculture initiatives 	Increase support for and application of such models as the DFLWT in other local jurisdictions Investigate tax credit schemes to reduce the economic cost to farmers of providing societal environmental benefits	Pursue seed monies through AEPI and NGO's Research	0-6 mo. Immediate			S \$ P	S	P \$	P *	
		Fairly compensate farmers for taking land out of production to provide environmental benefits	Loss of tax revenue at local and/or provincial levels	0-6 mo.	P		P	P			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fairly compensate farmers for crop losses due to wildlife damage 	Develop processes to prevent, mitigate and compensate for wildlife damage on agricultural lands	Utilize AEPI program	0-6 mo.			\$		P		
		Design damage compensation program based on models in other provinces	Substantial	0-6 mo.			P \$	P	P		
		Increase program funding and expand application	Substantial	1-2 years			P \$	S			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce agricultural damage by pest populations 	Develop strategies to control and manage pest species in the LM, especially such non-indigenous species as starlings	Research Inventory	0-6 mo.			P \$				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Control food safety risk associated with wildlife populations on farms 	Develop wildlife habitat and population management schemes based on ability of agriculture to sustain impacts.	Inventory	0-6 mo.			P \$ P	S \$ S			
			Research	3-5 years							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote farm agriculture-environment strategies in the LM 	Contribute towards solutions that deal with farm environmental sustainability, such as organic production, IPM, wildlife management, varieties, reduction in smells, waste management	Research Field testing Funding sources include AEPI and Investment Agriculture	3-5 years 0-6 mo.			P \$ P	P \$		S *		
NOTES:											

*Non-governmental organizations

P = Primary responsibility **S** = Secondary responsibility **\$** = Contribute resources

Proposal	Objective	Activity	Resource Implications	Timing	Responsibility						
						S		S	P		
GOAL #1: 2. Protect air and water resources	• Reduce pollution of agricultural water resources	Support programs to manage farm waste on farms	Utilize AEPI	0-6 mo.		S		S	P		
		Develop beneficial use options for agricultural waste	Inventory and investigation. Use existing resources	3-5 years			P	S		P*	
		Manage impact of farm waste on agriculture	Inventory and investigation. Use existing resources	3-5 years		S	P			S*	
		Control urban development impacts on quality of agricultural water resources	Inventory and investigation. Use existing resources	5-10 years	P	P	S	S			
		Develop safe on-farm sewer systems	Research	3-5 years			P			P*	
		Develop strategies to control environmental impact of septic systems	Research	0-6 mo		S	P		P	P*	
	Municipal hook-up User pay implications Federal infrastructure program		3-5 years	P \$	P \$	S	S				
	• Maintain and increase availability of water resources for agriculture	Promote irrigation efficiency initiatives on farms	Create programs	3-5 years			P	S			
		Develop improved irrigation systems	Investigation and research Inventory and investigation	1-2 years	P	P \$	P \$	S	P		
		Quantify agricultural water requirements in regional water planning		0-6 mo.	S	P	S				
	• Improve air quality for agriculture	Develop strategies to reduce vehicular contributions to air pollution	Implementation of air quality management plan. Significant resources required	1-2 years	S	P \$	P \$	S			
		Support programs to manage air quality on farms	Investigation and research	1-2 years			P	P	P		
		Quantify impact of air pollution on agriculture	Investigation and research	1-2 years			P \$	P		P*	
	3. Protect soil resources	• Undertake the drainage requirements required to maintain soil productivity	Implement annual agricultural drainage maintenance schedules	Requires assessment and budget allocation	Immediate and annually	P \$		P \$	P	P	P
			Require agricultural impact assessment prior to approval	Use existing resources	Immediate	P	P	P			
• Reduce impact of government use and/or acquisition of ALR land for non-farming purposes		Introduce agricultural impact criteria into land acquisition decision-making process	Use existing resources	Immediate	P	P	P				

*Universities and public research institutions

P = Primary responsibility **S** = Secondary responsibility **\$** = Contribute resources

