

Grown in Pitt Meadows

Our Agricultural Viability Strategy

2023



City of
Pitt Meadows
THE Natural PLACE

Acknowledgements

The City of Pitt Meadows acknowledges that this project took place on the traditional and unceded territory of the  (Katzie) First Nation. We recognize, honour, and respect the presence of Indigenous people past, present and future. The City of Pitt Meadows is committed to reconciliation with the  (Katzie) First Nation, who have lived on these lands since time immemorial.

This report was created with the input and involvement of the Agricultural Advisory Committee, farmers and City of Pitt Meadows staff throughout 2023.

The work was conducted by Upland Agricultural Consulting Ltd. in association with Urban Food Strategies.



Acronyms

AAC	Agricultural Advisory Committee
AF	Ministry of Agriculture and Food
ALC	Agricultural Land Commission
ALCA	Agricultural Land Commission Act
ALR	Agricultural Land Reserve
ALUI	Agricultural Land Use Inventory
BC	British Columbia
DFO	Fisheries and Oceans Canada
DFWT	Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust
DPA	Development Permit Area
DU	Ducks Unlimited
EMBC	Emergency Management BC
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
Ha	Hectares
LGA	Local Government Act
MV	Metro Vancouver
OCP	Official Community Plan
PES	Payment for Ecosystem Services
SAWP	Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program
TFW	Temporary Foreign Workers
TRAN	Ministry of Transportation
WLRS	Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

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1.0 Introduction



Farming has a long history in Pitt Meadows, which started in pre-colonial times through First Nations agriculture and aquaculture practices, and continues to be a vital part of the economic and social fabric of the community.

The City of Pitt Meadows contains over 6,356 ha (15,705 acres) of land in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), which equates to approximately 78% of the City's total land area. Management of agricultural land is important, not only to the business viability of producers, but also to address local food security and climate change impacts on a broader scale. Local governments can develop forward-looking plans to address the evolving nature of the agriculture and agri-food sector, and review the impacts of regulations surrounding agricultural land use planning.

It has been 23 years since the creation of the Pitt Meadows Agricultural Plan. Due to the evolving nature of the agriculture and agri-food sector, and land-use planning policies, the City of Pitt Meadows has embarked on a project to update the 2000 Agricultural Plan. This development of the Grown in Pitt Meadows: Our Agricultural Viability Strategy (the 'Strategy') took place over eight months in 2023. In preparation for developing the Strategy, a review of Pitt Meadows' policies, regulations and existing plans and strategies was completed, along with a comprehensive background report which provided context on the current agricultural sector, emerging

trends, and opportunities for growth. In addition, a series of public consultation and engagement activities took place which gave in-depth insights into the experiences of agricultural producers, including the challenges, benefits, and opportunities of farming in Pitt Meadows, as well as the general public's perception of the agriculture sector and local food production. This Strategy document is a culmination of the findings from the project process and includes recommendations for the continued success of the agriculture and agri-food sector in Pitt Meadows.

The aim of the Strategy is to provide a comprehensive agricultural planning document that identifies opportunities to strengthen the local agriculture and agri-food sector and contribute to its long-term sustainability. The Strategy recommends actions specific to Pitt Meadows to support municipal planning efforts in the short (1-2 year) to long term (6+ years) timeframe.

Situated in an upland estuary, the ancestral Coast Salish-Katzie had access to plentiful marshlands filled with a variety of food resources, such as cranberry, blueberry, and wapato - all of which would have been known and maintained.

The wapato, which produces edible tubers, was a valuable trade commodity and played a significant role in 'qic'ay' (Katzie) First Nation socio-economics.



2.0 Overview of Pitt Meadows' Agricultural Sector



2.1 Agricultural Land

Pitt Meadows has approximately 6,356 ha (15,705 acres) of land within the ALR, which is comprised of 712 parcels. According to the most recent Metro Vancouver Agricultural Land Use Inventory (ALUI) completed in 2016, 4,195 ha (10,367 acres) or 66% of the ALR was being farmed and used for agricultural activities.¹ Only 6% of the land (370 ha or 914 acres) was available but not used for farming. The remaining ALR land (28%) was considered unavailable for farming due to the presence of wetlands, lakes, roads, railways, and other infrastructure. Figure 1 (next page) indicates the distribution of agricultural land in Pitt Meadows.

2.2 Crop and Livestock Production

Over the last 50 years, there has been a gradual shift in the character of farming in Pitt Meadows, from one that was dairy-focused to one that is now berry-focused. Based on the 2021 Census of Agriculture, the most common types of farm operations in Pitt Meadows are berry, followed by hay and nursery operations. Blueberry (1,335 ha; 3,299 acres) and cranberry (861 ha; 2,128 acres) production account for the majority of agricultural land use.

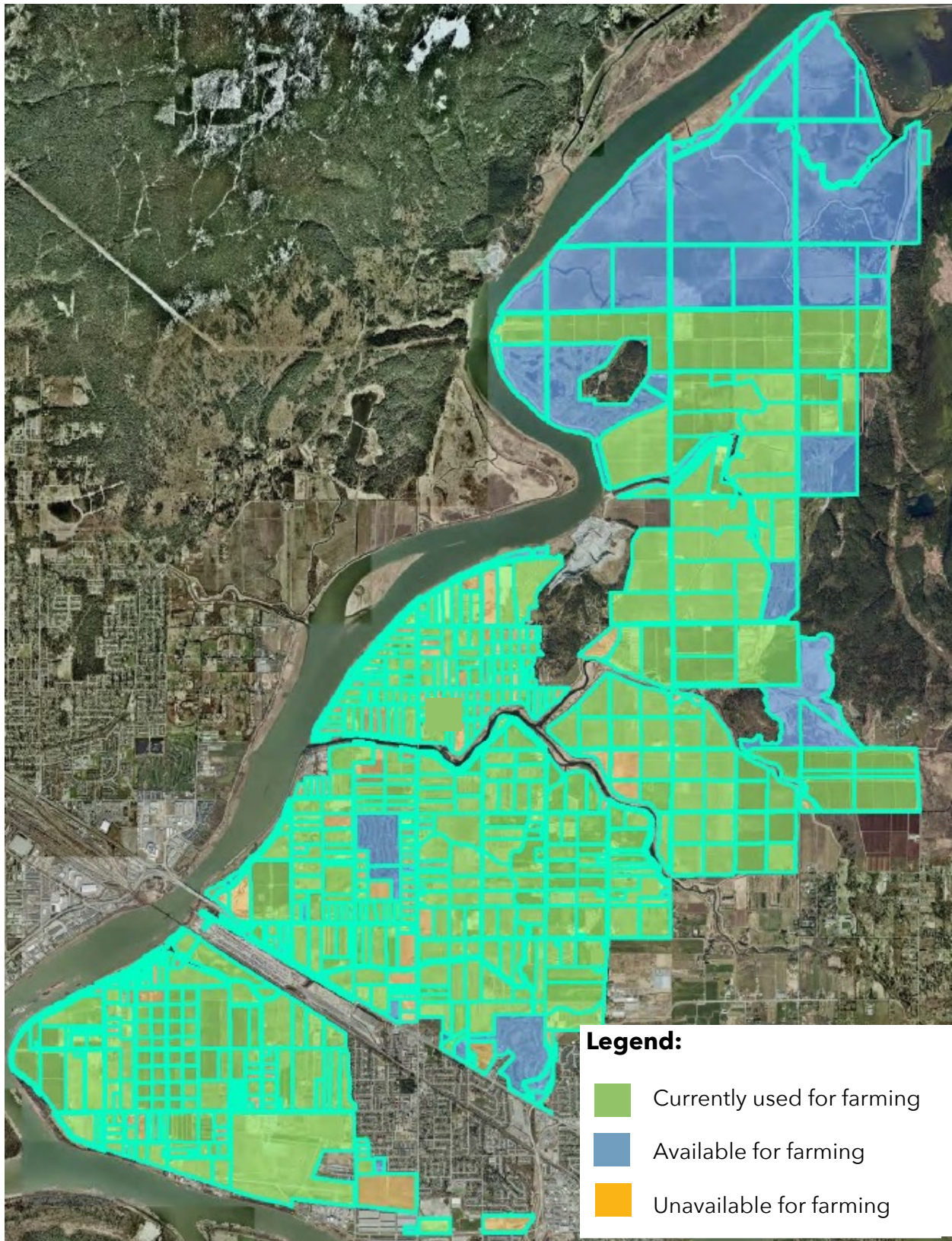
Blueberry production has decreased by 433 ha (1,039 acres) from 2011 to 2021, likely due to international and domestic market pressures, changes in demand, and pests, such as the spotted wing drosophila and scorch virus. Vertical farming is not captured by the Census of Agriculture.

2.3 Agricultural Economics

Understanding the many factors that contribute to healthy agricultural businesses can assist local governments with supporting the economic viability of the agricultural and agri-food system. Farm profitability is difficult to measure or to estimate. Farm capital and assets, and farm income and gross margins can be used as indicators. Other influences on agricultural business are business succession planning, farm labour, access to markets, packing and processing infrastructure, and value-added activities. These are all summarized in detail in the accompanying Background Report (see Appendix A).

¹ Metro Vancouver Agricultural Land Use Inventory, Ministry of Agriculture and Food, 2016.

Figure 1. ALR parcels in Pitt Meadows (Source: 2016 Metro Vancouver ALUI).



2.4 Farm Operators and Labour

As of 2021 there are 215 farm operators in Pitt Meadows. Farm operators in Pitt Meadows are majority (60%) male and the average age is 58 years old. Despite this, only 20% of farms reported having a written succession plan in place.

In 2021, 72 farms (33%) were run by sole operators with no farm workers or labourers. There were 35 farms using year-round full-time farm workers, 17 farms using year-round part-time farm workers, and 31 farms using part-time farm workers on a seasonal/temporary basis. The total number of farming jobs provided between all three levels of employment decreased significantly from 1,638 jobs in 2016 to 692 jobs in 2021. It is possible, and likely, that this shift in 2021 reflected temporary labour foreign worker restrictions that arose from the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.5 Market Access

Pitt Meadows is uniquely positioned with easy access to local, national, and international distribution routes via rail, highway, ports and airports. Over 95% of cranberries produced in BC, including those produced in Pitt Meadows, leave the province and are shipped to the USA to be used in Ocean Spray products. Pitt Meadows producers are also supported by local residents. There were 32 farms in Pitt Meadows selling direct to consumers in 2021. These include products being sold via farm-gate stands and farmers' markets. In 2022, the Pitt Meadows Farmers' Market began, creating opportunity for producers to sell their products locally.

2.6 Processing and Value-Added Infrastructure

Aggregation, packing, and processing (such as freezing) of berries occurs both on farm and can be outsourced to larger systems off-farm. Some producers have their own processing out-buildings on their farms where they clean, sort and package products for the local market. There are also licenced meat processing facilities based in Pitt Meadows, which allows farmers to have their animals processed in a timely manner and sell their products in cuts and portions that are tailored to the local market. Over the last 15-20 years, on-farm tours have been increasing in popularity. Farms are offering on-farm experiences such as U-picks, farm tours, special events and weddings. These value-added activities improve the financial diversity of farming operations; however, they must also be balanced with protecting the long-term capacity and capability of agricultural lands and operations.

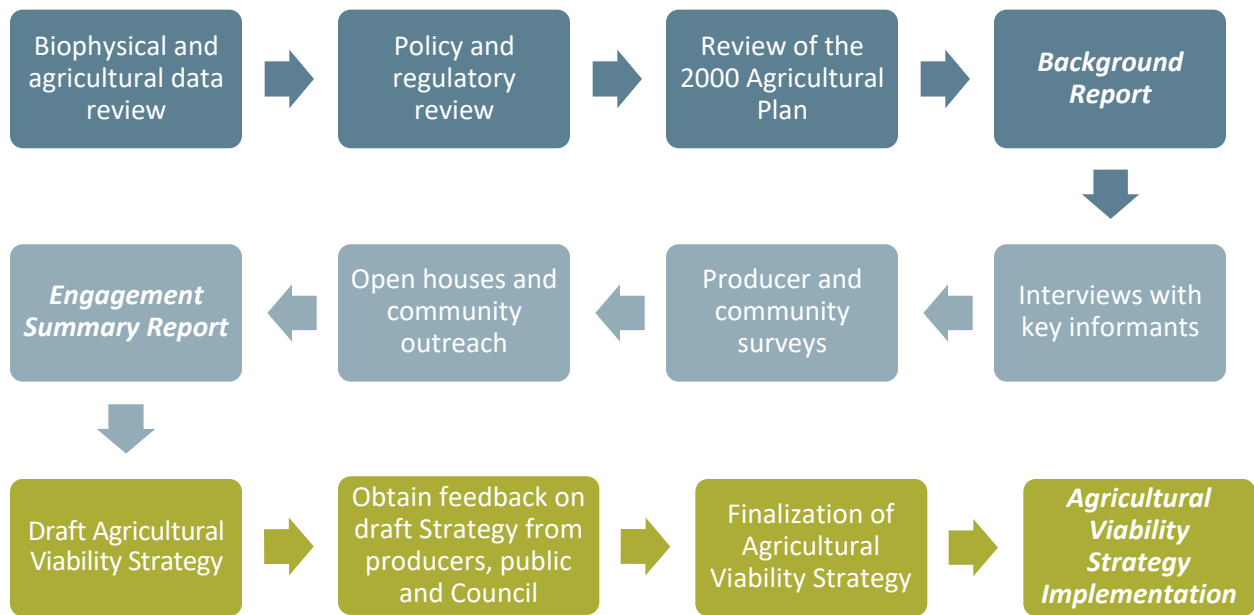


3.0 Strategy Development Process



The process for developing the Strategy involved research, engagement, and assessment leading to the formation of recommendations and an implementation plan. Figure 2 below summarizes the key milestones in the development of the Strategy.

Figure 2. City of Pitt Meadows Agricultural Viability Strategy development process.



3.1 Engagement Process and Feedback

The engagement process involved gathering local knowledge directly from the agriculture and agri-food sector, and from the general public. Detailed feedback is documented and presented in the accompanying Engagement Summary Report (see Appendix B).

3.1.1 Feedback from the Agriculture and Agri-Food Community

The key issues identified by the agriculture and agri-food community are as follows:

- The importance of maintaining diking and drainage infrastructure.
- Challenges associated with the number of regulations and inconsistency across various levels of governments.
- Damages to crop yields caused by wildlife, invasive species, and pests.
- Conflicts between farm vehicles and increased traffic on the local road system.
- High land prices, which makes it difficult to expand operations or for new farmers to get into farming.



The top five opportunities identified by the agriculture and agri-food community to support the sector included:

1. Collaboration (with the City, other farmers, and the public) and greater awareness amongst the public.
2. Support for business continuity and reinforcing supply chains and key inputs to ensure farms remain viable.
3. Preservation of farmland and protection from urban encroachment.
4. Education for the public about respecting agricultural vehicles on roadways, as well as respecting farms while using trails adjacent to farmland.
5. Increasing options to buy locally produced foods (e.g., direct to consumer, grocery stores and markets).

The three most important activities identified by the agriculture and agri-food community for the City to support the agri-food sector are:

1. Facilitating the use of water for irrigation.
2. Implementing policies and bylaws to protect farmland for farming (e.g., restricting size of homes on ALR lands, reducing non-agricultural vehicle parking).
3. Providing more information about living near active farming areas (e.g., minimizing conflicts between recreational/trail users and farming areas).

The following ideas were identified by the agriculture and agri-food community as to what an ideal future of agriculture in Pitt Meadows should look like in 10 years:

- Protecting and preserving farmland.
- Economic viability and support for farmers.
- Local food production, accessibility, and food security.
- Improved transportation and infrastructure.
- Environmental sustainability.
- Community engagement and awareness of the sector.

