



GROWING GREEN: for SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

A Law Reform Project

www.ffcf.bc.ca/GrowingGreen.html

***Growing Green* ACTION PLANS to March 31 2004**

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1.0 Policy Priorities

These action plans build on the project priorities articulated at the end of the project's first year and describe the key components of the project with background, desired outcomes, next steps and deliverables for each, as well as a glance beyond the end of the project in March 2004.

1.1 Lower Mainland Food Coalition, Vancouver Food Policy Task Force and related Official Community Plans and Bylaws

Background

Committed volunteers have been working on food security issues in Vancouver for well over a decade. Formed in 1995, the Vancouver Food Policy Coalition became the Vancouver Food Policy Organization in 1996 and over the next few years convened a number of events and discussions about the region's food system. By 2003, for a variety of reasons, it had lost a good deal of its momentum.

Growing Green was able to help network a variety of groups and people in the Greater Vancouver Regional District and make some new linkages, in particular with the Vancouver Agreement and the newly elected Vancouver City Council. A volunteer group formed the Lower Mainland Food Council in late 2002 and, with *Growing Green*, produced a discussion paper "Closer to Home: a Recipe for a Community-Based Food Organization" and hosted a Food Council Action workshop in June 2003. That workshop led to the creation of the Lower Mainland Food Coalition (citizens' group) and coincided with the striking of a Food Policy Task Force by the City of Vancouver. Herb Barbolet of *Growing Green* is advising both bodies. The Coalition has delivered a set of policy recommendations to the Task Force. The Task Force will report back to Vancouver City Council on 18 November 2003 regarding the elements of a sustainable food policy and plan for the city.

Desired Outcomes

By March 31, 2004, *Growing Green* will have helped:

1. Make recommendations to the City regarding a community food policy plan for safe and equitable growing, distribution and provision of food in Vancouver
2. Assist regional and senior governments and the UBCM to develop an action plan to meet any food policy targets Vancouver City Council adopts
3. Facilitate links to Agricultural Advisory Committees and Smart Growth BC in the region

Deliverables/Resources

- Community food councils session and report from Sorrento Gathering 2003
- Community food councils workshop and report from Community Food Security Coalition conference in Boston November 2003

- Closer to Home document from Lower Mainland Food Council workshop June 13, 2003
- State of the art tips re working with a community food council – tool for voluntary sector organizations – Kristina Bouris will develop, related to her thesis
- OCP/bylaws roundup from Deb Curran of Smart Growth with link to SG's Smart Bylaws Guidebook; and material related to agriculture in parks from FF/CF's Multifunctionality of Agricultural Land Project at Colony Farm

1.2 **Capital Region Food Coalition and related Official Community Plans and Bylaws**

Background

The first Greater Victoria Food Forum was held in 1997, focused on food access issues. From it the Capital Region Food Roundtable formed. After a strategic planning process in 1999 it was renamed the Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable. Its mission is to bring about positive change in the Capital Region food and agriculture system. With *Growing Green's* help, CR-FAIR has articulated a 10-year strategic plan and is currently working on (1) expanding its Steering Committee, (2) a series of public forums including one on food policy and one on the impact of social services cuts, (3) a baseline food security assessment and (4) with the advice of Wayne Roberts of the Toronto Food Policy Council, a draft strategy for creation of a regional food council.

Desired Outcomes

By March 31, 2004, *Growing Green* will have helped CR-FAIR:

1. Expand to a regional food security coalition that anchors community input and can facilitate creation of a CRD food council, which (1) will further CR-FAIR's mission (2) report to citizens and local government, (3) be robustly structured (survive changes in political administration), and (4) provide for a paid Executive Director
2. Identify a number of "quick start" projects in specific municipalities in the region
3. Facilitate links to Agricultural Advisory Committees (e.g. the Peninsula Agricultural Commission and others) and Smart Growth BC in the region