Proposal	Objective	Activity	Resource Implications	Timing	Responsibility					
					P	S				
GOAL #1: 4. Enhance ability of farmers to carry out farming activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the rural-urban interface is effective in protecting agriculture from urban encroachment 	Adopt adjacent development approval processes that assess the impact on agriculture	Use existing resources	0-6 mo.	P		S			
		Develop agricultural impact criteria in adjacent new development approvals	Use existing resources	0-6 mo.	P		P			
		Require "save harmless" clauses attached to property titles in fringe zones that protect farmers from unwarranted challenges to their farming operations later	Use existing resources	0-6 mo.	P		S			
		Require developers to include "disclosure clauses" on property title about the existence of adjacent farms and farming operations, sights, smells, and sounds	Use existing resources	0-6 mo.	P		S			
		Consider innovative tax regimes (e.g. development permit area or buffer tax credits) to encourage suitable densities and land uses to enhance agricultural objectives in fringe areas	Use existing resources	0-6 mo.	P		P			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the spill-over effects created by farms 	Improve the environmental sustainability of LM farms	Use AEPI	0-6 mo.	S		P	P	P	P*
		Investigate and develop rural-urban management systems that reduce negative impacts created by farming activities	Use existing resources	0-6 mo.	S		P	P	P	
		Improve process for resolving disputes	Use existing resources	0-6 mo.	S		P		P	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the intent and provisions of the Farm Practices Protection Act 	Support farmer right to choose farm type in ALR lands when utilizing normal farm practices	Use existing resources	0-6 mo.	P		S			
		Determine desirability of farming operations and activities based on "solid science"	Use existing resources to implement	0-6 mo.	P		S			
		Develop innovative solutions to deal with conflicts posed by activities necessary for farm profitability and broader societal needs	Investigate and research problematic areas	0-6 mo.			P	P		

*Universities and public research institutions

P = Primary responsibility S = Secondary responsibility \$ = Contribute resources

Appendix 3(continued)

ACTION PLAN

GOAL #2: Streamline the regulatory process						Municipality	GVRD/FVRD	Prov. Gov't	Fed. Gov't	Industry	Other*
<i>Proposal</i>	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Resource Implications</i>	<i>Timing</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>						
Remove confusion in environmental regulatory compliance requirements for agricultural operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve coordination of environmental regulatory and enforcement processes 	Explore alternatives for coordinating environmental regulations/enforcement such as a "one window" approach possibly through the Agriculture Environmental Partnership Initiative (AEPI)	May require some reallocation of existing resources and supplemented by a neutral process coordinator working under the AEPI	12 months	S		P	P	S	AEPI	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate actual environmental regulations to farmers 	Conduct workshops, prepare and disseminate materials to farmers outlining environmental assessment processes and regulations; set-up a website to communicate regulations and procedures (AEPI)	Fund through AEPI	6-12 months	S	S	P	P	P	AEPI \$	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure environmental regulations are science-based 	Undertake research to determine that regulations are grounded in science (Coordinate through AEPI)	New funding for research	1-2 years			P \$	P \$	P	AEPI	
Remove confusion in local government approvals and permit requirements for agricultural operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate approval and permitting processes to farmers 	Conduct workshops, prepare and disseminate materials to farmers outlining local government approval processes; set-up a website to communicate procedures	May require some reallocation of existing resources	6-12 months	P		S		S		
Ensure Development Cost Charges (DCC) for agriculture are fair and equitable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To determine if existing or proposed DCC's are based on fair and equitable treatment of the industry 	Undertake studies to assess if DCC's are calculated in a consistent and fair manner and that they are equitably used across the region	Research funding required	0-6 months	P \$	S	P		S		

P = Primary responsibility **S** = Supportive role

Appendix 3(continued)

ACTION PLAN

GOAL #3: Ensure availability of labour at the producer level

Ensuring availability of labour at the producer level may require a combination of two optional approaches:
A. Develop strategies to take advantage of locally available labour
B. Develop an off shore labour strategy modeled on the Ontario example