3.1.2 Feedback from the General Public

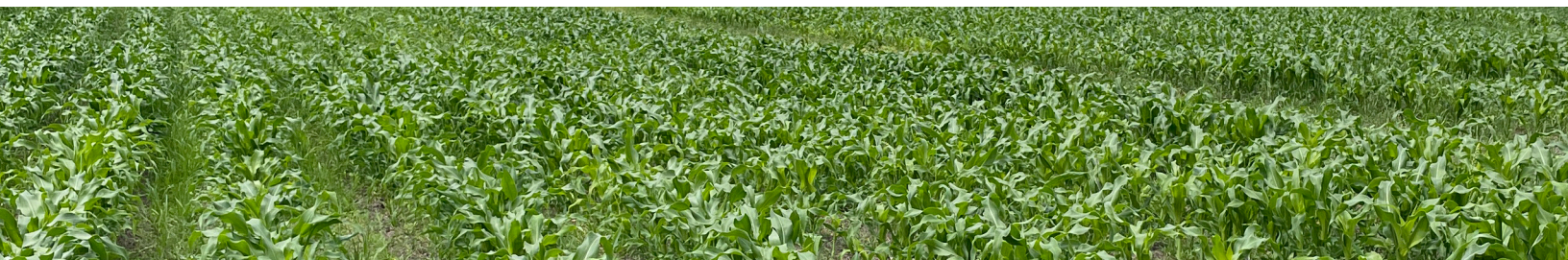
Results from the community-wide survey indicate that the top benefits of the agriculture and agri-food sector in Pitt Meadows for the general public include: access to fresh produce; the contribution of the agriculture and agri-food sector to the local economy; the connection to nature and views; and community food security. Only a minority of those who were engaged noted any negative impacts of living near active farming. These concerns included spraying of crops, odour, and noise – all of which are protected under the *Right to Farm Act*. Others noted an increase in industrial use of the landscape and farm vehicles on the road as concerns with living near agriculture.

The top three opportunities identified by the general public to engage with and support the agriculture and agri-food sector included:

1. More information about finding local foods and the farmers that produce those foods, along with more places to purchase local foods (e.g., farmers' market, farm-gate sales, and grocery stores).
2. Supporting the protection of biodiversity on farmland while reducing impacts of wildlife on crops.
3. Agri-tourism opportunities, such as attending farm tours, visiting on-farm breweries, wineries, etc.

The following ideas were identified by the general public, as to what an ideal future of agriculture in Pitt Meadows should look like in 10 years:

- Farmland is protected and used to its full potential.
- Increase in availability and diversity of local food being accessible at the farm-gate, and clearly identified in grocery stores.
- Continued use of recreation on the dikes.
- Agricultural practices steward the environment and contribute to climate change mitigation.



3.2 Summary of Key Issues for the Strategy to Address

Producers in Pitt Meadows are facing unprecedented challenges due to the overlapping risks of climate change, an aging farmer population, high inflation, land speculation, and increasing input costs associated with disrupted supply chains. Table 1 provides a summary of key issues that were heard throughout the engagement process that the Strategy's recommendations should address. These issues are presented in order of the number of times that the issue was raised.

Table 1. Key issues facing Pitt Meadows' agriculture and agri-food sector in 2023.

Issue	Description
Irrigation	Producers identified that one of the most important ways for the municipality to support agriculture was by maintaining the drainage infrastructure and facilitating the use of ditch water for irrigation. Water levels within the ditch system are sufficient in spring but drop significantly in summer months. There is a need for more investigation into the implications of managing the ditch system for agricultural needs and flood management needs, which are not always aligned. This includes reviewing the Administering Internal Drainage Facilities policy.
Drainage	While Pitt Meadows farms require irrigation in summer, drainage is also required during wetter winter months. This creates a tension between the need to add water to fields versus the need to remove it. Producers have identified the need to clear and maintain existing ditches to engineering standards and to ensure a location to move and manage the cleared material (landfill) is maintained. Invasive species, such as parrot's feather, also pose a challenge in existing drainage ditches. Residential, commercial, and industrial development also exacerbate runoff and drainage.
Farm Economic Viability	Costs associated with farm operations continue to rise with increasing costs of inputs and labour. Furthermore, increasing costs of agricultural land impede producers' abilities to expand operations, as well as the potential for new farmers to enter the sector. High land values can make it less likely that farmland will be purchased by farmers in the future, leading to a deterioration in support for farming operations and escalating unaffordability.
Succession Planning	Few producers (20%) have written succession plans, leaving a potential gap in the next generation of farmers financially able and willing to carry on agricultural production in Pitt Meadows. Many producers would like to create one but do not have the time, resources, or expertise to do so. Succession planning is linked to supporting new entrants who can build skills and invest in the assets (land, equipment) to take over existing farm operations.

Issue	Description
Climate Change	The farming community is acutely aware of the changes that are already occurring due to climate change in Pitt Meadows, particularly within the scope of changes to extreme heat and precipitation patterns. Farmers are interested in investing in new tools and strategies such as innovative equipment to reduce the impacts of flooding and drought on the farm but are concerned about the costs and time involved in implementing solutions. The farming community would also like to be recognized as leaders and partners in using techniques that maximize yields while minimizing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. A strong local food system inherently reduces the carbon footprint of the entire community.
Housing for Farmworkers	Protection of farmworker rights and accommodation is regulated by multiple levels of government. This multi-jurisdictional approach can create confusion for farm operators. At the same time, a lack of affordable housing in the urban centre and transit options in agricultural areas creates additional pressure to provide accommodation for a farm manager and farm workers on the same parcel as the main farming activities. Farm operators want to be able to provide affordable and comfortable accommodation for workers and managers, but feel that the complexity of regulations and permitting requirements is presenting significant challenges.
Land Use Planning Regulations	Municipal land use planning, through tools such as the Official Community Plan and Zoning Bylaw, can provide much needed support for agriculture by containing residential growth within urban containment areas, and requiring urban-side buffers to reduce conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural neighbours. Planning and designing trail systems to minimize disruption to agriculture is also an important consideration.
Invasive Species and Wildlife Impacts	Invasive plant species in the sloughs of Pitt Meadows create issues for managing ditches. Pests and viruses, such as spotted wing drosophila, scorch virus, and others, are impacting berry crops. Producers have noted that some wildlife (particularly waterfowl) populations are increasing along with associated impacts to crop yields.
Road and Transportation Conflicts	As the population of Pitt Meadows grows, tensions arise between urban residents and farmers, particularly with respect to the use of roads. Rural roads are used extensively by commuters, cyclists, and pedestrians, which creates safety and time delay issues for farmers. Also with an increasing population, some of Pitt Meadows' rural roads are experiencing a higher degree of wear and tear. ²

² Transportation Master Plan Summary Report. City of Pitt Meadows. 2014.

3.3 Partnerships and Collaboration

Protecting and enhancing the viability of agriculture is a shared responsibility among all levels of government, and requires the involvement of numerous organizations, groups, and individuals. In addition to partnering and collaborating with the agricultural community, opportunities exist to engage with academic and educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, and other levels of government.

The City's role in leading the implementation of the recommendations within the Strategy will necessarily reflect its mandate, jurisdiction, and resources. Various levels of government hold influence over agriculture and actions which are pertinent to the agriculture sector. For this reason, engaging different government levels and departments in supporting roles will help move the Strategy forward and contribute to the completion of recommended actions.

For issues that would benefit from, or require the involvement of, other levels of government and organizations, the City can take on the roles of advocacy, convening, and education.

3.3.1 ᑲᑲᑲᑲ (Katzie) First Nation

Collaborating with ᑲᑲᑲᑲ (Katzie) First Nation is not only important for ongoing reconciliation commitments, but offers valuable opportunities to incorporate Indigenous approaches to food production and agriculture, while working together on shared goals and initiatives. The ᑲᑲᑲᑲ (Katzie) First Nation are long-term stewards of the area now known as Pitt Meadows, and hold invaluable knowledge, experience

and relationships to the land and water. Collaboration with First Nations is particularly important around the topic of food sovereignty and the conservation, use, and management of water.

3.3.2 Federal Government

The Federal Government regulates several areas of agriculture including interprovincial and international trade practices, public health, and food safety. In some instances, municipalities may have to respond to federal legislation through their local jurisdiction and authority. For example, the *Cannabis Act* motivated municipalities to create new policies and bylaws related to land use, zoning, business licensing and responding to nuisance complaints.

The *Fisheries Act* protects fish and fish habitat, whether they occur on federal, provincial or private land. Among other things, this Act prohibits the deposit of deleterious substances into waters frequented by fish or in any place where the substance may enter waters frequented by fish, and prohibits any activity that would cause the harmful alteration, disruption or destruction of fish habitat. This has implications regarding the management of waterways (including agricultural ditches) that may be fish habitat or that connect to fish habitat.

In addition to legislation, federal programs can influence local government policies and bylaws. Of particular importance is the federal Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) and associated housing standards for temporary foreign workers (TFWs). These stipulate the number of foreign workers that can be assigned to a particular agricultural operation and the size and design of accommodations for these workers.

3.3.3 Provincial Government

The Province of BC primarily regulates agriculture through legislation under the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food (AF), and the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC), who oversee the ALR. However, the agriculture and food sector also have to comply with legislation managed by other provincial ministries, such as: the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRS), who oversee the *Environmental Management Act*, the *Agricultural Environmental Management Code of Practice*, the *Water Sustainability Act* and the water licensing program; the Ministry of Forests (FOR); and Ministry of Transportation (TRAN). Provincial policies and regulations related to agriculture are continuously evolving and municipalities must incorporate regulatory changes into their Official Community Plans (OCPs) and Zoning Bylaws as required.

The ALC, which is an independent administrative tribunal dedicated to preserving agricultural land and encouraging farming in BC, and is the agency responsible for administering the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* (ALCA) and associated regulations. The ALC plays a role in assisting local governments with achieving consistency between their bylaws and the ALCA, Regulation, and any Resolutions of the Commission via the ALC's Bylaw Review Process.

The Agricultural Land Commission Act (ALCA)

The ALCA sets out the legislative framework for the establishment and administration of the agricultural land preservation program. Section 6 of the ALCA outlines the purposes of the Commission as follows:

6 (1) (a) to preserve the agricultural land reserve; (b) to encourage farming of land within the agricultural land reserve in collaboration with other communities of interest; (c) to encourage local governments, First Nations, the government and its agents to enable and accommodate farm use of land within the agricultural land reserve and uses compatible with agriculture in their plans, bylaws and policies.

(2) The ALC, to fulfill its purposes under subsection (1), must give priority to protecting and enhancing all of the following in exercising its powers and performing its duties under this Act: (a) the size, integrity and continuity of the land base of the agricultural land reserve; (b) the use of the agricultural land reserve for farm use.

3.3.4 Regional Government: Metro Vancouver

The City of Pitt Meadows is a member of Metro Vancouver Regional District (MV). Regional districts play a role in region-wide planning by developing a Regional Growth Strategy and other plans and strategies that link or coordinate the otherwise independent planning and land use regulation choices of member municipalities. Municipalities are responsible for creating a Regional Context Statement that links their aspirations as expressed in their OCP to the regional vision as expressed in the Regional Growth Strategy. The Regional Context Statement must be accepted by the Metro Vancouver Board.³ Regional districts can establish Agricultural Advisory Committees that are involved in, and support, projects aimed at promoting public awareness, diversification and growth of the agriculture sector and advise the Board of Directors on matters regarding the agricultural sector. MV has an active Agricultural Advisory Committee with this aim.

³ Metro Vancouver Regional Context Statements.

3.3.5 Municipal Government: The City of Pitt Meadows

The manner in which agriculture is primarily considered at the municipal level is through policies within the OCP and regulations in the Zoning Bylaw. The City of Pitt Meadows’ OCP, Zoning Bylaw and other bylaws and strategies demonstrate a high degree of support for the agriculture sector. Municipalities can support agriculture by extending its role into advocacy, convening, and facilitation,

as a means to move forward on issues that are challenging the agriculture and agri-food sector. The role of the municipality will be reflective of its mandate, resources, and capacity. Municipalities must often seek external funding in order to make progress on, and implement, key actions in support of agriculture.



4.0 Agricultural Viability Strategy Framework



There are five key components to the Strategy:

1 vision: The vision statement describes a clear, comprehensive future state and intention for agriculture in Pitt Meadows, while anticipating possible future events with careful consideration.

5 goals: The goals expand on the vision statement and overall aims articulated and amalgamated through feedback received during engagement. These goals provide direction to identify specific actions to implement the vision and strengthen the local agriculture sector. The goals are not presented in order of importance.

17 strategies: The strategies break down each goal into several recommended actions that can be tackled through specific activities.

Implementation strategy: The implementation strategy sorts the recommended actions into prioritized categories.

Monitoring and reporting framework: A “report card” style table sets out a framework to track the implementation of the strategies and progression on achieving the identified goals.

4.1 Strategy Vision and Goals

This Strategy is guided by a vision and goals that are based on research and engagement findings.

VISION

Agriculture in Pitt Meadows is a thriving and resilient sector where farmers are valued, productive lands are supported, and producers are equipped to adapt to changing social, economic, and environmental conditions.

GOALS

1. Protect farmland for farming;
2. Plan and manage infrastructure assets, such as drainage, irrigation, and roads, to ensure they are well-functioning for agriculture and supported through thoughtful decision-making;
3. Support the economic viability of the agriculture and agri-food sector;
4. Help the agriculture and agri-food sector adapt to future challenges by adopting new technology, embracing innovation, and becoming resilient to climate change; and
5. Help the community support and be proud of agriculture in Pitt Meadows.

4.2 Strategies and Recommended Actions

In the sections that follow, strategies are put forward under the theme of five goals. The strategies are further broken down into specific recommended actions. For issues that are outside of municipal government jurisdiction, advocacy is proposed. Each action will need to be led by the City of Pitt Meadows. Organizations that are suggested to support each action are identified, however these organizations have not necessarily provided commitments to do so.

Each strategy includes a proposed timeline of Short (1-2 years), Medium (3-5 years), or Long (6-10 years) to begin implementation. These timelines reflect overall priority levels as well as capacity and resources available at the municipality to implement the Strategy.

The City of Pitt Meadows already engages in a variety of activities which are supportive of the agriculture community and the viability of the agriculture sector. Continuing and re-invigorating many of these activities will be important for the future of agriculture in Pitt Meadows. Examples of such activities include:

- Ensuring that planning and regulatory documents such as the OCP and Transportation Plan are clearly supportive of agriculture and the ALR, including preserving agricultural land for agricultural production;
- Supporting and consulting with the AAC as an advisory body for the City;

- Maintaining drainage and irrigation infrastructure, while encouraging responsible water use on farms through increasing irrigation efficiency and on-farm water retention and storage; and
- Providing resources and information to the non-farming community about the importance of agriculture, as well as information for the agriculture community on opportunities or legislative changes which may impact them.

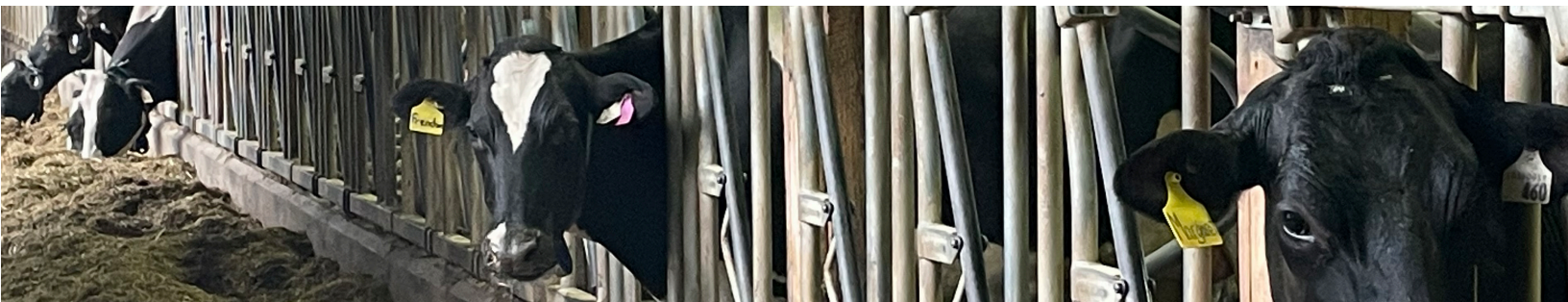
These, and other, important on-going actions are listed in detail in Appendix C.