Deliverables/Resources

- Paper from Nancy Klenavic (UVic law student) re role of local government in ensuring regional food security
- Report from Sep community food councils session at Sorrento
- Report from Sep 24 forum on "Recipes for Change: Healthy food choices, Healthy food policies"
- "Cooking up a Healthy Food System in the CRD" draft concept paper
- Report from "Cooking up a healthy food system in the CRD" forum Oct 24
- Baseline Food Security Assessment for the Capital Region

1.3 **NEW Junk Food in Schools**

Introduction

On a tip from Reference Group member Oliver Brandes, *Growing Green* contacted Calvin Sandborn, Executive Director of the Environmental Law Centre (ELC) at UVic. The ELC is a non-profit organization that gives law students the opportunity to undertake legal research on topics suggested by members of the community, as a course for credit. *Growing Green* submitted three legal research ideas to the ELC for the fall 2003 term: junk food in schools; hospital food; and conservation covenant guidelines. One of the students picked up the junk food in schools topic. *Growing Green* can submit more ideas to the ELC for the winter term starting in January 2004.

Background

As school budgets suffer increasing cuts, school trustees seek new sources of revenue. Vending machines that sell pop and candy can provide additional revenue. However, there are costs to consumers' health in terms of obesity, diabetes, and heart problems. Too much sugar also has demonstrable negative effects on children's ability to learn. In addition, there is now evidence that companies manufacturing fatty and sugary foods know their products tend to be addictive and deliberately target student populations through advertising and merchandising.

Possible approaches/legal mechanisms

- Contracts between schools or school districts and junk food vendors. Can these be rescinded or changed?
- School Act – schools are presumably legally responsible for keeping students safe and healthy while they are in their care/on their premises

Desired Outcome

By March 31, 2004, *Growing Green* will have helped identify legal and policy measures that can be taken to reduce the amount of junk food sold in BC schools.

1.4 **Public Health**

Background

Through the Provincial Health Officer, staff in the Ministry of Health Planning are currently reviewing core health services in preparation for redrafting the Health Act. A Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance (of senior civil servants and health professionals) has been formed.

As input to the core health services review, the Community Nutritionists Council of BC asked Cathleen Kneen and Kathleen Gibson to prepare an analysis and report on the importance of food security to public health. This was submitted to

CNC in March and will be submitted by CNC to the Provincial Health Officer later this fall.

In the meantime, on 6 and 7 October 2003, the provincial Medical Health Officers and the Community Nutritionists Council held a food security conference with the goal of making room for food security on the public health agenda. Herb Barbolet and Cathleen Kneen attended. The conference committed to an action plan for creation of a provincial food security/public health alliance that would develop:

- a report from the Provincial Health Officer on the state of food security in BC
- an awareness-raising strategy to explain the links between food security, sustainable food systems, food policy, child health, chronic disease and environmental health
- a plan to link and help strengthen existing groups and create a BC food security coalition, which could set the stage for a provincial food policy council

Growing Green understands that a public process regarding a new Health Act is several years away and that the Ministry of Health Planning is not particularly interested in public/grassroots input to health policy at this time. Although there is an acknowledgement that chronic disease prevention cannot be achieved without community action, there seems to be little acknowledgement of the important role played by community-based organizations in facilitating such action.

Desired Outcomes

By March 31, 2004, *Growing Green* will have helped:

1. Establish a strong conceptual link between food security and public health in core health services review material and in the minds of senior managers in the Ministry of Health Planning
2. Ensure that community-based food councils are in the communications and planning loop for provincial public health initiatives
3. Achieve acknowledgement of community-based food councils as potential key service providers for food-related aspects of chronic disease prevention (possibly via a social co-op approach, as in the Emilia Romagna part of Italy Herb visited in summer 2003 to study co-op structures)

Deliverables/Resources

- Panel discussion and report on public health/food security from Sorrento Gathering 2003
- CNC paper on food security and public health (with permission)
- Provincial Health Officer report on state of food security in BC (with permission)
- Presentation that makes the case for community food councils as key service providers for food-related aspects of chronic disease prevention

1.5 Small-scale Food Processors

Background

Some of the most important players in the seed-to-plate chain are in the middle. If they are successful, benefits accrue to the farm end and to the consumer end of the chain. *Growing Green* chose to work with the Small-Scale Food Processor Association because it showed us the tremendous potential in BC for food processing businesses with 25 or fewer employees. The SSFPA was formed in 2001 at the request of small-scale processors, who had many common questions and challenges. It is run by Community Venture Development Services, a consulting company with a strong background in community economic development.