Option A - local labour strategy					Municipality	GVRD/FVRD	Prov. Gov't	Fed. Gov't	Industry	AWPB
Proposal	Objective	Activity	Resource Implications	Timing	Responsibility					
Develop a long term labour strategy for seasonal agriculture labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure adequate labour resources are available to pick all crops. 	AWPB should clearly define objectives Prepare Request for Proposals Approach associations and Investment Agriculture for funding. Hire consultant to assist in the development	Matching dollars with Investment Agriculture, HRDC funding as an IAS project. Industry associations will have to provide matching dollars	Immediately			\$			P \$
Government acknowledgement of the value of agriculture to the Province of BC and thus the need for seasonal labour to ensure crops are picked.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build Provincial and Federal government support for labour supply initiatives. 	Industry associations increase political activity and communication to raise awareness of agriculture	Part of wider communication strategy to raise the profile of agriculture in BC		S	S	S	S	P	S
Continue to build Community/Government Partnerships re seasonal labour supply. (Two successful pilots on this principle)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To build partnerships and increase coordination regarding labour supply 	Build on the existing pilot project (2001 Fraser Valley Labour Exchange Project), which reduces barriers and streamlines communication among various parties involved in agricultural seasonal labour.	F/P/M gov'ts and industry must provide adequate funds to continue this project for the 2002 year; any long term labour strategy/ business plan must include funds in this area.	2002	S \$	S	S \$	S \$	S \$	P
Attract younger labour to seasonal harvest activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure quantity of labour needed for hand harvest. 	Continue work of Fraser Valley Seasonal Labour Exchange Project. Increase promotion/communication budget Increase agriculture in the class room to raise level of awareness	Need funding to continue work initiated by of Fraser Valley Seasonal Labour Exchange Project.	2002	S	S	S \$	S	S	P
Provide transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure workers can get to fields & work sites 	FLC's and others to provide transportation		2002					S	P
Adopt flexibility in EI and BC Benefits programs (present regulations result in penalties for getting a job).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To eliminate disincentives to work 	Lobby all levels of gov't to reduce the claw back by EI and BC benefits so people receiving benefits have an incentive to work	Affected commodity associations need to work directly with AWPB and BCAC; need adequate funds for moving this forward.	Start immediately			S \$	S \$	P \$	S \$
Initiate changes to the Employment Standards Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To increase flexibility for deployment and pay of seasonal workers 	Take advantage of the review of the Employment Standards Act to make necessary modifications	Regional commodity associations need to work directly with BCAC on this initiative.	Immediately	S	S	S		P	S

Appendix 3(continued)

ACTION PLAN

GOAL #3 Option B - off shore labour strategy					Municipality	GVRD/FVRD	Prov. Gov't	Fed. Gov't	Industry	AWPB	
					Responsibility						
Proposal	Objective	Activity	Resource Implications	Timing							
Develop a long term labour strategy for seasonal agriculture labour (<i>same as Option A</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure adequate labour resources are available to pick all crops. 	AWPB should clearly define objectives Prepare Request for Proposals Approach associations and Investment Agriculture for funding. Hire consultant to assist in preparation	Matching dollars with Investment Agriculture, HRDC funding as an IAS project. Industry associations will have to provide matching dollars	Immediately			\$	\$	P	P	
Implement an agriculture offshore guest worker program either independent from or part of a local labour strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide adequate seasonal labour through the use of offshore workers. 	AWPB or newly formed association leads in organizing the industry and negotiating appropriate agreements Following are the main steps required to incorporate off shore labour in a seasonal labour strategy:	Based on Ontario model, there is a heavy initial investment of time and money by industry and government.	Develop schedule as part of long-term strategy; 3-5 years is realistic	S	S	\$	\$	P	P	
		a) Negotiate a Canada/BC agreement on agricultural offshore labour	Significant resource requirements re housing; ON farms built housing under Federal subsidy program								
		b) Provide adequate housing on farms or negotiate off farm housing arrangements									
		c) Deal with work mobility/employer issues that are part of ON agreement but may not work for BC, e.g. BC operations may have difficulty providing necessary days of employment. Employers may have to transfer/share employees, which is not allowed in other offshore agreements.									
		d) Implement appropriate CPP/WCB/BC Medicare agreements									
		e) Implement appropriate payroll collection system									
		f) Determine appropriate "Industry" administrative body to manage transportation, visas, negotiate with HRDC/Prov/other countries; handle all reporting requirements.									
g) Make necessary changes to Employment Standards Act (see Option A)											
Gov't acknowledges value of agriculture and thus the need for seasonal labour to ensure crops are picked	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build Provincial and Federal government support for labour initiatives. 	Industry associations increase political activity and communication to increase awareness of agriculture	Part of wider communication strategy to raise the profile of agriculture in BC								

Appendix 3(continued)