Goal 1: Protect farmland for farming

Land use regulation by local governments to enable farming is established under the *Community Charter* and the *Local Government Act* (LGA). Tools include the OCP, Zoning Bylaw, Development Permit Areas (DPA) Guidelines, and other plans and bylaws. Agriculture is a cross-cutting topic that requires inter-departmental, inter-jurisdictional and inter-sectoral responses to key issues.

The agricultural character of Pitt Meadows is highly valued by residents. The popularity of local agri-food products and agri-tourism experiences is largely based on public knowledge and respect of farming practices. However, opportunities exist for the City of Pitt Meadows to work with producers to further strengthen this valued sector from a land use planning perspective. Tensions along the urban-rural edge persist; therefore, ensuring alignment between local and provincial regulations, particularly regarding recreation (trails) and residential uses, will help to support farming activities. From the interviews and agri-food sector survey, the second most important way that the City of Pitt Meadows could support the agriculture and agri-food sector is by implementing policies and bylaws to protect farmland for farming.



Strategy 1.1: Advocate to other levels of government for policies and regulations that support and stimulate productive stewardship of the agricultural land base. (OCP 2.1.4 c)

- Advocate to BC Assessment for opportunities to better match tax rates with farmland production activities (e.g., higher BC Farm Tax Status minimum thresholds; changes to the application of the school tax on inactive farmland; a vacant crop tax), to help prevent land speculation.
- Advocate to the ALC and AF for increased provincial resources to support enforcement of provincial regulations in the ALR, including the administration of the *ALC Act*.
- Advocate to Federal and Provincial agencies to streamline processing requirements to obtain temporary farm workers and to construct temporary farmworker housing.
- Advocate to Federal and Provincial agencies that any loss of farmland for infrastructure projects (e.g., rail, roads, other) must provide benefits to the wider agricultural community.

Timeline: Short 1-2 years

Strategy 1.2: Update the OCP and Zoning Bylaw to support and strengthen agriculture. (OCP 2.1.4; 2.2.1)

- Include, highlight, and strengthen policy statements and bylaws to discourage non-farm uses in the ALR particularly around issues such as non-agricultural vehicle parking and soil deposit and removal.
- Combine multiple agricultural zones for ease of use and clarity around different uses, minimum parcel sizes, and densities.
- Prepare Zoning Bylaw updates for Council to consider for farm home plate maximums that are aligned with (or more restrictive than) AF home plate guidelines, including maximum lot line setbacks for residential uses in the ALR.
- Ensure consistency in terminology across the Zoning Bylaw, OCP, and other local government planning documents for definitions that are also used in provincial policies and regulations. (Examples include: agriculture, farm operation, intensive farming, watercourse, agri-tech, vertical farming, and processing zones.)
- Review best practices on agricultural buildings as outlined by the ALC and other municipalities, such as the City of Richmond, and consider updating Pitt Meadows policies to align with these best practices.

Timeline: Medium, 3-5 years

Strategy 1.3: Maintain and update Development Permit Area 5 (Farmland Protection). (OCP 2.2.1)

- Monitor the newly adopted Development Permit Area (DPA) #5 (for the Protection of Farming) to determine if entire properties abutting the ALR boundary should be designated as part of the DPA, rather than the current setback within them, in order to provide more solid protections for agriculture in the long-term.

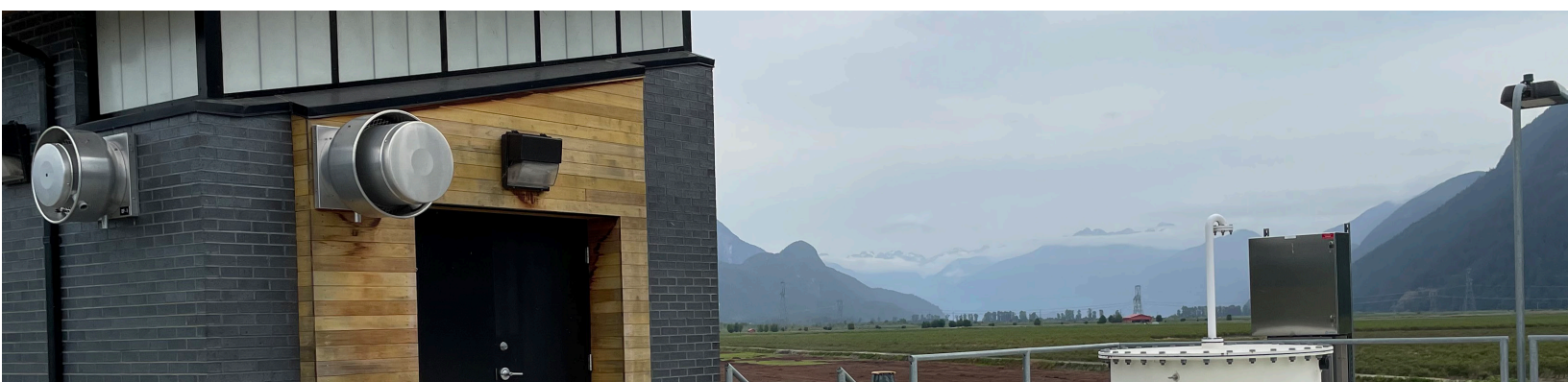
Timeline: Long, 6-10 years

Goal 2: Plan and manage infrastructure assets to ensure they are well-functioning for agriculture and supported through thoughtful decision-making

Water management, such as floodplain management, drainage and irrigation, is a critical component of successful agricultural production. Most agricultural land in Pitt Meadows is on a floodplain created by the major rivers in the area – the Fraser, Alouette, and/or Pitt rivers. A series of dikes and pump stations have been installed to protect the land from flooding. However, climate change is projected to bring increased risk of flooding, extreme precipitation events, and drought. Agricultural water demands are expected to increase as climate change leads to hotter, drier summers and longer growing seasons. Climate change and population growth, combined with an increase in irrigation needs, are anticipated to combine to result in increased pressure on the municipal water system, especially during summer months. Currently, a small number of producers may be using the municipal water supply (treated potable water) for irrigation needs, while others draw from the internal ditch network. Some producers have obtained (or applied for) Provincial water licences to permit this diversion, while others may still be operating without a licence. The Provincial water licensing system has been identified as a source of frustration for the agricultural community and farmers are concerned with the Province’s ability to require curtailment of irrigation under the *Water Sustainability Act* during drought conditions. While obtaining a water license is a requirement of the province, it does not guarantee water usage; therefore, additional measures will likely need to be put into place to ensure water availability meets irrigation needs.

Through the survey and interview process, farmers communicated that one of the best ways for the City of Pitt Meadows to support the agriculture sector is to identify a point person on staff who can liaise with the farming community about water issues. The farming community does have a point person for water issues at the City; however, given that the City does not currently manage irrigation and operates based on the policy set-points and associated flood risk, the City is limited in this capacity.

Infrastructure upgrades and maintenance were also a prominent theme regarding disputes over the use of roadways and conflicts between farming and non-farming vehicles. Transporting produce, animals, equipment, and inputs are daily activities for farmers. As such, reliable access to roadways is critical for day-to-day operations.



Strategy 2.1: Provide safe and reliable drainage infrastructure for farming. (OCP 2.4.2; 9.6.1)

- Advocate to Provincial and Federal government agencies to provide the City and the agricultural community with resources to improve drainage infrastructure, ditch cross-sections, maintenance, and upgrades.

Timeline: Short, 1-2 years

Strategy 2.2: Develop an agricultural water study to assess the capacity of the City's drainage system to support irrigation water for agricultural activities. (OCP 2.4.3)

- Advocate to Provincial and Federal government agencies for opportunities for the City to be able to undertake measures to support irrigation for farmers. For example: managing water levels within the ditch system without becoming an irrigation district.
- Advocate to the WLRS regarding the need to simplify, streamline, and hasten the water licensing program for agricultural users, as well as consider the feasibility of an Agricultural Water Reserve.
- Seek clarity from the Province regarding how the various provincial water use regulations interact with one another and can be reasonably adhered to.
- Conduct a city-wide water study that measures and estimates irrigation and other water needs for agriculture in a detailed and seasonal manner, now and into the future, under the lens of climate change and within the context of the current ditch drainage system. This should include an Agricultural Water Demand Model analysis to examine the current and future water needs of agricultural producers and processors, as well as specific consideration of the benefits, trade-offs and impacts of the City potentially becoming an irrigation district. This data analysis could be achieved in tandem with an updated Agricultural Land Use Inventory.
- Conduct an assessment of alternative sources or irrigation water and analyze the pros and cons of using the drainage system for irrigation purposes. This will require discussions with the 'qic'ay (Katzie) First Nation, given the cultural importance of the watershed(s).
- Encourage responsible water use by linking existing online water conservation resources (e.g., WaterBucket) on the Pitt Meadows Agriculture webpage, and/or distributing printed materials, such as brochures, during mail-outs (e.g., with annual property tax information) to agricultural users and landowners
- Further explore groundwater (wells) as an option for irrigation needs in some areas.

Timeline: Short, 1-2 years

Strategy 2.3: Plan for future development and improvements of rural roads with consideration for needs of agricultural users and to reduce conflicts. (OCP 9.1.1)

- Measure and monitor the effects of commuters and population growth on rural traffic congestion.
- Advocate for traffic improvements and supporting projects that divert traffic away from rural areas.
- Advocate to TransLink to update the Transport 2050 Plan to acknowledge and better manage the impacts of commuter/increased population traffic around agricultural lands.
- Improve safety of rural roads by increasing signage to communicate safe shared road use, vehicle priority, speed limits (specifically on Old Dewdney Trunk Road) and parking restrictions.
- Engage with the agricultural community to understand the needs of agricultural users in order to prioritize best management practices for rural roads.

Timeline: Long, 6-10 years

Goal 3: Support the economic viability of the agriculture and agri-food sector

The local agricultural system is connected through value-added opportunities such as processing, storage, distribution, and retail channels. Aggregation, packing, and processing (such as freezing) of berries and other agricultural products occurs both on farm and off-farm. Some producers have their own processing out-buildings on their farms where they clean, sort, and package products for the local market. Many blueberry and cranberry producers send their freshly harvested crops to processing facilities run by larger-scale operators. Meat processing is also available in Pitt Meadows, providing slaughter and cut and wrap services for livestock producers.

Despite these assets, there is interest by some producers in building more processing facilities within the community, and potentially using a co-operative model of governance to manage them. Processing, storage, and distribution facilities are important investments and can result in structures that are located on farmland for decades, even as businesses come and go. Therefore, their permitting, approval, and development require thoughtful consideration. There are also regulations set forth by the Province regarding the footprint of agricultural processing structures and the need for facilities to meet the “50% rule”. Under the *ALR Use Regulation*, a farm may store, pack, prepare, and/or process farm products if at least 50% of the farm product is grown or raised on the farm on which the processing takes place. The farm may be comprised of one or several parcels of land owned or operated as a farm business by a farmer or by co-operative members of an association. The 50% threshold is based on the quantity (measured by volume or weight) of processed farm products used, calculated over the full product line.

Through engagement and outreach in developing this Strategy, other important issues that arose for economic viability included a desire to collaborate with Maple Ridge producers regarding branding and agri-tourism. The mental health and well-being of farmers also arose as a key concern, which is affected by concerns around succession planning, how to advocate for key issues affecting the farming community, and how to overcome the challenges associated with climate change.



Strategy 3.1: Promote agri-tourism and marketing. (OCP 2.3.2)

- Seek alignment and collaboration with the Maple Ridge agricultural community to complete a review of the True North Fraser brand and determine opportunities to revive this collaborative marketing initiative.
- Review the suitability of instigating initiatives that consider the amount and type of agri-tourism activities that are of interest to Pitt Meadows producers and aligned with the Economic Development Strategy. Opportunities may include: creating an online interactive food map, a self-guided farm circle tour, U-Picks, and others.
- Ensure that at least one member of the AAC is cross-appointed to the Economic Development Advisory Committee.

Timeline: Short, 1-2 years

Strategy 3.2: Explore opportunities for increasing agricultural processing within the community. (OCP 2.3.2; 2.7.2)

- Review other municipal Food Hub⁴ Feasibility Assessments and consider developing one for Pitt Meadows, and/or lending support for a North Fraser Food Hub initiative to move forward.
- Meet with berry producers to discuss opportunities. This could involve:
 - Convening members of the berry sector to develop a road map towards long-term viability of berry production in Pitt Meadows and Maple Ridge with the objective of identifying specific gaps in processing and storage resources.
 - Exploring the needs versus existing capacity for berry processing and storage infrastructure in the community, considering international and domestic market opportunities for the fresh and frozen berries.
 - Conducting a site suitability analysis to encourage new facilities and infrastructure for food processing, distribution and storage to be developed within Pitt Meadows, with priority to business parks and mixed-employment areas.
 - Conducting a co-operative governance feasibility assessment for the Pitt Meadows and Maple Ridge berry sector. The assessment would provide recommendations on the benefits and/or drawbacks of instigating a co-operative model for investing in processing, storage, and marketing.

Timeline: Short, 1-2 years

⁴ The Ministry of Food and Agriculture define food hubs as: *Food hubs refer to shared-use food and beverage processing facilities that offer food and agriculture businesses access to commercial processing space, equipment, expertise and resources to support business development and growth.*

Strategy 3.3: Support farm operators and labourers in mental health and well-being, networking and succession planning. (OCP 2.5.1)

- Provide resources for mental health support for farmers on the City website.
- Work with the agricultural sector to consider reviving the Pitt Meadows Farmers Institute, possibly in conjunction with the Maple Ridge agricultural community. The structure of this group would allow for producers to connect to one another as through a supportive community group, and the group could play an advocacy role to various levels of government.
- Work with organizations, such as the Young Agrarians, to facilitate land-linking and succession planning for those who have farmland but are not farming, or those that are planning to wind down their farming career, with those who are wanting to start farming. This may include advocating to the federal government for changes to the capital gains tax policy regarding flexibility in the sale of farm assets to extended family members.

Timeline: Medium, 3-5 years

Strategy 3.4: Support local food procurement. (OCP 2.7.1)

- Develop and adopt a local food procurement policy for City of Pitt Meadows events and meetings.
- Explore locations for a permanent year-round Farmers' Market.

Timeline: Long, 6-10 years

Goal 4: Adapt to future challenges by adopting new technology, embracing innovation, and becoming resilient to climate change

Climate change is expected to result in drier summers, wetter winters, increased risk of wildfires and local, more frequent flooding events in Pitt Meadows. Additional challenges mentioned by producers are the increasing damages to crop yields caused by wildlife (e.g., migratory birds), invasive species, and pests. These are all daunting challenges, and will require the City to support and work with the agriculture and agri-food sector and to collaborate with First Nations, regional, provincial, and federal governments to help the farming community maintain viability.

While climate change may challenge future growing conditions, there are also opportunities to provide incentives for innovative practices that focus on maintaining and enhancing the natural environment, including supporting soil health and riparian area protection. Environmentally sound farming practices that conserve water, replenish the soil, and provide habitat for wildlife, birds and pollinators can be encouraged through facilitating partnerships between environmental organizations and the agriculture community, as well as through compensation programs, such as Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES).