Growing Green provides the SSFPA with (1) advice on strategies for itself and its members, (2) advice on specific policy areas; and (3) relevant information from other jurisdictions.

Desired Outcomes

By March 31, 2004, *Growing Green* will have helped:

1. SSFPA get a proposal accepted for a regional pilot project (on Vancouver Island?) for a flexible manufacturing/ marketing network co-op to pool product from various small local processors and do processing, labelling, packaging and distribution
2. Provide useful information and resources regarding food-related co-op models that work (e.g. from Emilia Romagna)
3. Ensure that the SSFPA is in a strong position on its own and in relation to provincial agri-food agencies (Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, Investment Agriculture Foundation)
4. Explore options for meaningful regulatory change regarding food safety regulations, HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points) in particular, for small-scale food processors

Deliverables/Resources

- Herb's course paper from Emilia Romagna – on transferability of the model to BC and flexible food manufacturing/marketing networks and co-ops
- Powerpoint presentation on same (offered several times including at March 2004 launch)
- Briefing paper on policy recommendations re food safety regulations

1.6 Farmland Trusts and Conservation Covenants

Background

Growing Green set out to explore the possible benefits of conservation agencies investing in working farms. The rationale included potential benefit (1) for farmers, to gain new sources of capital investment plus economic reward for ecological services provided by their farms (2) for land trusts, to achieve their conservation objectives while supporting the food production practices that reduce the ecological footprint of our current food system and (3) for the environment itself. *Growing Green* talked with Farmers' Institutes on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands and with local conservation agencies. A paper, *Natural Allies: Land Trusts and Working Farms*, summarizing some options for conservation investment in working farms, was presented to the Land Trust Alliance AGM in July 2003.

This was followed by the formation of a committee and the drafting of a proposal to undertake a pilot project on Salt Spring Island that would (1) demonstrate the benefits of a partnership between land trusts and working farms, (2) design model farm trust partnership arrangements and (3) explore innovative ideas for funding farm trusts. The committee includes Salt Spring Island farmers (Michael Ableman and John Wilcox); The Land Conservancy (Nichola Walkden); The Real Estate Foundation (Tim Pringle); and Salt Spring Island Monetary Foundation (Bob McGuinn). The Monetary Foundation is interested in investing in agricultural land to back its local currency.

The newly enacted Agricultural Land Commission Act says 'a covenant that prohibits the use of agricultural land for farm purposes has no effect until approved by the Commission.' *Growing Green* heard a good deal from land trust organizations regarding their concerns about this; many of them wrote to the Provincial Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) to object to this section on the grounds that it would further discourage efforts of farmers to register conservation covenants on properties within the Agricultural Land Reserve. West Coast Environmental Law voiced these concerns to Minister Stan Hagen and in July the ALC produced guidelines for conservation covenants. WCEL submitted comments. The guidelines were to go to the ALC's October 2003 meeting for discussion/approval.