ACTION PLAN

GOAL #4: Develop supportive policies and plans.					Municipality	GVRD/FVRD	Prov. Gov't	Fed. Gov't	Industry	Other*
<i>Proposal</i>	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Resource Implications</i>	<i>Timing</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>					
4.1 Create supportive agricultural policies, plans and bylaws	• Recognize and confirm the right to farm in local government plans and policies	Prepare OCP's, and Regional Growth Strategies that incorporate policies based on right to farm principles & protect integrity of ALR	Could be implemented with existing resources	12 months	P	P	S		S	
	• Ensure local bylaws are consistent with the FPPA	Review bylaws to ensure they are consistent with FPPA & enforce them	Could be implemented with existing resources	12 months	P		P		S	
	• Prepare and implement local agricultural plans	Prepare local agricultural plans that support FPPA principles and contain bylaw provisions for implementation	May require some added resources to prepare plans (either by local govt staff and/or outside consultants)	18 months	P \$	S	S		S	
4.2 Ensure agriculture has a voice in local government land use decisions	• Local gov'ts to appoint agricultural advisory committees where required	Appoint agricultural advisory committees and provide staff resources to assist them	May require some additional resources to provide support to the committees	12 months	P \$		S		S	
4.3 Ensure impacts of new development on agriculture are taken into account in land use decision-making processes	• Local gov'ts to assess potential impacts of new development on ag	Create development approval processes that assess impacts from new development on agricultural activities	May require outside expertise Utilize Agricultural Advisory Committees to assist in this process	12 months	P \$		S		S	
4.4 Ensure there is adequate staff understanding of agricultural planning issues in local land use decision-making	• Local governments to train staff and dedicate resources to deal with agricultural issues	Appoint staff that are dedicated to dealing with agricultural issues and provide them with adequate training	Resources required to provide staff support and training	1 - 2 years	P \$		P		S	
4.5 Raise the awareness of agriculture issues in land use planning and decision-making	• To provide a forum for an interchange of ideas on agricultural planning and policy issues in the LM	Industry and 3 levels of government to jointly sponsor an annual agriculture conference such as at the time of the Pacific Agricultural Show	Resources required to organize and conduct annual conference	12 months	S \$	S \$	P \$	S	P \$	
	• Increase the role of agricultural interests in land use planning	Industry to establish a broad-based regional agricultural group to represent industry in planning and land use decision-making issues	Use existing resources, with some possible new resources	6 months					P	

P = Primary responsibility **S** = Secondary responsibility **\$** = Contribute resources

Appendix 3(continued)

ACTION PLAN

GOAL #5: Support an expanded industry image/communications initiative					Municipality	GVRD/FVRD	Prov. Gov't	Fed. Gov't	Industry	Other*
					Responsibility					
<i>Proposal</i>	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Resource Implications</i>	<i>Time</i>						
Build a unified, consistent, co-ordinated, macro-focused, long-term, well funded communications team offering a "measured voice" and a "honed ear" to the benefit of all ag producers and processors.	To communicate effectively the accepted strategies and aid in their execution by building cohesion and consensus within the ag community and "educating" those outside ag ranks	Identify and enlist potential team member organisations to guide this goal, including the obvious majors mentioned to the right Hold an initial half-day meeting, followed by a 2-day retreat in order to refine and produce a viable extension to the concepts expressed here.	This entire area will require at the outset a team of up to 10 designates from BCAC, Ag Aware, MAFFF, Investment Agriculture, and a qualified private sector communications team. Start-up co-ordination, facilitation, execution, reporting and OPC to cost under \$ 25,000. Better defining the size, scope and annual budget will require significant investment in time, and is necessary to develop stakeholder consensus to operate.	4 Mon.						
	To offer a powerful, respected countervailing voice to the weight & effect of inappropriate, mass communications driven by ignorance, greed, self interest & / or misinformation & which also conflict both fact & ag interests	Enumerate negative & positive influences & issues to determine key goals, objectives, strategies, factors and measureables that result in most universal and major Ag benefits. Identify ongoing trended issues and prepare " what if" scenarios and appropriately formulated and supported responses thereto	Allow a year and \$60,000 seed money to build a limited version of this concept, and \$3.5 - 4.0 million for the first full year of operation, falling to \$2.5 - 3.0 million annually thereafter. This is a 10-20+ year effort.	10-14 Mon.			S		P \$	P \$
	To win farm & / or non-farm votes on issues of significance to the ag community	Proactively disseminate "pre-emptive" information on an ongoing basis, to help society recognise the value of a self-sufficient, sustained supply of safe food. Maximise familiarity & use of unpaid media & volunteer-driven opportunities					S		P \$	P \$
	To "listen" & provide prompt, appropriate response to major-issue criticism of ag/ agri processing community	Develop extended sources of information and build healthy relationships in non-ag but ag-impacting sectors (environment, health, labour, science, technology, financial, media etc.) This includes sectors that agriculture impacts.	Existing budgets could fund much of the initial development & definition required by the consortium making up the Ag voice/ communications team. Some modest contracted resources are required to compliment existing skill sets & provide non-volunteered continuity.	10-14 Mon. & on-going	S	S	S \$	S	P \$	P \$
	To provide connected voice and ears to industry advocate									
Enlist, foster & elevate the communications capabilities of existing ag organisations	To increase awareness of positive impacts of ag / agri-processing on society	Establish liaison & build awareness in ag community of the major do's & don'ts of public / media/ community relations; open channels of mentorship & support	Supplement existing staff of the major members of the Ag communications team with contracted, specialised resources as required. Allow \$25,000 - \$35,000	12-18 Mon. & ongoing			S \$	S	P \$	P \$