Throughout the engagement process, survey respondents commented on the importance of the natural ecology of the land and environmentally sound farming practices, acknowledging the important role that well-managed agricultural lands play in stewarding the environment and contributing to mitigation and reduction of climate change impacts. While it can be challenging to balance the needs of ecological biodiversity and agriculture, many programs and resources do exist. Through the community survey, 70% of survey participants indicated that they supported the implementation of PES initiatives, with nearly half willing to pay an additional \$5 or more annually to fund these initiatives.



Strategy 4.1: Engage with producers to create a shared understanding of how farms can become more resilient to climate change. (OCP 12.1.3; 12.2.7)

- Ensure that the agriculture and agri-food sector is included during the development of local climate change planning initiatives and strategies. This could include identifying climate change hazards, risks, impacts, mitigation, and adaptation measures specific to the agriculture and agri-food sectors and devoting a specific section to agriculture within a future Climate Action Plan.
- Support the adoption of regenerative agricultural practices and agritech (the use of technology to optimize production, profitability, or environmental sustainability) to sequester carbon and offset emissions (may include improving soil health by cover-cropping, low-impact harvesting, composting, anaerobic digestion, heat capture, methane capture, etc.).
- Provide educational resources on funding available for increasing on-farm water storage capacity to help manage drought seasons and potential changes in crops that are more resilient to climate change.
- Encourage fuel switching and electrification to reduce emissions from the agricultural sector (could be promoted through grant-funded demonstration projects).
- Work with industry and farmers to develop practices and techniques to help the agricultural sector be a part of the climate change solution, while improving productivity for the long-term.

Timeline: Short, 1-2 years

Strategy 4.2: Ensure agriculture is considered in emergency preparedness and planning. (OCP 12.1.2; 12.1.3; 12.2.6)

- Work with the farming community to identify emergency preparedness opportunities in the agricultural areas. This could include:
 - Reviewing and collaborating with the AAC to include a producer perspective when updating the local emergency response plans.
 - Reviewing and updating the emergency plan for livestock in Pitt Meadows, including registration with the BC Premises ID program and consideration of local livestock producer needs and trailer capacity in the event of an evacuation.
 - Promoting the use of “buddy farm” systems particularly for larger farms such as dairy operations, so that producers are paired up to assist one another during emergencies.

- Explore training opportunities for emergency response.
- Discussing how to measure and account for the needs of seasonal farmworkers and their safety during an emergency.

Timeline: Short, 1-2 years

Strategy 4.3: Explore opportunities to encourage or incentivize the restoration and/or maintenance of ecological services on farmland to mitigate climate change impacts. (OCP 3.6.2; 12.2.5)

- Meet with Metro Vancouver staff to discuss a possible regional approach to PES, using financial incentives for the protection, improvement, and/or enhancement of ecological services on farmland (such as the initiation of a conservation fund or environmental levy).
- Support opportunities for addressing waterfowl, beavers and other wildlife impacts on crop yields, such as communication and planning efforts between producers and local groups such as Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust (DFWT), Birds Canada, Ducks Unlimited, and the Federal Environment and Climate Change Canada’s Canadian Wildlife Service. As a first step, invite DFWT to provide resources to the agricultural community for managing wildlife conflicts on farmland.

Timeline: Short, 1-2 years

Strategy 4.4: Control invasive species and noxious plants and pests. (OCP 3.1.3)

- Develop an Invasive Species Management Plan, which will involve:
 - Collaborating with ǫǫǫǫǫ (Katzie) First Nation to explore potential areas and species to prioritize.
 - Providing resources to rural residents about managing and disposing of invasive species, including the provincially-mandated removal of noxious weeds.
 - Developing and/or distributing educational materials regarding ditch maintenance, shading opportunities, and other best practices.
- Provide invasive/noxious species etiquette signage along the trails in agricultural areas.
- Actively manage and remove invasive species on City-owned lands.
- Provide resources to producers on disposing of invasive species on their farms.

Timeline: Medium, 3-5 years

Strategy 4.5 Develop solutions for agricultural wastes. (OCP 2.4.4)

- Seek opportunities to dispose of agricultural waste products (organic and non-organic) within the municipality and/or in partnerships with nearby municipalities and Metro Vancouver. Examples could include:
 - Exploring opportunities for a biofuel or waste-to-energy facility that provides a benefit to farmers by treating agricultural waste while providing heat and power to residents and businesses.
 - Exploring an agricultural plastics recycling/disposal pilot program with an organization such as Clean Farms.
 - Promoting on-farm composting of green waste using AF guidebooks.
 - Exploring the potential to have a mobile chipper that provides free or low-cost on-farm wood waste management for farms (e.g., to dispose of waste materials from land clearing, crop pruning, or other wood waste).
 - Exploring ways to offer incentives to farmers dispose of plastics, hazardous materials, equipment (e.g., clean up days).
- Ensure that the municipal landfill continues to accept ditch-cleaning materials (e.g., sediment and green waste).

Timeline: Long, 6-10 years

Goal 5: Help the community support and be proud of agriculture in Pitt Meadows

The support for local agriculture and a local food system is largely based on public knowledge and awareness of agricultural products and processes, which vary from community to community. As indicated from the survey results, Pitt Meadows residents gain many benefits from living near farmland including access to fresh produce, a connection to nature and views, and community food security. Many residents also use the recreational paths on dikes located adjacent to agricultural areas for activities such as biking, walking, or running.

Results from the engagement process found that those involved in the agriculture and agri-food sector would like to see a greater awareness amongst the public as to how to best support local producers. To complement those findings, the respondents from the community survey indicated that they would like more information regarding where to find local food and what types of agricultural activities are being undertaken in the community. In addition, the survey results indicated that producers would like the City of Pitt Meadows to provide more tips and information for residents about living near active farming areas (e.g., how to minimize conflicts between recreational/trail users and farming areas).

The City of Pitt Meadows has historically used a range of tools such as direct mail, websites, social media, and hosting events to connect with the agricultural community and support community education about the agricultural sector. Building on these channels, the City of Pitt Meadows can strengthen communications on a wide range of topics in food and agriculture. This will help to increase clarity and quality of working relationships with local farmers and food sector businesses, as well as spread awareness to community members about the agricultural sector.



Strategy 5.1 Improve public understanding and knowledge of agriculture and food systems in Pitt Meadows. (OCP 2.7.4 b; 2.7.4 c)

- Promote awareness and support for agriculture and local foods by:
 - Encouraging urban residents and businesses to understand and appreciate local agriculture. This could include signage and/or videos about littering regulations on trails adjacent to farmland; the need to keep dogs leashed to prevent harassment of livestock (or providing support to fencing off trails); the *Right to Farm Act*; and the need to reduce speeds along rural roads to respect farm equipment.
 - Developing signage to be placed along agricultural fields to identify crops being produced and along local trails and greenways in order to reduce conflicts between trail users and agricultural operations.
- Explore product branding and identification for local products at retail outlets to inform consumers.
- Provide informational resources to existing residents in the rural areas of Pitt Meadows to convey the value and importance of agriculture in their community and how to be a good neighbour to agricultural operations. This could include developing a map of local farm-gate sales, providing profiles of local farmers on the Pitt Meadows agriculture webpage through videos, and hosting farm tours for the public.
- Explore incentives to encourage farmers to create aesthetically-pleasing operations. This could include enhancements or decorations to farm buildings, placement of heritage farming equipment, edge plantings, or artistic displays.

Timeline: Medium, 3-5 years

Strategy 5.2: Support food system literacy throughout the community. (OCP 2.7.4 a)

- Assess food assets in the community with a view of improving the overall state of community food security levels and identifying recommendations for reducing household food insecurity.
- Explore opportunities to develop relationships and learning opportunities among School District 42, post-secondary institutions, and the agricultural community. This could involve assisting schools with obtaining Farm-to-School BC and Agriculture in the Classroom grants through letters of recommendation, or an indication of matching or in-kind support. This could be done with a revived Pitt Meadows Farmers Institute and may include advocacy to expand on agricultural curriculum.
- Identify potential sites for new/expanded community gardens for growing food within the urban environment.

- Be receptive to any renewed community interests in keeping urban hens, while balancing the agricultural community’s concerns regarding their role in spreading Avian Flu. Monitor permitted uses in non-agricultural zones to allow “urban agriculture” as a permitted use in non-agriculture zones such as Rural Residential (RR). Use best practices from other jurisdictions to inform bylaw development on urban agriculture.
- Integrate Pitt Meadows food and agriculture into existing community events (e.g., local catering, information booth, handouts, quick surveys, guest speakers) at events like Pitt Meadows Day, and add an agricultural lens to other holiday events.

Timeline: Medium, 3-5 Years

5.0 Implementation Strategy



Given the broad scope of the Strategy, many of the actions will require further research, engagement, and planning. All actions will be expected to consider the following principles in their scoping and activation:

1. **Advance Reconciliation:** Seek opportunities to partner with and strengthen our relationship with the ᑕᓴᑕᓴᑦ (Katzie) First Nation as part of the implementation phase.
2. **Collaborate across sectors and with other levels of government:** Bring all interested and affected organizations together to identify collaborative solutions.
3. **Use resources effectively:** Build on existing initiatives and partnerships for efficiency and impact.
4. **Engage farmers and community members:** Ensure farmers and community members are engaged throughout implementation.

The recommendations are presented in the following tables to identify implementation timelines, potential partners and estimated budgetary requirements. Additional or external funding refers to either an annual budget request, other funding sources, or a combination thereof.

Priority levels are tied to timing of the beginning of implementation. Highest priority actions are to be targeted to begin within 1-2 years. Medium priority actions are to be targeted to begin within 3-5 years. Lower priority actions are to be targeted to begin within 6-10 years.

A summary of current and recommended ongoing actions being undertaken by the City is provided in Appendix C.

5.1 Short Term Actions (1–2 Years)

Strategy	Description	Support organizations	External funding required
1.1	Advocate to other levels of government for policies and regulations that support and stimulate productive stewardship of the agricultural land base.	N/A	No
2.1	Provide safe and reliable drainage infrastructure for farming. This includes advocacy to provincial and federal levels of government.	N/A	Yes
2.2	Develop an agricultural water study to assess the capacity of the City's drainage system to support irrigation water for agricultural activities.	ǫ́iǫǫ́y (Katzie) First Nation	Yes
3.1	Promote agri-tourism and marketing.	N/A	Yes
3.2	Explore opportunities for increasing agricultural processing within the community.	City of Maple Ridge, Local berry producers, BC Blueberry Council	Yes
4.1	Engage with producers to create a shared understanding of how farms can become more resilient to climate change.	N/A	No
4.2	Ensure agriculture is considered in emergency preparedness and planning.	EMBC, AF	Yes
4.3	Explore opportunities to encourage or incentivize the restoration and/or maintenance of ecological services on farmland to mitigate climate change impacts.	Metro Vancouver, DFWT	Yes

5.2 Medium Term Actions (3-5 Years)

Strategy	Description	Support organizations	External funding required
1.2	Update the OCP and Zoning Bylaw to support and strengthen agriculture.	ALC	No
3.3	Support farm operators and labourers in mental health and well-being, networking, and succession planning.	Young Agrarians, Do More Ag Foundation, AgSafe	No
4.4	Control invasive species and noxious plants and pests.	Invasive Species Council of BC, ᑕᑭᑖᑕᑭᑭ (Katzie) First Nation	Yes
5.1	Improve public understanding and knowledge of agriculture and food systems in Pitt Meadows.	N/A	Yes
5.2	Support food system literacy throughout the community.	School District 42, Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills	Yes

5.3 Long Term Actions (6-10 Years)

Reccommendation	Description	Support organizations	External funding required
1.3	Maintain and update Development Permit Area 5 (Farmland Protection).	N/A	No
2.3	Plan for future development and improvements of rural roads with consideration for needs of agricultural users and to reduce conflicts.	TRAN, Transportation Safety Board, TransLink	Yes
3.4	Support local food procurement.	N/A	No
4.5	Develop solutions for on-farm agricultural wastes.	Clean Farms, AF	Maybe

6.0 Monitoring and Reporting Framework



A monitoring and reporting framework has been developed to support implementation of the Strategy. For each goal, at least one progress indicator has been identified as well as measurement metrics, data sources, and baseline information where available. The Strategy recommends that this evaluation is completed annually. The City of Pitt Meadows will be responsible for some data sources, including the dissemination of a survey to the farming community. The survey would ideally be designed with the support of the AAC to address the data gaps. While the indicators help to track the overall health of the local agricultural sector, it is important to note that many are influenced by factors that are beyond the City's control.

Goal	Indicator	Measure	Data Source(s)	Baseline (2023)
Goal 1: Protect farmland for farming	The ALR is protected and preserved for agriculture.	Amount of land in the ALR (based on 2023 values).	City of Pitt Meadows ALUI ALC	Total ALR in Pitt Meadows 6,356 (ha) or 15,706 (ac) (2016, ALUI)
	Agricultural land is productive.	Percentage of ALR that is in an agricultural (productive) use.	ALUI Survey of Agricultural Community	The 2016 ALUI provides a measure of agricultural productivity
Goal 2: Plan and manage infrastructure assets to ensure they are well-functioning for agriculture and supported through thoughtful decision-making	Water needs are met.	Number of active agricultural water licenses issued by WLRS.	BC Water Resources Atlas	Currently, there are 40 active agricultural water licenses, representing 28% of all farms (140 farms 2021 Census of Agriculture). The number of farms who have applied for licenses, but the license has not yet been issued, is unknown.
		Percentage of farms with water needs met.	Survey of Agricultural Community	N/A
	Water is obtained by farmers through a variety of sources.	Number of alternative water options (e.g., on-farm water storage systems or other) are installed to help ensure irrigation needs are being met.	Survey of Agricultural Community	N/A

Goal	Indicator	Measure	Data Source(s)	Baseline (2023)
	Traffic patterns accommodate agricultural vehicles and farming activities.	Feedback from the agricultural community regarding existing traffic and road conditions.	Survey of Agricultural Community	N/A
Goal 3: Support the economic viability of the agriculture and agri-food sector	Amount of local processing and sales of agricultural products.	Number and/or capacity of local processing plants/ facilities.	City of Pitt Meadows Survey of Agricultural Community	N/A
		Number of farms and number of farm operators in Pitt Meadows.	Census of Agriculture	215 Farm Operators (2021 Census of Agriculture)
	Succession planning and new farmers are supported.	Number of farms with succession plans.	Census of Agriculture Survey of Agricultural Community	28 farms (20%) have succession plans (2021 Census of Agriculture)
	Local food sales are supported.	Number of local vendors contracted through the food procurement policy.	City of Pitt Meadows	Not yet started
		Gross margin farm receipts.	Census of Agriculture	\$97,504,707 gross farm receipts (2021) 11.7% gross margin (2021)

Goal	Indicator	Measure	Data Source(s)	Baseline (2023)
		Number of Pitt Meadows farms represented at the Pitt Meadows Farmers Market. and/or other markets.	Fraser North Farmers Market Society Survey of Agricultural Community	1
Goal 4: Adapt to future challenges by adopting new technology, embracing innovation, and becoming resilient to climate change	Improved resilience of the agriculture sector to the effects of climate change.	Number of on-farm innovative projects to reduce waste and GHG emissions.	Survey of Agricultural Community	N/A
		Number of farms that have emergency preparedness plans.	Survey of Agricultural Community	N/A
	Farmers maintain, restore, and enhance areas of biodiversity and ecological significance.	Number of biodiversity/ riparian enhancement projects undertaken on farmland.	Investment Agriculture Foundation – Farmland Advantage WLRS DFO Survey of agricultural community	Currently unknown

Goal	Indicator	Measure	Data Source(s)	Baseline (2023)
		Number of collaborative projects with Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust, IAF, and/or other organizations.	DFWT IAF Survey of agricultural community	0
	Waste generated from farms is diverted from the landfill.	Number of Agricultural waste drop-off / pick-up events.	City of Pitt Meadows	0
		Number of farms employing waste diversion strategies.	Survey of Agricultural Community	N/A
Goal 5: Help the community support and be proud of agriculture in Pitt Meadows	Public understanding and engagement in local agriculture.	City-supported opportunities for public to interact with farms (special events, activities) are offered.	City of Pitt Meadows	N/A
		Farmers feel supported by the community.	Survey of agricultural community	N/A
		Municipal publications and/or social media posts that feature the importance of agriculture or profile of a farmer.	City of Pitt Meadows	N/A
		Tour(s) for municipal staff of agriculture and agriculture related facilities.	City of Pitt Meadows	N/A

7.0 Appendices



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Appendix A

Background Report

City of Pitt Meadows Agricultural Plan Update



June 2023



In association with



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List of Acronyms

AF	Ministry of Agriculture and Food
ALC	Agricultural Land Commission
ALUI	Agricultural Land Use Inventory
ALR	Agricultural Land Reserve
BC	British Columbia
CRA	Canada Revenue Agency
CSD	Census Sub-Division
FOR	Ministry of Forests

1.0 Introduction

Agriculture and farming have a long history in Pitt Meadows and continue to be a vital part of the economic and social fabric of the community. The local agriculture sector is mainly characterized by cranberry and blueberry production with a variety of other agriculture activities, including: greenhouse and nursery production, dairy and an emerging vertical farming scene.