Desired Outcomes

By March 31, 2004, *Growing Green* will have helped:

1. Facilitate a partnership (on the Salt Spring pilot project committee) between land trusts and working farms
2. Submit a funding application for a pilot farmland trust project on Salt Spring Island
3. Provide useful information on farmland trusts from other jurisdictions, particularly the UK

Deliverables/Resources

- July 2003 discussion paper Natural Allies: Land Trusts and Working Farms
- July 2003 facilitated session (conference call) with Salt Spring partners
- Nov-Dec 2003 Salt Spring project proposal development meeting
- Article for Land Trust Alliance Kingfisher magazine (next deadline after Aug 15)
- Salt Spring Island pilot project proposal
- Short critique and recommendations regarding conservation covenants

1.7 Organics and Regulated Marketing

Background

Small-scale farmers (particularly organic farmers) argue that although many support the principle of regulated marketing, the administration of existing supply-managed marketing schemes (specifically for chicken, eggs, broiler hatching eggs, milk and turkey) fails to serve them. They argue their products are fundamentally different than those of conventional producers and should therefore not be regulated as if they are the same. Farmers who want to integrate their farms by producing multiple products want to reduce the multiple regulatory burden of reporting to several different marketing boards. Fees and levies associated with supply management schemes are too onerous for small farmers, and cost of quota is prohibitive for small farms and new entrants.

Following a presentation to the Certified Organic Associations of BC (COABC) Annual General Meeting in February 2003, *Growing Green* has been working with a small advisory committee of organic farmers. After meetings with industry opinion leaders and provincial regulatory officials, *Growing Green* prepared a short "Blueprint for Change" policy proposal in July. The COABC committee, working with representatives of the organics industry, is forming an "organics coalition" led by Gunta Vitins, National Marketing Manager for Pro Organics, which is developing a research project to prepare policy options for presentation to government.

The actions of marketing boards and commissions are overseen by the BC Marketing Board (BCMB), an administrative tribunal with supervisory as well as appellate powers. In September 2003 its CEO contacted Kathleen Gibson with a request for advice on a review of specialty production. The BCMB has requested the five supply-managed marketing boards to review their programs for specialty (includes organic) products and has asked for the boards to submit written reports by December 31. Kathleen is assisting the BCMB in order to facilitate communication between the organics coalition, the boards and commissions, and the BCMB.

Desired Outcomes

By March 31, 2004, *Growing Green* will have helped:

1. The organics coalition identify and use appropriate channels for communicating its ideas and recommendations to government
2. The organics coalition clearly identify program options and the financial and legal implications of each that could make the regulated marketing system more responsive and effective for organic products and remove existing impediments to stronger growth in the organic sector
3. Articulate the pros and cons of an "honest broker" role in this kind of policy development situation

Deliverables/Resources

- July Blueprint for Change with specific suggestions for organic marketing policy alternatives (embargoed until organics coalition's research project is complete)
- July memo to COABC sub-committee recommending process to follow (embargoed until organics coalition's research project is complete)
- Reflection on interactions with government in this exercise (at end of *Growing Green* project)
- Lawrence's speaking notes from July 2002 seminar on advocacy (with permission)
- Organics coalition's policy options paper (with permission)

1.8 Farm Leases

Background

Growing Green has heard from farmers that although the Provincial Agricultural Land Commission states that a farmer can register a short-term lease on part of a property on Agricultural Land Reserve land, this practice is in fact denied because of court decisions. The result is that a person wishing to secure his or her investment in fencing and irrigation on leased land is unable to do so by registering the lease against the owner's title. *Growing Green* is thus seeking an amendment to the Land Title Act or Agricultural Land Reserve Act to lift the onerous application of section 73 (requiring subdivision) that has removed options and flexibility for landlords and tenants leasing farmland.

Growing Green met on September 26 with Steve Thomson of the BC Agriculture Council who was interested in having a presentation featuring this initiative made to the BCAC Board.