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		Expand mandate of AgAware web site. Health & wellness fuels rising consumer interest in information. Registrations could give us the "electronic voice" we seek & provide "one-stop shopping" for all consumers seeking information on the subject of agriculture &/ or links with specialty sectors. It could also serve as a central clearinghouse for producers and others seeking information sources and answers to questions.	This will require seed funds of \$5,000 to review feasibility and estimate longer- term costs and timeframes. Some possibility of volunteer input. In some cases, there could be web services provided to ag interests too small to justify their own sites but this would be largely on a user pay & / or cost shared basis Likely volumes offer commercial potential to be exploited to self fund this & other efforts	1-2 Yrs & on going	S	S	S \$	S	P \$	P \$
		Develop and disseminate templates and tools useful to disparate member organisations in their own unique communication programs (which should compliment, not conflict with the whole)	Cost recovery or defrayal to be explored but pending refined objectives and definition of scale, allow \$ 20,000 to \$30,000				S	S	P \$	P \$
		Build a shared, central but universally accessible media and community contact database for authorised use by all password holders (contributors)	Information/ internet work is required to allow remote data entry and retrieval. Could cost as little as \$ 5,000- \$ 8,000 but it must be linked to the data and delivery system	1-2 Years	S	S	S	S	P \$	P \$
Develop increased positive Interface between urbanites and farmers/ agri processors through experiential, recreational and educational means	To heighten the empathy of urbanites for the ag community and foster understanding of issues facing agriculture	Farm gate sales and farmers markets Festivals of public interest Demonstration/ interpretative venues Agri tourism / farm stays Farm & agri processing tours Classroom visits Mobile event displays and experiential / presentation systems Activities that promote farming to youth as a viable, "cool", fun, fulfilling & profitable career path are required	Many of these activities are in operation but more activities are required and must be better publicised. Funding should be by entrepreneurs; some assistance appears to be available through existing programs.	1- 3 Yrs & on-going	S \$	S \$	P \$	S \$	P \$	P \$
		Elaborate and expand all the above with the qualified input of the proposed team.	Significant funding requirement is required for delivery of the proposed Ag voice/ communications program: \$3.5 - 4.0 million in year 1 and continuing for not fewer than 5 years at \$2.5 - 3.0 million annually.	Start 12-18 Mons; to run 20+ yrs			S \$	S \$	P \$	P \$
NOTES:	This concept is most likely to succeed if private sector ag producers and processors band together with their industry associations to commit funds for this purpose. We believe that every \$2.00 from the private sector/ industry might be met with a Provincial dollar & a Federal dollar. This kind of private sector commitment sends an important message to buyers, investors, the public and less committed sectors concerning the great potential for stimulated production, processing, import replacement and exports.									

P = Primary responsibility **S** = Secondary responsibility **\$** = Contribute resources

Appendix 3(continued)