It has been 23 years since the creation of the “District of Pitt Meadows Agricultural Plan.” Due to the evolving nature of the agriculture, food sector, and the regulations surrounding land-use planning policies, the City of Pitt Meadows has embarked on a project to update the 2000 document. This planning process is taking place from May to December 2023 and will culminate in an updated *City of Pitt Meadows Agricultural Plan*. The primary objective of the project is to produce a comprehensive agricultural planning document that focuses on Pitt Meadows’ local jurisdiction and provides guidance in identifying opportunities to strengthen the local agricultural sector and contribute to its long-term sustainability. The final Plan will propose recommended actions that anticipate future changes and challenges specific to Pitt Meadows to support municipal planning efforts.

There are several key elements in the planning process that are used to achieve the objectives of the Plan. These include:

- A background report (this document) to provide an update on the current trends in the agricultural sector since the 2000 Plan was completed;
- A review of progress made since the creation of the 2000 Plan, including completed and ongoing objectives;
- An analysis of current policies and regulations relating to the agriculture sector in Pitt Meadows;
- Engagement with agricultural producers and the public (including interviews, surveys and Open Houses) to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats affecting the agriculture sector and land base; and
- The creation of an implementation strategy to facilitate a community-based approach to strengthening agriculture, along with a monitoring and evaluation framework to track implementation progress.

This *Background Report and Agriculture Profile* provides the foundational knowledge about the agricultural sector in Pitt Meadows to help inform the development of the Plan.

2.0 Agriculture Profile

Agriculture is a cornerstone of the community of Pitt Meadows and an important economic driver for the City. The following section provides an overview of the agriculture sector within Pitt Meadows. A variety of data sources were used to compile the information and trends over time, and these are described wherever possible.

2.1 Agricultural Profile Methodology

This agricultural profile was compiled using existing reports and data sets. The main sources of data regarding agricultural activities were the 2011 Pitt Meadows ALUI, 2016 Metro Vancouver Agricultural Land Use Inventories (ALUI), and the Census of Agriculture (2011, 2016, 2021) data sets. There are some clear differences in the way that these data sets are compiled, which can lead to discrepancies when some

indicators are compared. Whenever possible, these differences are explained. For example, if five acres of blueberry bushes are noted on the parcel during the ALUI then this contributes to the acreage listed as blueberry production, even if the blueberries may not be sold and/or otherwise be brought into the local food system. By contrast, the Census of Agriculture includes data on farms that are self-reported by individuals, specifically those from commercial operations. This is one example of how the data sets can lead to differences in results.

Agricultural Land Use Inventory

In 2016, BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food (AF) completed an ALUI of Metro Vancouver, including Pitt Meadows. Each parcel was examined using AF's standard AgFocus system for ALUI. The ALUI data is helpful in answering the following questions:

- What is the current extent, type, location, and scale of agricultural activities in the area?
- What proportion of the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) is available for farming?

Census of Agriculture

The Census of Agriculture collects information from self-reporting individuals every five years as part of the larger Statistics Canada census collection and the completion is mandatory under the Federal *Statistics Act*. The Census of Agriculture is a federal data collection initiative and, as such, the geographic resolution is coarser than that of the ALUI. This is another reason for some discrepancies found in the datasets. The latest available Census of Agriculture uses 2021 data from Statistics Canada for Census Subdivision (CSD) Pitt Meadows (Figure 1).¹

In the 2011 and 2016 Census, a farm was defined as any “agricultural operation” that grows or produces agricultural products with the intent to sell these products. This means that farms with no to very low farm revenues were included, as long as the agricultural products produced were intended for sale. In the 2021 Census, the definition of a farm changed to: a “farm” or an “agricultural holding” (i.e., the [census farm](#)) unit that produces agricultural products and reports revenues or expenses for tax purposes to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). The new definition removes ambiguity in the definition of a farm, focusing on business-oriented agricultural operations. This change affects the comparability of farm counts and related statistical data from previous census years and many communities have seen a drop off in overall farm numbers, particularly small holdings and/or those earning under \$10,000 per year.²

¹ Statistics Canada. 2021. Census of Agriculture

² Statistics Canada. [Key changes to the 2021 Census of Agriculture](#). April 2022.

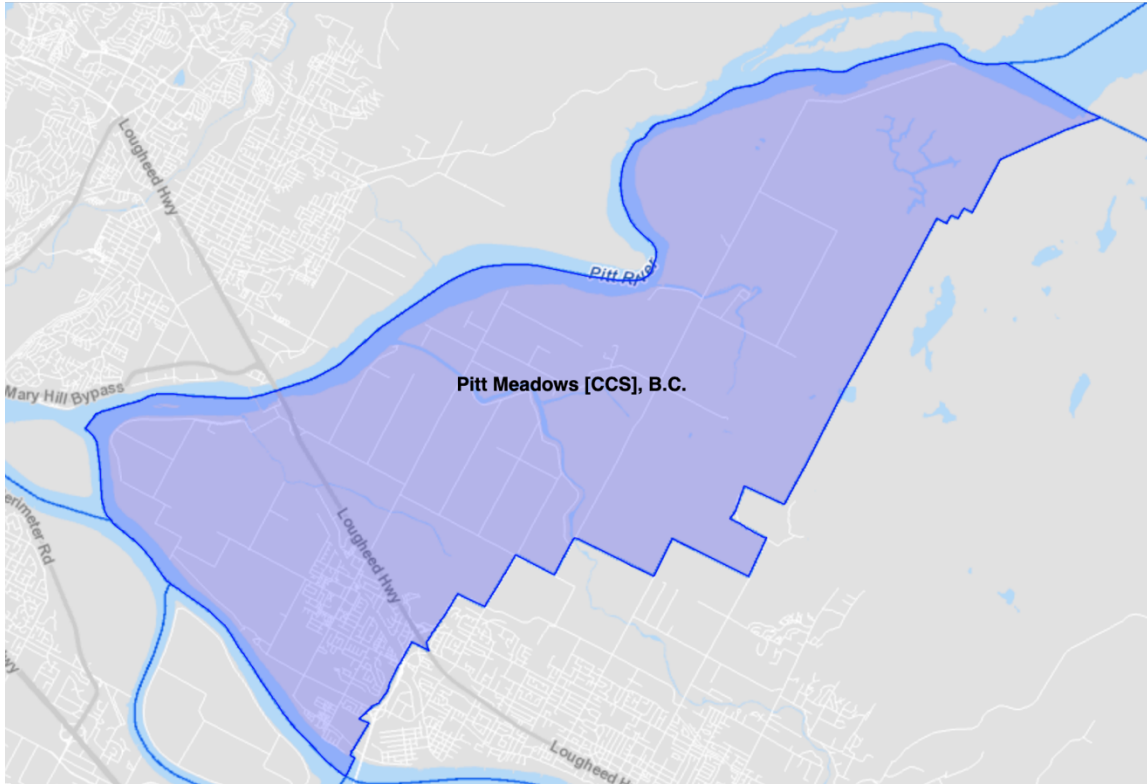


Figure 1. Pitt Meadows Census Subdivision Boundaries (Source: Statistics Canada)

2.2 Agricultural Land Base

Pitt Meadows has approximately 6,356 ha (15,705 acres) of land within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), spread across 712 parcels. According to the 2016 Metro Vancouver ALUI, 3,697 ha (9,135 acres), or 58% of the ALR land base, was being farmed across 434 (61%) of the parcels. Of the remaining parcels, 114 (16%) were considered available for farming, and 164 (23%) are unavailable for farming (Table 1). Unavailable for farming usually relates to ALR that overlaps with wetlands, lakes, roads, railways, or other infrastructure. Figure 2 provides a map of the distribution of agricultural land, where yellow parcels are available for farming, blue parcels are unavailable for farming and green parcels are currently used for farming.

Table 1. Status of agricultural land in Pitt Meadows (Source: Metro Vancouver ALUI 2016)

Agricultural Land	Parcel distribution		Land distribution		
	# of Parcels	% of Parcels	ha	acres	% of land
Available	114	16%	370.0	914.3	6%
Unavailable	164	23%	1,790.5	4,424.3	28%
In Use	434	61%	4,195.5	10,366.9	66%
Total	712	100%	6,356.0	15,705.5	100%

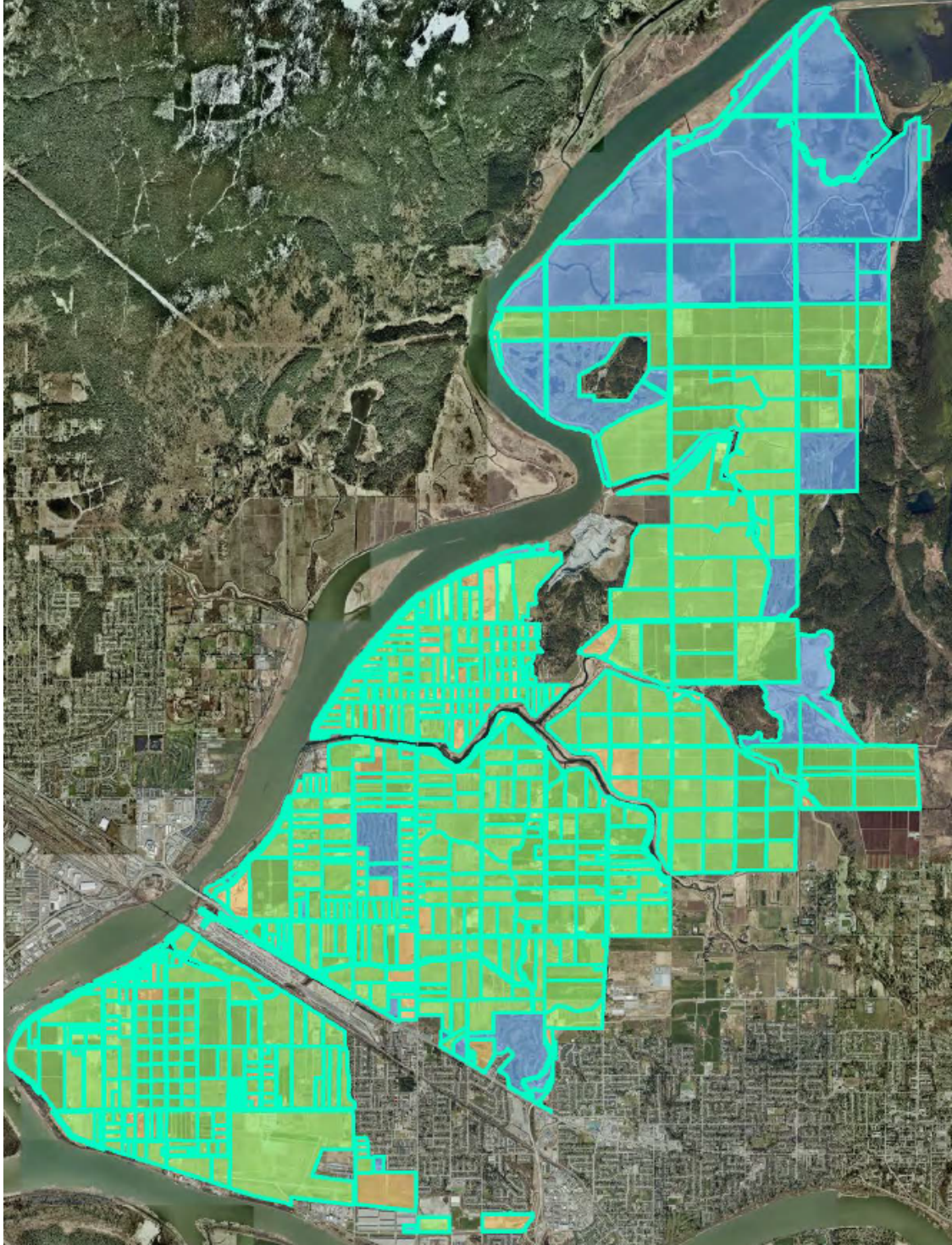


Figure 2. ALR parcels in Pitt Meadows (Source: 2016 Metro Vancouver ALUI)

Legend:

- Green: Currently used for farming
- Yellow: Available for farming
- Blue: Unavailable for farming

2.3 Farm Characteristics

2.3.1 Number of Farms and Farmed Parcels

According to the Census of Agriculture, the number of commercial farm operations decreased in Pitt Meadows from 163 in 2011 to 140 in 2021. This decrease may be influenced by the change in the census definition of “agricultural operation” as the 2021 definition only includes farms that produce agricultural products and report revenues or expenses for tax purposes to the CRA, narrowing the census scope to business-oriented agricultural operations.

2.3.2 Size and Types of Farms

The land in Pitt Meadows supports a wide diversity of farms ranging from under 10 acres to over 760 acres (Table 2). However, farms are on the small side in comparison to the rest of BC, nearly half (43%) of farms in Pitt Meadows are under 10 acres, compared to 32% of farms across BC sizing under 10 acres. Furthermore, 86% of farms in Pitt Meadows are under 70 acres, compared to 65% of farms across BC being under 70 acres. Only 14% of farms are over 70 acres in Pitt Meadows.

Table 2. Farms classified by total farm area in Pitt Meadows (Source: Census of Agriculture 2011, 2016, 2021)

	2011		2016		2021	
	# of farms	% of farms	# of farms	% of farms	# of farms	% of farms
Total Number of Farms	163	100%	133	100%	140	100%
Under 10 acres	64	39.0%	48	36.0%	60	43.0%
10 - 69 acres	69	42.0%	61	46.0%	60	43.0%
70 – 129 acres	8	5.0%	6	4.5%	5	3.5%
130 – 179 acres	5	3.0%	4	3.0%	4	3.0%
180 – 239 acres	5	3.0%	2	1.5%	4	3.0%
240 – 399 acres	3	2.0%	6	4.5%	5	3.5%
400 – 559 acres	5	3.0%	4	3.0%	1	<1%
560 – 759 acres	1	1.0%	1	<1%	0	<1%
760 acres and over	3	2.0%	1	<1%	1	<1%

Census data indicates that the most common types of farm operations in the community are fruit and tree nut operations (73) (Table 3). Fruit production is followed by hay (16) and nursery tree operations (15). The City has few other types of farms, including dairy (7), horse and equine (6), and chicken egg production (3).