Desired Outcomes

By March 31, 2004, *Growing Green* will have helped:

1. Secure support for a legislative amendment to enable farm leases without subdivision

2. Seek commitment for draft amendment on the legislative agenda for 2004 or 2005

Deliverables/Resources

- Meeting with BCAC Board
- Lawrence's memo about next steps with amendment
- Sample resolution drafted by Lawrence

1.9 Ecological Services

Background

The Galey Farm in Victoria is a good example of a "multiple-win" situation – for the farmer, the municipality, the public and the environment – when a drainage ditch was restored to a stream in "properly functioning condition." This case study provides a number of important policy lessons including (1) the project went ahead in spite of some policy constraints (e.g. DFO fisheries window) and was an acknowledged success (2) the importance of farm and all government personnel (three levels) working collaboratively (3) the potential for development of local government policy mechanisms that provide tangible benefits to farmers in return for public benefits they provide.

Growing Green is interested in potential policy solutions that will reward farmers in useful ways for their contribution to public goods. *Growing Green* has prepared a paper summarizing incentive programs for good farm environmental management from around the world.

There is a potential link between *Growing Green's* research in this area and the current roll-out of the Environmental Farm Plan program through the BC Agriculture Council. These ideas could build on and enhance the work of an Environmental Farm Plan.

Desired Outcomes

By March 31, 2004, *Growing Green* will have helped:

1. Identify farms' ecological services (wildlife habitat, water storage, etc.)
2. Summarize policy mechanisms to reward farmers who provide ecological services
3. Develop a strategy for engaging governments to implement best mechanisms

Deliverables/Resources

- Web-enabled document re potential incentives and rewards – same format as Introductory Essay (consider selling this resource through FF/CF?)
- Workshop-format presentation for farm organization audiences regarding incentives that local/regional governments could implement, especially in GVRD and CRD

2.0 Voluntary Sector Tools

Background

Growing Green has been working with Linda Geggie to identify capacity building tools for voluntary sector organizations regarding input to policy for sustainable food systems. After discussions about the scope of the project and a review of a “shopping list” of ideas, we settled on four ideas that Linda will help us expand into tools.

1. A basic manual on how governments work – Who do I call first? How do I present my question or idea? What are effective ways for voluntary sector organizations to work with government?
2. A systems-focused piece – possibly a mind map – to help engage a spectrum of interests (e.g. health, agriculture, food, environment, labour) in discussion of policy issues related to sustainable food systems
3. Manual re state-of-the-art community-based food council – Kristina Bouris will seek advice from Linda and will develop this related to her thesis
4. Workshop on next-level policy input ideas – for the March 12 launch event – featuring some lessons learned from the *Growing Green* project, such as the value of “honest broker” roles like that played by Herb with the Lower Mainland Food Coalition and the City of Vancouver Food Policy Task Force

Desired Outcome

By March 31, 2004, *Growing Green* will have developed four tools that will be of ongoing use to the project’s voluntary sector partners and others.

3.0 “Sharing the Benefits” Program

Background

From its start, *Growing Green* has set aside a portion of its budget each year to support policy dialogues by/with our voluntary sector partners. So far, *Growing Green* has supported the following initiatives:

- BC Food Systems Network – to support attendance at provincial food security conferences in Sorrento, September 2002 and 2003
- Certified Organic Associations of BC – to support attendance at its February 2003 Annual General Meeting
- POLIS Project on Ecological Governance – for a workshop in March 2003 on farm ecological services, in particular freshwater systems
- Your Local Farmers’ Market Society – for a workshop in June 2003 regarding formation of a community-based food council in Greater Vancouver
- Small-Scale Food Processor Association – for a workshop on small-scale value-added farm/food businesses at the BC Co-operative Association’s inaugural AGM in June 2003
- The Land Trust Alliance – to support attendance at its July 2003 Annual General Meeting

The plan for Year 2 was to offer six instalments of \$2,500 for similar efforts. Two are expended (Land Trust Alliance AGM and 2003 Sorrento conference). As the project nears completion, the Project Team feels that the remaining four fund instalments should be targeted as closely as possible to our action priorities. At the same time, we have had a number of discussions with voluntary sector partners about issues outside our identified priorities that are important to them and for which they would appreciate policy dialogue. The current candidate initiatives are (in no particular order):