ACTION PLAN

GOAL #6: Become market oriented and proactive.					Municipality	GVRD/FVRD	Prov. Gov't	Fed. Gov't	Industry	Other*
<i>Proposal</i>	<i>Objective</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Resource Implications</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>					
Create Ag market research and development Institute. (Not scientific / production research)	To stimulate end-user research by the agricultural community.	Form founding team and raise seed / start-up/ operating capital. Refine targets, scale, early broad priorities & costs. Refer to and examine USA's Market Access Program. Review Montana Dept of Ag programs, which offer good models. Identify which components might be funded through existing programs/budgets both inside and out side agriculture.	Organize team; define & prioritise the initial tasks in this area - under \$25,000 Goal # 6 requires a series of tranches ranging from \$25,000 to \$65,000 to cover 3-4 month periods. The defined stages of activity could total \$175,000 - \$ 275,000 in year 1 depending upon the scope of activities approved by founders Subsequent phases would be planned and justified by the results of the preceding phases.	3 Mons			\$	\$	\$	\$
		Examine what local chain buyers want (continuity of source? consistent supply?) and identify ways to deliver it	Although a separate orientation, this may be folded into the project below (reducing a \$ 5,000 cost to \$3,000).	4-6 Mons			\$		\$	\$
		Analyze what products end users buy and how they buy it, as determined from existing data; include consumers, institutional & commercial users Examine ethnic food import replacements & export potentials. Offer, solicit & deliver custom user-pay or shared-cost research. Consider offering periodic omnibus research within a consistent target group	As above and to be defined but in the \$25,000 to \$45,000 range. Could see some ex province & foreign contributions on cost shared basis. Could be a separate study due to obvious and specific export potential	7-9 Mons; follows step 1 above			\$	\$	\$	\$
	To effectively disseminate market research information.	Identify ag communications resources (websites and others) that can be effectively linked to disseminate research.	Define & prioritise the early tasks in this area for under \$20,000. This initiative will make the most use of existing investments and overheads	6-9 Mons.	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
		Generate support for the concept; define scale, costs & negotiate agreement & terms with early founders. Ensure link to Image/ communications team & probable sharing of their site as the electronic delivery vehicle	Set up is likely to be in the \$ 20,000 to \$40,000 range. Execution would reflect the degree of new versus pooled resource utilisation as defined above.	12-18 Mons. ongoing						
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	To effectively disseminate market research information (cont'd)	Build list/contact data on associations and media who are likely users of these services and develop an unpaid media plan to reach targets. Link to Image/communications team	The incremental operating cost of providing this facility could be partially offset through user fees	1-2 yrs						
	To inspire investment in processing facilities (as suggested to right)	Conduct detailed review of specific categories of interest. Organic baby food/ dairy products/ cosmetic ingredients/ nutraceuticals, herbs, spices & new drying systems and some of the above plus vegetables, fruit, berries, resulting in a fact and trend-based business case for such investment Identify complimentary sources of supply, e.g. offsetting BC seasonality.	\$45,000 to \$ 65,000 assuming acquisition of existing statistical trend data & pending the determinations and scope of initial exploration above. Success is related to the removal of disincentives to new investment with incentives potentially required to reverse existing resistances. See below.	14-18 Mons. follows initial explorations above			S \$	S \$	P \$	\$S
	To identify and promote ways for BC products to access international niche markets	Identify existing eastern Canadian, USA & foreign perception of BC product (both positive and negative); capitalise upon the former and address the latter. Extend the market research seeking product opportunities based upon such input	\$25,000 to \$ 50,000 assuming acquisition of existing statistical data & scope defined above. We also call upon trade office support, which allows for a second phase of research & action.	20-24 Mons. & on-going			S \$	S \$	P \$	\$S
		Prepare and distribute to intern'l trade offices a brief identifying BC's wants/needs	Following the foundation work this might be accomplished for \$ 2,500	16-20 Mons.			S \$	S \$	P \$	\$
		Share the above material with the Ag investment and development syndicate.	No incremental costs envisioned at outset.	On-going						
		Identify needs for tech/ scientific/ production research &/ or education & training and share with appropriate entities.		On-going			P \$	S \$	S \$	S \$
	Build working linkages among stakeholders that would benefit from heightened levels of agri-processing investment and expansion in BC. To develop a process to attract ag-related private sector investment To identify and reduce public sector disincentives to such investment.	Based upon business cases, identify and proactively approach targeted organisations capable of world class production, marketing and sales, and share the opportunity and incentives.	\$ 25,000 to \$ 35,000 assuming that there will be contributions from agencies and parties outside the founding group.	1- 2 Yrs & on-ward	S	S	S \$	S \$	P \$	P \$
NOTES:	Most of the suggested activities represent new ground that has yet to be defined by participants. Most are components of what should be long-term programs. Furthermore, many components are designed or will grow to have an entrepreneurial orientation with potential for cost recovery. For these reasons, long term operating budgets are impossible to define at this point. Initial exploratory budgets will provide the data required to define long-term funding needs.									

P = Primary responsibility **S** = Secondary responsibility **\$** = Contribute resources