Table 3. Select farm types in Pitt Meadows (Source: Census of Agriculture 2011, 2016, 2021)

	2011 (163 Farms Total)	2016 (133 Farms Total)	2021 (140 Farms Total)
Fruit and tree nut	73	75	73
Hay	17	11	16
Nursery tree	15	10	15
Dairy cattle	8	6	7
Horse and equine	17	6	6
Floriculture	9	6	3
Beef cattle ranching	9	2	3
Chicken egg production	0	3	3
Corn	0	2	3
Apiculture	2	5	2
Vegetable	3	3	1

A closer look at livestock trends in Pitt Meadows between 2011 and 2021 (Table 4) shows that the number of farms reporting cattle and calves has reduced from 21 to 14, though the number of cattle in the City have increased by about 600 head over the decade, indicating an intensification of the livestock industry. Bee colonies and the number of farms keeping chickens and hens have remained steady (Table 4). The number of farms reporting horses have reduced from 21 to 10, and the number of horses have reduced by 50%. This is likely linked to the change in “agricultural operation” definition, as many horse and equine farms are hobby based and do not generate income.

Table 4. Livestock Trends in Pitt Meadows (Source: Census of Agriculture 2011, 2016, 2021)

Types of Animals	2011			2016			2021		
	# of farms	# of animals	Average per farm	# of farms	# of animals	Average per farm	# of farms	# of animals	Average per farm
Horses & Ponies	28	256	9	12	211	18	10	102	10
Cattle & calves	21	2,184	104	11	2,125	193	14	2,728	195
Hens & Chickens	14	805	57	11	464	42	15	x	x
Bee Colonies	10	6,074	607	14	11,114	793	9	10,521	1,169

Note 1. x within the table indicates the number has been suppressed by Stats Canada for privacy reasons.

Of the crops produced in the region, the fruits, berries and nuts category is the most common, with 2,210 ha (5,461 acres) spread over 83 farms (Table 5). The noted decrease in most crop categories is likely somewhat attributable to the change in Statistics Canada’s definition of an “agricultural operation” definition.

Table 5. Most common crops in Pitt Meadows (Source: Census of Agriculture 2011, 2016, 2021)

Crops produced	2011		2016		2021	
	# of farms	ha (acres)	# of farms	ha (acres)	# of farms	ha (acres)
Tame hay & fodder	37	816 (2,016)	19	558 (1,379)	27	556 (1,374)
Alfalfa	3	25 (62)	4	36 (89)	3	x
Field vegetables	6	9 (22)	7	20 (49)	10	x
Potatoes	2	x	1	x	3	x
Fruits, berries & nuts	80	2,800 (6,919)	80	2,572 (6,355)	83	2,210 (5,461)
Corn	7	100 (247)	9	129 (319)	9	x
Nursery	15	478 (1,181)	6	x	9	121 (299)
Sod	1	x	1	x	1	89 (220)

Note 2. x within the table indicates the number has been suppressed by Stats Canada for privacy reasons.

A deeper look at fruit production in Pitt Meadows reveals that a majority of production is happening in the blueberry (1,335 ha, 3,299 acres) and cranberry (861 ha, 2,128 acres) sectors (Table 6). Other fruits are produced in Pitt Meadows, such as fruit trees and grapes, however the number of producers and hectares in production are suppressed by Statistics Canada due to privacy protection.

Table 6. Fruit production in Pitt Meadows (Source: Census of Agriculture 2011, 2016, 2021)

Fruit Produced	2011		2016		2021	
	# of farms	ha (acres)	# of farms	ha (acres)	# of farms	ha (acres)
Cranberries	14	x	12	942 (2,328)	8	861 (2,128)
Blueberries	71	1,768 (4,369)	68	1,612 (3,983)	74	1,335 (3,299)
Pears	1	x	0	0	5	x
Apples	1	x	0	0	6	x
Raspberries	1	x	2	x	2	x
Grapes	0	0	2	x	3	x
Plums & prunes	0	0	3	1 (2.5)	4	x
Cherries	1	x	1	x	2	x

Note 3. x within the table indicates the number has been suppressed by Stats Canada for privacy reasons.

Pitt Meadows also has 14 reported greenhouse operations, 10 of which produce flowers or potted plants, 7 produce vegetables, and 1 producing other crops (some greenhouses produce more than one crop) (Table 7). In 2021, the amount of greenhouses under production (m²) have been suppressed by Statistics Canada.

Table 7. Greenhouse production in Pitt Meadows (Source: Census of Agriculture 2011, 2016, 2021)

Greenhouse Production	2011		2016		2021	
	# of farms	m ² (acres)	# of farms	m ² (acres)	# of farms	m ² (acres)
Total	17	284,368 (70)	12	169,760 (42)	14	x
Flowers	11	102,770 (25)	7	x	10	x
Vegetables	7	x	4	x	7	x
Other	2	x	1	x	1	x

Note 4. 'x' within the table indicates the number has been suppressed by Stats Canada for privacy reasons.

The Metro Vancouver 2016 ALUI data provides a slightly more in depth understanding of the crops being produced in Pitt Meadows as the ALUI is a visual survey of fields and does not rely on self-reporting, nor have restrictions on the definition of a farm. Table 8 provides the 2016 ALUI findings.

Table 8. Crop production in Pitt Meadows (Source: 2016 Metro Vancouver ALUI)

Crop	Number of Parcels	ha (acres)
Berries	312	2,584.6 (6,386.5)
Forage	146	651.7 (1,610.3)
Nursery & Tree Plantation	59	179.7 (444.0)
Pasture	80	146.4 (361.7)
Glass Greenhouse	24	32.0 (79.1)
Poly Greenhouse	33	11.3 (27.9)
Turf	4	10.7 (26.4)
Nut Trees	2	5.9 (14.6)
Vegetables	11	3.3 (8.2)
Floriculture	9	1.7 (4.2)
Fruit Trees	2	1.1 (2.7)

2.3.3 Vertical Agriculture

Vertical agriculture is increasing in popularity across Canada, and within Pitt Meadows. Vertical agriculture is a means of producing food in a controlled, indoor environment which reduces the geographic footprint of agricultural fields and is less reliant on natural factors such as weather, soil conditions, climate and

daylight hours. Pitt Meadows, as the time of writing, is home to two vertical farming operations, Up Vertical Farms Ltd.³ is producing leafy greens and lettuce in an industrial-style warehouse. CubicFarms⁴, which opened in 2020, is a vertical farming operation that also sells growing chambers to other producers.

2.3.4 Farm Practices

From 2011 to 2021, there has been a slow but steady increase in farms with shelterbelts or windbreaks (Table 9). Other practices are suppressed in the 2021 data due to low numbers, however, the practice of winter cover cropping increased from 10 to 14 farms between 2011 and 2016, while rotational grazing and winter grazing decreased.

Table 9. Land practices in Pitt Meadows (Source: Census of Agriculture 2011, 2016, 2021)

Land Practice	Number of farms		
	2011	2016	2021
Rotational grazing	17	6	x
In-field winter grazing	10	5	x
Windbreaks or shelterbelts	10	16	19
Plowing down green crops	9	6	8
Winter cover crops	10	14	x

Note 5. 'x' within the table indicates the number has been suppressed by Stats Canada for privacy reasons.

The number of farms engaging in the use of inputs such as commercial fertilizers, herbicides and insecticides have remained fairly steady since 2011, though the areas involved for all three have decreased (Table 10).

Table 10. Agricultural inputs in Pitt Meadows (Source: Census of Agriculture 2011, 2016, 2021)

Inputs	2011		2016		2021	
	# of farms	ha (acres)	# of farms	ha (acres)	# of farms	ha (acres)
Commercial fertilizer	72	3,151 (7,786)	66	3,257 (8,048)	67	2,442 (6,034)
Manure or compost incorporated in soil	19	60 (148)	14	89 (220)	19	312 (771)
Manure or compost not incorporated in soil	16	92 (227)	11	x	11	x
Herbicides	56	2,853 (7,050)	61	2,673 (6,605)	55	1,889 (4,668)
Insecticides	48	2,042 (5,046)	51	2,524 (6,237)	45	1,934 (4,779)

Note 6. 'x' within the table indicates the number has been suppressed by Stats Canada for privacy reasons.

Farms in Pitt Meadows have adopted modest technology applications, such as slow-release fertilizers, soil sample testing and variable rate input application (Table 11). More expensive and specialized technologies

³ [Up Vertical Farms](#). Accessed 2023.

⁴ [Our Company](#). Cubic Farm. Accessed June 2023.

such as drones and some robotic equipment have slower rates of adoption, likely due to the level of investment required.

Table 11. On-farm technology adoption in Pitt Meadows (Source: Agriculture Census 2011, 2016, 2021)

	2021
Technology	# of farms
Variable rate input application	23
Drones	4
Soil sample tests	43
Slow-release fertilizers	46
Robotic greenhouse equipment	2
Fully robotic milkers	x

Note 7. 'x' within the table indicates the number has been suppressed by Stats Canada for privacy reasons.

2.3.5 Farm Labour and Succession

In terms of labour, in 2021, 35 farms in Pitt Meadows reported providing year-round full-time work, 17 reported year-round part-time work and 31 farms reported hiring part time seasonal/temporary basis. The total number of farming jobs provided between all three levels of employment decreased significantly from 1,638 in 2016 to 692 in 2021 (Table 12). It is possible that this shift in 2021 reflected temporary labour foreign worker restrictions that arose from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 12. Farm labour in Pitt Meadows (Source: Census of Agriculture 2016, 2021)

Labour Types	2016		2021	
	Farms reporting	Total employees	Farms reporting	Total employees
Year-round full time	31	301	35	238
Year-round part time	18	153	17	67
Seasonal/ Temporary	47	1,184	31	387
Total		1,638		692

There are 215 farm operators in Pitt Meadows, 72 of which are the sole operators on their farms. The sector is majority male (130) with only 80 female operators. The average age of farmers in Pitt Meadows has been steadily increasing since 2011, reported as 58.2 in 2021 (Table 13). Despite this, only 28 of 140 farms (20%) reported having a written succession plan in place.

Table 13. Farm demographics in Pitt Meadows (Source: Census of Agriculture 2011, 2016, 2021)

	2011	2016	2021
Total number of operators	255	195	215
Farms with one operator	80	75	72
Number of farm operators on farms with two or more operators	185	120	145 (68 farms)
Male operators	175	130	130
Female operators	85	65	80
Average age	54.7	57.4	58.2
Farms with written succession plans	x	17	28

Note 8. 'x' within the table indicates the number has been suppressed by Stats Canada for privacy reasons.

2.3.6 Farmland Tenure

In Pitt Meadows, 85% of land being farmed is owned while only 15% is being leased from private owners. Though total farmed area has decreased by 2,286 ha since 2011, the ratio of owned to leased land has remained steady (Table 14). The decrease in farm area being reported is likely associated with the change in farm definition on the agriculture census.

Table 14. Land tenure in Pitt Meadows (Source: Census of Agriculture 2011, 2016, 2021)

	2011		2016		2021	
	ha	%	ha	%	ha	%
Total farm area reporting	6,275	100%	4,785	100%	3,989	100%
Area owned	5,214	83%	3,995	84%	3,390	85%
Rented or leased from others	886	14%	754	16%	587	15%
Other	188	3%	0	0%	0	0%

2.4 Farm Profitability

Producers in the region must offset income with costs for land, labour, chemical and fertilizer inputs and fuel. Farmers in most of BC have difficulty producing sufficient income to offset losses due to climate-related disasters, wildlife-related crop impacts (e.g. migratory birds), trespassing, and invasive species. Furthermore, the cost of farm labour, equipment, and other farm inputs (seeds, feed, soil amendments, etc.) continue to rise. The situation in the Lower Mainland is no different. Most farmers need financial assistance (through loans or grants) in order to scale up their production and often one family member must work off the farm. Farm profitability is difficult to measure or to estimate. The following proxies can be used:

- Farm capital and assets
- Gross margin of farm operations
- Average farm receipts per farm
- Net revenue margin

2.4.1 Farm Capital and Assets

Total farm capital includes land and buildings, livestock and poultry, farm machinery, and farm equipment. While the total farm capital in Pitt Meadows decreased from 2011 to 2021, the average per farm has increased from \$5.7 million to \$6.1 million (Table 15). Furthermore, total capital and average capital per farm in livestock and poultry has risen from 2011 to 2021, indicating a rise in the number or value of farm animals.

Table 15. Farm capital of in Pitt Meadows (Source: Census of Agriculture 2011, 2016, 2021)

	2011 (million \$)		2016 (million \$)		2021 (million \$)	
	Total	Average per farm	Total	Average per farm	Total	Average per farm
Total farm capital	929.2 (163 farms)	5.7	714.1 (133 farms)	5.4	854.6 (140 farms)	6.1
Land & buildings (owned)	764.9 (152 farms)	5.0	564.6 (125 farms)	4.5	627.4 (132 farms)	4.7
Machinery & equipment	29.8 (163 farms)	0.2	28.7 (133 farms)	0.2	27.4 (124 farms)	0.2
Livestock & poultry	4.7 (59 farms)	<0.1	8.7 (45 farms)	0.2	9.3 (42 farms)	0.2

2.4.2 Gross Margin of Farm Operations

From 2016 to 2021, gross margin of farm operations decreased from 16.2% to 11.7% (Table 16). This decrease was largely due to a significant increase in operating expenses within the same timeframe. A modest decrease in gross margin was a consistent trend across the province which saw gross margin on agricultural operations go from 15.3% in 2016 to 12.3% in 2021.⁵

Table 16. Gross Margin of Farm Operations in Pitt Meadows (Source: Census of Agriculture 2011, 2016, 2021)

Year	Gross farm receipts (\$)	Total operating expenses (\$)	Gross margin
2011	83,597,741	77,348,844	7.5 %
2016	81,308,215	68,126,690	16.2 %
2021	97,504,507	86,133,541	11.7%

2.4.3 Farm Receipts and Net Revenue

Farm revenue can be calculated on an average per farm basis using Census of Agriculture data. The average farm revenue increased by \$85,121 from 2016 to 2021 (Table 17). Note that in 2021, 16 farms reported \$0 farm revenues. It is unclear why some farms were reporting no revenues but this could reflect challenges in income related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 17. Gross Farm Receipts in Pitt Meadows (Source: Census of Agriculture 2011, 2016, 2021)

Year	# of farms	Gross farm receipts (\$)	Average per farm (\$)
2011	163	83,597,741	512,869
2016	133	81,308,215	611,339
2021	140	97,504,507	696,460

⁵ Census of Agriculture for British Columbia. 2016 & 2021.

2.4.4 Farm Revenue by Category

Only 28% of farms in Pitt Meadows generated above \$500,000 in operating revenue in 2021, while 72% of farms generate under \$500,000 (Table 18). Of the 22 farms which reported under \$10,000 in revenue, 16 reported \$0 in 2021. As noted above, it is unclear why some farms were reporting no revenue in 2021 but this could reflect challenges in income related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 18. Total Operating Revenue in Pitt Meadows (Source: Census of Agriculture 2011, 2016, 2021)

Operating Revenue by \$ Category	2011 (163 farms)	2016 (133 farms)	2021 (140 farms)
Under \$10,000	52	30	22 (16/22 reporting \$0)
\$10,000 – \$24,999	19	20	25
\$25,000 - \$49,999	19	13	14
\$50,000 - \$99,000	16	17	18
\$100,000 – \$249,999	18	18	14
\$250,000 – \$499,999	12	10	8
\$500,000 - \$999,999	8	4	6
\$1,000,000 - \$1,999,999	8	10	7
\$2,000,000 and over	11	11	10

3.0 Agriculture and Water

3.1 Water and Climate Change

With rising median temperatures and changes in precipitation patterns, Pitt Meadows and the entire Metro Vancouver region can expect increased pressure on freshwater resources, creating a seasonal strain on crop and livestock water needs.

Despite the challenges of applying broad climate models, some general projections are anticipated in BC between now and 2050. For the Greater Vancouver area, climate projections from the Pacific Climate Impact Consortium⁶ suggest significant increases in median temperature as early as the 2050s, overall reduced snowfall in winters with increased precipitation as rain, and an extension of the productive season through increased growing degree days⁷ and frost-free days. Table 19 offers a more in-depth look at the current projections, which are likely to impact agricultural water demand.