- COABC – to discuss its policy options project with the organics coalition
- CR-FAIR – for possible action workshop on community-based food council for the Capital Region
- District A Farmers' Institute - meeting regarding pilot farmland trust project on Salt Spring Island
- POLIS Project, Smart Growth on the Ground and other partners - workshop regarding incentive/reward programs for farmers who provide ecological services, to develop specific proposals to present in the GVRD and CRD
- Progressive Intercultural Services Society – to explore idea of a farm labour co-op

Desired Outcome

By March 31, 2004, *Growing Green* will have sponsored a series of events/dialogues that directly assisted policy development and helped build capacity in participating voluntary sector organizations for input to agri-food policy.

4.0 “Think Pieces”

At the end of year one we talked about possible “think pieces” (such as the Introductory Essay) that might help set a context for the work of the project. The topic below arose from many discussions the Project Team has had regarding sustainable food systems. BC is blessed with an incredible variety of organizations, people and initiatives related to farms and food. Our observation is that none of the government agencies we have dealt with pick up the full spectrum (either within or across sectors), so we propose producing the paper below to engage such a discussion.

4.1 Alternative Farms Profile

Background

Some farmers have responded to social and environmental concerns by changing management practices to capitalize on consumer interest for food that is raised according to specific environmental or ethical standards. These farms are supposed to reflect values that go beyond the financial return from selling commodities to the market to include public goods like wildlife habitat, soil conservation, land stewardship, clean water, or rural culture. These alternative farms sell products differentiated by their method of production. For the free range-egg producer or the organic vegetable grower, one egg or vegetable is simply not substitutable for any other product.

Growing Green has found little research that systematically describes such alternative farms. At present it is difficult to assess whether such farms are

simply fringe anomalies or whether these producers represent the beginnings of a parallel or complementary food production system that is driven by a different set of forces and thus has different policy, research and other requirements than the mainstream system.

Desired Outcomes

By March 31, 2004, *Growing Green* will have:

1. Explored the extent to which an alternative agricultural system exists in BC
2. Described the number and types of "alternative" farms (described as free-range, sustainable, organic, community-supported, regenerative, permaculture, etc.)
3. Uncovered some of the socio-economic conditions that support each type of system (mainstream vs. alternative) and raised ethical and practical concerns
4. Examined policy options that will help support certain "alternative" farms
5. Developed a case that can be made to government that there is a large farm-based constituency (e.g. low volume/high value-added, multi-commodity) in BC that is not on the current agri-food policy radar and that represents significant (potentially missed) economic opportunities in communities all around the province

Deliverables/Resources

- Paper profiling/making the case for alternative farms in BC with case study sidebars that can be lifted in or out
- Presentation based on work to date for selected government audiences (not clear yet what it would look like)

5.0 Case Studies

We also propose a series of case studies to illustrate various aspects of sustainable food systems. Herb proposes to write up the following case studies in January-February 2004:

- 5.1 Engeler Farm
- 5.2 Noble Food and Education Centre
- 5.3 Local sourcing for school food

6.0 Launch Event

Background

In discussions about how to wrap up and evaluate the project, the Project Team felt it would best fit the project's goals to deliver the final report as an interactive learning event (rather than producing a huge written report that no-one would have time to read). We have been calling it a launch because we want to introduce a number of policy initiatives and the voluntary sector organizations that are working on them - to each other and to our partners and funders.

The purpose of the event is to sum up and evaluate the project and showcase our partners and their work. Participants will be able to infer where and how *Growing Green* made a difference.

Accordingly we are planning an afternoon forum in March 2004. We selected the 12th because the Environmental Grantmakers will be meeting in Vancouver March 10-12. The forum is tentatively planned to include:

- a keynote address
- working sessions that will showcase the work of different *Growing Green* voluntary sector partners and lessons learned during/from the project
- introduction of a suite of learning tools for voluntary sector organizations that have been collected and produced by the project
- participatory evaluation of the project
- opportunities for networking and enjoying some fine food and beverages