Increasing median temperatures and changing hydrological systems, such as reduced rainfall in summer months and reduced snowpack through the winter, have a two-fold impact on agricultural system. Higher temperatures increase evapotranspiration in crops, leading to a need for increased irrigation at times when

⁶ Pacific Climate Impacts Consortium. [Plan2Adapt tool](#). Accessed June 2023.

⁷ [Growing Degree Days](#) (GDD) are used to estimate the growth and development of plants and insects during the growing season. The basic concept is that development will only occur if the temperature exceeds a minimum base temperature.

water is often in lowest supply. Changing hydrological systems means more precipitation falls as rain in the spring, which can lead to flooding and erosion, while times of drought are expected to increase through the summer and fall months.

Table 19. Climate Projections for Greater Vancouver Area, 2020, 2050 and 2080 (Source: Pacific Climate Impacts Consortium)

		2020 change from 1961-1990 baseline		2050 change from 1961-1990 baseline		2080 change from 1961-1990 baseline	
Characteristic	Season	Range	Median	Range	Median	Range	Median
Median Temperature	Annual	+1.2°C to +2.1°C	+1.6°C	+2.0°C to +4.2°C	+3.0°C	+3.5°C to +6.5°C	+4.8°C
Precipitation	Annual	-4.9% to +1.4.0%	-2.0%	-4.2% to +2.5%	+0.23%	-2.9% to +10%	+4.9%
	Summer	-30% to +0.38%	-12%	-40% to +0.95%	-15%	-56% to -4.5%	-25%
	Winter	-4.5% to +7.3%	+0.22%	-3.3% to +6.6%	+0.13%	+2.4% to +17%	+7.1%
Snowfall	Winter	-68% to -42%	-56%	-83% to -67%	-77%	-93% to -77%	-89%
	Spring	-63% to -13%	-36%	-87% to -29%	-69%	-97% to -49%	-87%
Growing Degree Days	Annual	+289 to +568 degree days	+436 degree days	+562 to +1180 degree days	+818 degree days	+954 to +1940 degree days	+1380 degree days

3.2 Drainage and Irrigation

In Pitt Meadows, some producers are using the municipal water supply (treated potable water) for irrigation needs, while others draw from the internal ditch network. Some producers have obtained (or applied for) Provincial water licenses to permit this diversion, while others may still be operating without a licence. BC Ministry of Forests (FOR), which administers water licencing, indicates that there are a number of agricultural users within Pitt Meadows that do not currently hold water licences.

The 2011 Pitt Meadows ALUI is the most recent assessment of irrigation specific to Pitt Meadows and, while somewhat out of date, offers insight into water use. The 2011 ALUI documented all irrigation uses occurring within the ALR and on parcels of land with Farm Tax Status outside the ALR. Data regarding land use activities was then used to summarize water use for agriculture in Pitt Meadows. Table 20 outlines the findings regarding irrigation from the 2011 ALUI.

Table 20. Main crop types and irrigation systems in Pitt Meadows (Source: Pitt Meadows ALUI 2011)

Cultivated Field Crop	Irrigation system in use (ha)			Total area irrigated ha (acres)	% of crop area irrigated
	Sprinkler	Giant gun	Trickle		
Berries	948	4	1,345	2,297 (5,676)	93%
Nursery tree and plantation	66	-	-	66 (163)	32%
Forage and pasture	-	19	-	19 (47)	2%
Turf	10	-	-	10 (25)	100%
Vegetables	<1	-	1	2 (5)	100%
Other	<1	-	-	<1	<1%
Total field crop area irrigated	1,027	23	1,346	2,397 (5,923)	67%
Greenhouse	Flood and trickle irrigation			36 (89)	100%

The 2011, the Pitt Meadows ALUI found that 67% of cultivated fields were irrigated, with trickle irrigation systems being the most widely used (38%) followed by sprinkler systems (29%) (Table 21).

Table 21. Irrigation types on cultivated fields in Pitt Meadows (Source: Pitt Meadows ALUI 2011)

Irrigation type	Percent of cultivated fields
Trickle	38%
Sprinkler	29%
Giant gun	<1%
Not irrigated	33%

There are some clear differences in the way that the Census data (Table 22, below) and the ALUI data (Tables 20 and 21) are compiled, which can lead to discrepancies when some indicators are compared. For example, the ALUI surveyor may see irrigation equipment on the field, and the farmer may not report the equipment as it is not being used at the time of the Census. According to the 2021 Census of Agriculture, only 42 farms reported using irrigation, to a total of 1,931 ha. The drop in area being irrigated and the dip in number of farms irrigating may be due to the change in definition of Census Farm or in the irrigation needs that shift from year to year.

Table 22. Number of farms irrigating in Pitt Meadows (Source: Census of Agriculture 2011, 2016, 2021)

	# of Farms	Ha (acres)
2011	57	2,486 (6,143)
2016	59	2,495 (6,165)
2021	42	1,931 (4,771)

4.0 Value-Add and Agricultural Support Services

The local agricultural system is connected through value-added opportunities such as processing, storage, distribution, and retail channels. Agricultural support services can also include farm equipment dealers, government extension officers, and industry associations, which can all assist in maximizing the ability for individual farming operations to succeed. These are summarized within the Pitt Meadows context below.

4.1 Meat Processing

Each link in the local meat supply chain is vital - a local abattoir allows farmers to get their animals processed in a timely manner and cut and wrap shops (butchers) allow farmers to sell their products in cuts and portions that are tailored to the appropriate market. While there may never be one simple solution for something as complex as the meat sector, some relatively small investments in local infrastructure can provide enhanced income streams for area farmers and employment opportunities for area residents.

In 2007, the province amended meat processing regulations such that licensing and certification was more stringent and involved additional administrative oversight. These changes, along with other challenges in the industry such as the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (mad cow disease) crisis, resulted in more than 300 abattoirs closing throughout BC over the last 15 years. In 2021, the BC government updated the meat processing licensing system with new “Abattoir”, “Farmgate Plus” and “Farmgate” licenses. The “Abattoir” license allows for slaughtering of an unlimited number of animals (own and custom for other producers) with sales to retail or direct to customer. However additional restrictions related to the ALR may apply. “Farmgate Plus” allows for slaughter of one’s own animals and limited custom slaughter for other producers with sales to the retail market or direct-to-customer. The “Farmgate” licenses only allow for slaughter of one’s own animals and are restricted to direct-to-consumer sales. Further meat processing, including cut and wrap requires a Food Premises Permit obtained from a health authority for all levels of licensing. There are currently several Abattoir licenses in and around Pitt Meadows. The following is a list of those facilities at the time of publication within the region:

- Hopcott Farms Ltd, Pitt Meadows – *Cattle (and soon to take on sheep)*
- Meadow Valley Meats, Pitt Meadows – *Cattle*
- 0802981 B.C. Ltd, Langley – *Chicken (slaughter only)*
- Sumas Mountain Farm, Abbotsford – *Cattle, hog, chicken, duck, geese, sheep, turkey*
- AGM Beef Farm Ltd, Surrey - *Cattle, sheep/lamb/goat, llama/ alpaca*
- Fraser Valley Specialty Poultry, Chilliwack - *Chicken, duck, geese, turkey*
- Johnston Packers Ltd, Chilliwack – *Bison, cattle, hogs, llama/alpaca, water buffalo, sheep*
- Las Palomas Farms, Chilliwack - *Chicken duck, turkey (slaughter only)*
- Scott’s Meats, Agassiz - *Cattle*

4.2 Berry Processing

Aggregation, packing, and processing (such as freezing) of berries occurs both on farm and can be outsourced to larger systems off-farm. Some producers have their own processing out-buildings on their farms where they clean, sort and package products for the local market. Many blueberry producers send their freshly harvested crops to larger-scale operators, such as West Coast Blueberry Farms, who can also

pack cranberries and other fruits as per customer request.⁸ Other major packing operators and processors in Pitt Meadows include Pacific Canadian Fruit Packers (Robinson Brothers Food Group), Golden Eagles Farm (Aquilini Group), and TwinBerry.

Over 95% of cranberries produced in BC, including those produced in Pitt Meadows, leave the province and are shipped to the USA to be used in Ocean Spray products such as cranberry juice and Craisins. Ocean Spray is a grower-owned cooperative and includes cranberry growers from BC, with a major packhouse based in Delta, BC.⁹

4.3 Distribution and Sales

Pitt Meadows is uniquely positioned with easy access to local, national, and international distribution routes via rail and highway. The agri-food sector in Pitt Meadows relies on highways and secondary roads for connectivity to local, regional, and provincial sales markets. Highway 7 (Lougheed Highway) is the main transportation artery running through the City, which connects Pitt Meadows to Coquitlam and Vancouver to the west and communities north of the Fraser to the east. Highway 1 (Trans-Canada Highway) is accessible directly south of the Fraser River via Highway 7B (Mary Hill Bypass) and Golden Ears Way, providing access to Vancouver and the rest of the nation to the east. Furthermore, Pitt Meadows is only 30 km from the Canada-USA border, and 50 km from the west coast, offering access to shipping ports and international markets. This allows producers in Pitt Meadows to gain access to a variety of markets. With an increasing population, some of Pitt Meadows’ rural roads are experiencing a higher degree of wear and tear, detracting from their ability to perform their original function, as transportation networks for the agriculture sector.¹⁰

According to the 2021 Census of Agriculture, 32 (23%) farms in Pitt Meadows are selling direct to consumers through a variety of channels. These include unprocessed and value-added products, being sold via farm gate stands and farmers markets (Table 23). Additionally, the 2021 Census found that 13 farms reported that direct sales to consumers accounted for 100% of their operating revenues and 8 farms reported that direct sales accounted for 50-99% of their revenues, suggesting that although only 23% of farms in Pitt Meadows are selling direct to customers, those direct sales are significant for their gross income.

Table 23. Producers in Pitt Meadows selling direct to consumers (Source: Census of Agriculture 2016, 2021)

Farms Selling Direct to Consumers	Number of Farms	
	2016	2021
Sales of Unprocessed Agricultural Products	36	32
<i>Using Farm Gate, Stands, Kiosks, U-pick</i>	34	28
<i>Using Farmers' Markets</i>	4	x
Sales of Value-added Products	2	4

Note 9. 'x' within the table indicates the number has been suppressed by Stats Canada for privacy reasons.

In 2022, the Pitt Meadows Farmers’ Market began, creating opportunity for producers to sell their products locally. At the time of writing, this market is attended mostly by producers outside of Pitt Meadows. In addition to the Pitt Meadows Farmers’ Market, there are several markets operating in adjacent

⁸ [About Us](#). West Coast Blueberry Farms. Accessed June 2023.

⁹ [FAQ](#). BC Cranberries. Accessed June 2023.

¹⁰ [Transportation Master Plan Summary Report](#). City of Pitt Meadows. 2014.

communities, which may be accessible to local producers. Table 24 summarizes the farmers markets that operate in Pitt Meadows and directly neighbouring communities.

Table 24. Summary of farmers markets in and around Pitt Meadows (Source: Fraser North Farmers Market Society)

Market	Location	Season	Days
Pitt Meadows Farmers Market	Pitt Meadows	June - September	Tuesdays 15:00 – 19:00
Coquitlam Farmers Market	Coquitlam	May – October	Sundays 9:00 – 13:00
Port Coquitlam Farmers’ Market	Port Coquitlam	June - September	Thursdays 15:00 – 19:00
Fort Langley Village Farmers Market	Fort Langley	April - December	Saturdays 9:00 – 15:00
Haney Farmers Market	Maple Ridge	May - October	Saturdays 9:00 – 14:00

ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY REPORT – ROUND 1

PITT MEADOWS AGRICULTURAL PLAN UPDATE

July 2023

Developed by:



In association with



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Acronyms

AAC	Agricultural Advisory Committee
AF	Ministry of Agriculture and Food
ALC	Agricultural Land Commission
IAP2	International Association for Public Participation
KFN	q̓ic̓á'y (Katzie) First Nation

1.0 Introduction

An Agricultural Plan update is most effectively developed in relation to a thoughtful engagement strategy including all interested and affected individuals and organizations. Particularly at the early stages, farmer, community, and rights-holder engagement provides opportunities to:

- Gather information about their values and priorities with respect to agriculture, from different viewpoints and perspectives;
- Share with, and learn from, those involved about the issues and concerns around maintaining a viable, sustainable, and resilient farming community; and
- Establish consensus regarding the values and goals that will shape the goals and objectives of the Agricultural Plan.

Innovative, broad, and inclusive engagement will help to instil greater confidence in decision-making for Council, especially in regard to policy development. Residents, particularly those involved in the process, will have a greater understanding of how decisions are made at the local government level. Finally, innovative, broad, and inclusive engagement will produce a strategy that is more relevant and meaningful to a greater number of people and organizations.

The following section presents the Engagement Framework that was used to guide engagement and is followed by a summary of the engagement activities and results from the Agricultural Plan update. Table 1 presents the first round of engagement activities, the timeline, and status of completion. Anticipated activities for the second round of engagement are outlined in the final section of this report.

Table 1 Engagement Activities for the Pitt Meadows Agricultural Plan Update

Engagement Activity	Timeline	Status
Round 1 Engagement		
1. Interviews	May - June 2023	Complete
2. Agriculture and Agri-food Survey	Mid May – June 2023	Complete
3. Community Survey	Mid-May – June 2023	Complete
4. Pitt Meadows Day Event	June 3 rd , 2023	Complete
5. Farmers’ Market Attendance	June 13 th , 2023	Complete
6. Agriculture and Agri-food Open House	June 15 th , 2023	Complete
7. Public Open House – Recreation Centre	June 22 nd , 2023	Complete
8. Creation of Engagement Results Infographic	July 2023	In progress

2.0 Engagement Framework

2.1 Engagement Objectives

Updating the Agricultural Plan (the Plan) involves comprehensive engagement with key players and interested and affected individuals and organizations who are impacted by, and involved in, the agriculture and food sector. Engagement activities aid the project team in understanding the local context, including assets, gaps, opportunities and challenges facing the sector and those within it. The consultant team follows a high standard related to engagement which is guided by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) engagement goals and spectrum. The following IAP2 goals guided the public engagement activities in Pitt Meadows:

- **Inform:** To provide balanced and objective information to assist the community in understanding the problems, alternatives, opportunities, and/or solutions facing agriculture and the food sector in Pitt Meadows; and
- **Consult:** To obtain feedback and input from the community on analysis, alternatives, and/or decision through the planning process.

2.2 Engagement Values

The project was guided by the Council-endorsed Civic Engagement Policy and Framework:

- **Consider all audiences.** Review who will be affected by the Plan, including farmers, residents, businesses, interest groups, rights-holders, and interested and affected individuals, and local organizations, and use engagement approaches that best meet their needs.
- **Open and honest.** Adhere to transparency in decision-making and a commitment to sharing information, data and other materials without undue process, particularly when information is readily available, to assist with establishing trust and credibility.
- **Informative.** Present information clearly, outlining the need and benefits of the project or process, as well as the considerations being reviewed, such as potential challenges, the implications for various decisions and the costs involved.
- **Linked to strategy.** Ensure messages include linkages to Strategic Plan and/or Official Community Plan to demonstrate purpose and provide context for why work is being done, as well as how it supports progress towards the goals and vision for the community.
- **Timely.** Engage residents and other interested and affected individuals and organizations early in processes and prior to key decision-making points.
- **Responsive and accessible.** Respond quickly to requests for information, presentations or other enquiries with relevant information to answer questions and address issues or concerns.
- **Proactive.** Inform the community early and in advance of requests for information – not waiting until the community demands updates – including more proactive communication on completed projects, success stories, plans for the future and achievements that benefit residents as well as consistent messaging related to the City’s role, services, and Strategic Plan.
- **Engaging.** Integrate community engagement with processes to improve community consultation, build relationships with residents and local organizations and support ongoing community engagement to promote meaningful conversations, highlight special projects, events and activities and create platforms for sharing ideas and concerns.

2.3 Anticipated Engagement Outcomes

The following are anticipated outcomes from engagement during the project’s process:

- Work with City of Pitt Meadows staff and local media to notify the public on ways to become involved in the process and obtain media coverage by issuing press releases and social media content at key points in the process.
- Engage the agriculture and agri-food community in identifying existing food and agriculture assets, gaps, challenges, and opportunities.
- Identify champions who will support the planning process and the implementation of the Plan.
- Provide elected officials with a clear, rational set of recommendations for decision-making.
- Gain support and acceptance across Pitt Meadows for the Plan and its implementation.

3.0 Engagement Activities and Results

3.1 ic (Katzie) First Nation

The Agricultural Plan presents opportunities for the City of Pitt Meadows to collaborate with the ic (Katzie) First Nation (KFN) on projects and initiatives that support traditional food and medicine practices, economic development opportunities. The City of Pitt Meadows extended communication with the KFN regarding the Agricultural Plan update and the consulting team held space for input from KFN members, staff, Chief and Council. To date, there has been no formal or informal response from the KFN regarding the Agricultural Plan. However, the City and the consulting team will continue to make efforts to provide opportunities for communication and collaboration. The City of Pitt Meadows can develop an Agricultural Plan that prioritizes working with the KFN to develop policies and actions that may assist in supporting traditional practices, ensuring food sovereignty and agricultural economic opportunities.

3.2 Agricultural Advisory Committee

Members of the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) were key in the engagement process. City of Pitt Meadows staff provided an update regarding the Agricultural Plan at the February and May 2023 AAC meetings and individual members were contacted and invited to participate in interviews regarding the Plan. AAC members were also asked to identify other interested and affected individuals that may be amenable to being interviewed. The AAC is made up of representatives in the Pitt Meadows agriculture sector as presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Pitt Meadows AAC Members

Member Name	Role
Dan Kosicki	Meadows Landscape Supply
Hank Bitter	Cranberry farmer
Jag Parmar	Blueberry Farmer

Joe Bachmann	Dairy Farmer
Lynn Kemper	Cranberry Farmer
Sandy Howkins	Specimen Tree Nursery
Philip Robinson	Cranberry Farmer
Teressa Vader	Hobby Farmer
Travis Hopcott	Beef and Cranberry Farmer
William Jack	Hay Farmer
Wayne Wisselink	Dairy Farmer
Mike Manion	Council Liaison
Bob Meachen	Council Liaison

3.3 Interviews

One-on-one phone interviews with targeted individuals in the agriculture and agri-food sector were conducted to gather critical information and insights for the Plan. The questions sought to develop an understanding of the following core elements:

- Identify key issues and challenges for the local agriculture sector
- Uncover any gaps in policy, regulations and/or support from the City of Pitt Meadows
- What, with respect to the agriculture sector, is working well in Pitt Meadows
- How the local government can support the sector

To date, a total of 7 interviews have been conducted.

The interview results were aggregated and separated into key themes that arose. Table 3 provides a summary of the issues and opportunities that were mentioned by at least one interviewee.

Note: some topics were mentioned more than once by a single interviewee, which is why the number of mentions may exceed the total number of interviews.

Table 3 Issues and Opportunities mentioned during the interviews

Issue/Challenge	Number of Times Mentioned
Diking and drainage	9
Regulations	8
Wildlife/invasive species/pests	5
Traffic and roads	5
Land prices	5

Urban development	4
Under-utilized agricultural lands	4
Edge issues: urban/rural complaints	3
Labour	2
Opportunity	Number of Times Mentioned
Collaboration	7
Farmers Market enhancements	6
Agri-tourism	3
Proximity to large markets	3
Agri-tech	3
Enhanced road signage	2
Local food processing	2

Examples of comments from interviews include:

- Difficult to attract local farms to the farmers market.
- Cost of land is making it impossible to expand operations – it is out of proportion to what can be achieved through farming.
- Concerns about drainage and diking system being managed to accommodate salmon – if salmon are introduced, this has implications for farmers (required setbacks, irrigation restrictions, etc.).
- Would like to see vertical farming sector expand, but not on viable farmland so that land remains available for soil-based agriculture.
- More processing facilities and cold/freezer storage within the industrial areas would improve the viability of farm businesses.
- Animal rights activists are resulting in farmers feeling more anxious about opening their doors to the public.
- Traffic along Dewdney Trunk Road is getting dangerous for farm vehicles.
- It is difficult to find young people who want to work on farms – need to rely on foreign labour.
- Sloughs need to be more regularly cleaned as there are a lot of invasive species.
- With new subdivisions being built around farmland, there is more foot traffic, bikers, hikers, and speeding vehicles.
- Use of ditches are as important for drainage as they are for irrigation.

3.3 Open Houses

Four opportunities for the public to provide feedback on the project took place during Round 1 of engagement:

- June 3 at Pitt Meadows Day
- June 13 at the Pitt Meadows Farmers’ Market
- June 15 at Hopcott Farms Store
- June 22 at the Pitt Meadows Family Recreation Centre

These open houses served as the main conduit in seeking ideas from the local community on how to strengthen farming and local community food security. They were also used to gather information to inform the Plan’s vision and key themes, issues, gaps, and opportunities within the context of the City’s agri-food sector. At each event, a City of Pitt Meadows staff member was present, and a member of the consulting team was present at the Farmers’ Market on June 13 and at Hopcott Farms Store on June 15.



Figure 1 Interactive board at the Farmers’ Market

At all events, a booth was set up with information boards about the project and several boards were interactive, where the public could place stickers if they agreed with statements presented (Figure 1). Feedback from the public was also obtained through discussion with the staff member/consultant and the public was encouraged to fill out the online survey.



Figure 2 Open house at Hopcott Farms store

The following feedback and key themes were received during the open houses:

- The top three agriculture and agri-food sector strengths in the community are:
 1. Support for local food
 2. Good soil and growing conditions

3. Historic farm knowledge and multi-generational farm families

- The top three challenges facing Pitt Meadows' agriculture and agri-food sector are:
 1. Urban growth pressures
 2. Climate change and natural hazards
 3. Labour and farm worker housing

- Additional challenges identified included:
 - High land values
 - Conflicts between agriculture and surrounding non-farm uses
 - Increasing costs of inputs
 - Fuel and transportation
 - Bureaucracy / regulations

The public ranked the opportunities for Pitt Meadows to continue supporting the agriculture and agri-food sector, as follows:

1. Protecting farmland from urban development
2. Maintaining dikes and flood control infrastructure
3. Managing invasive species, weeds, and pests
4. Supporting the protection of biodiversity on farmland while reducing impacts of wildlife on crops
5. Creating education initiatives (e.g., trail users, about living or recreating near active farmland)
6. Including agriculture in all emergency planning and preparedness initiatives
7. Supporting food system infrastructure (e.g., processing, cold storage, food hubs)
8. Advocating to other levels of government on agri-food issues outside of Pitt Meadows' jurisdiction



Figure 3 Booth set-up at Pitt Meadows Day

3.4 Surveys

3.4.1 Agriculture and Agri-food Survey Results

A survey was developed to target those involved in the local agriculture and agri-food sector, such as farmers, food processors, retailers, and organizations. The objective of the survey was to obtain feedback on which issues are relevant and/or emerging. The survey questions were framed under the context of actions which are within the City’s jurisdiction. The survey was distributed online through the “Have Your Say” platform and was promoted through a mailout of postcards to producers. Links to the survey were also disseminated through local social media, websites, and newspapers. The survey was open from May 29 to June 29, 2023.

Characteristics of the Respondents

The agriculture and agri-food survey received 48 responses, with approximately 88% being owners or workers on a farm (Figure 4). Others were involved with agri-food related organizations or were leasing land to farmers. The majority of respondents have been involved in the agriculture and agri-foods sector for over 20 years (Figure 5).

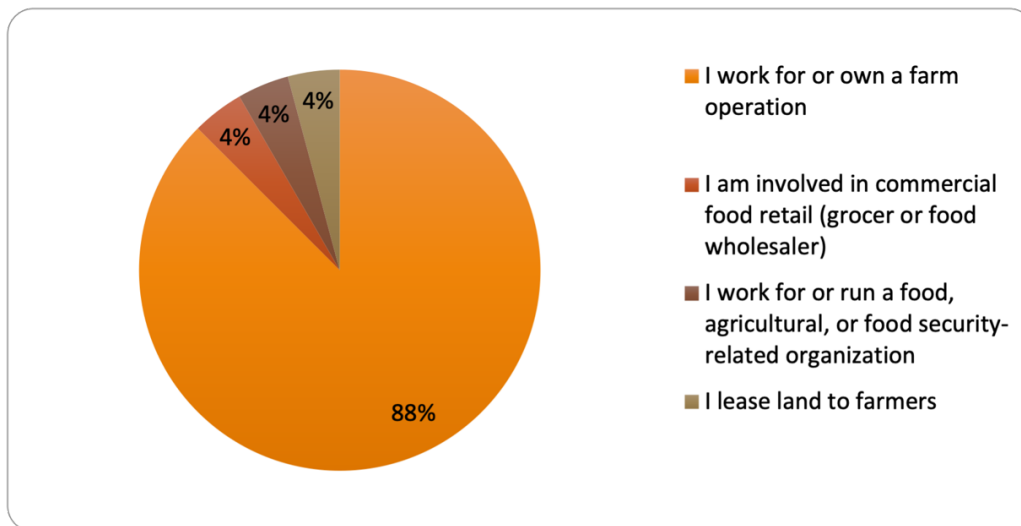


Figure 4 Respondents' involvement in Pitt Meadows' agriculture and agri-food sector

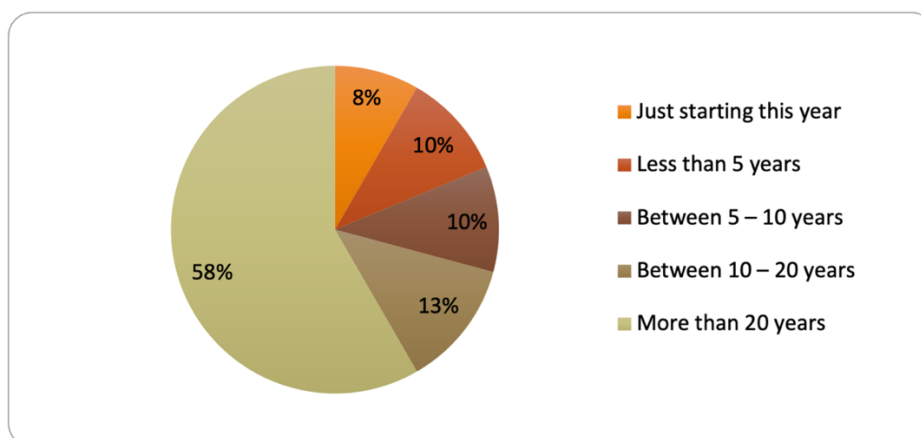


Figure 5 Length of time respondents have been involved in Pitt Meadows' agriculture and agri-food sector

Producers who responded to the survey are involved in a wide diversity of agricultural activities, with hay and forage and blueberries being the most common (Figure 6). Fruit trees, micro greens and silage for dairy cows were some activities included in “other”.

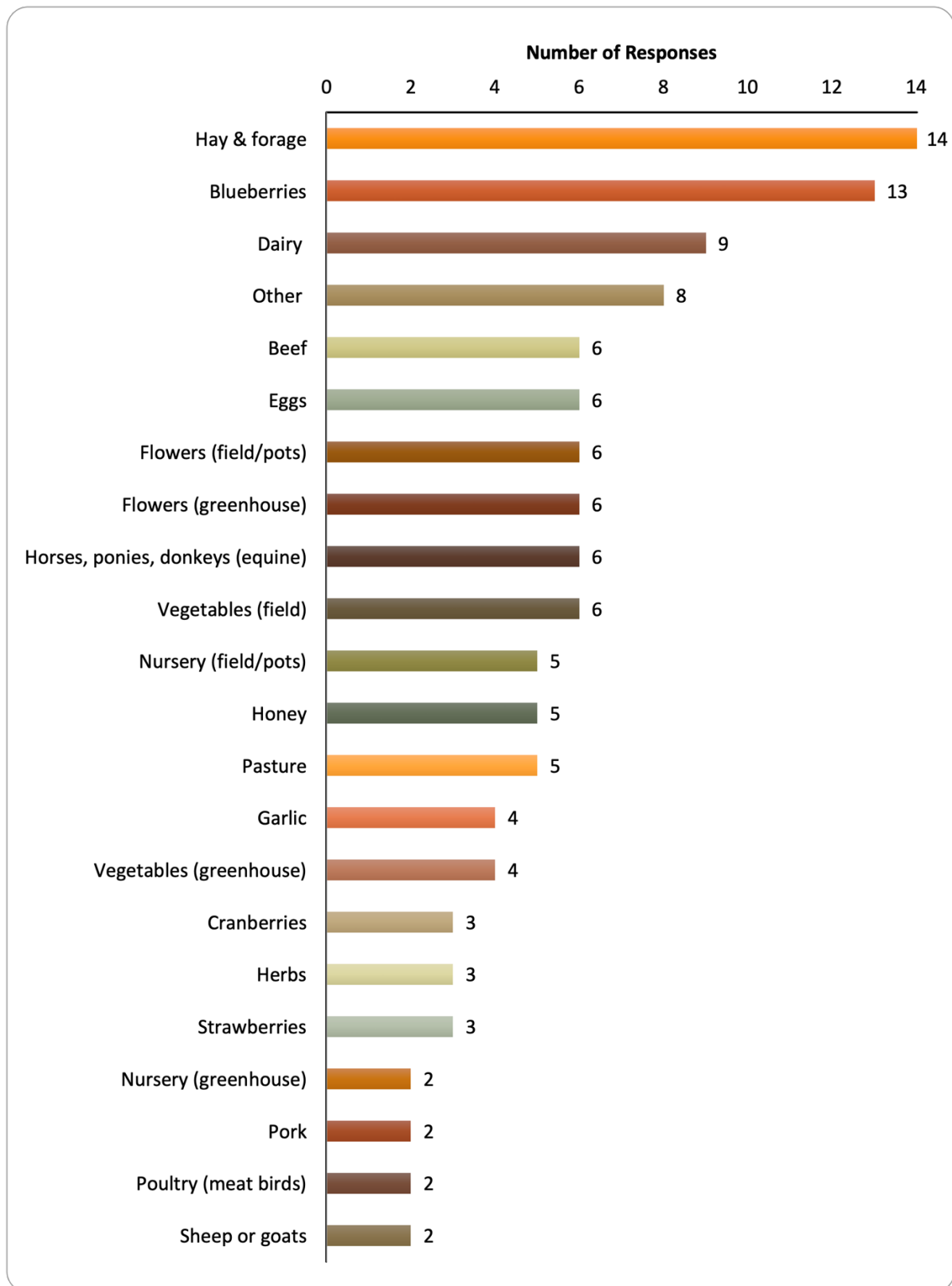


Figure 6 Agricultural activities respondents are involved in

Opportunities for sector growth and support

The top three opportunities for growing the agriculture and agri-food sector identified in Pitt Meadows were (Figure 7):

1. Greater awareness amongst the public about opportunities to support the local sector;
2. Support for business continuity; and
3. Reinforcing supply chains and ensure key inputs can be accessed.

Investing in local food processing, and exploring agri-tech opportunities were also of interest. Those who responded “other” include opportunities such as: educating the public about labour/careers in agriculture, ensuring farmland is in production, and enabling on-farm housing to facilitate farm succession.

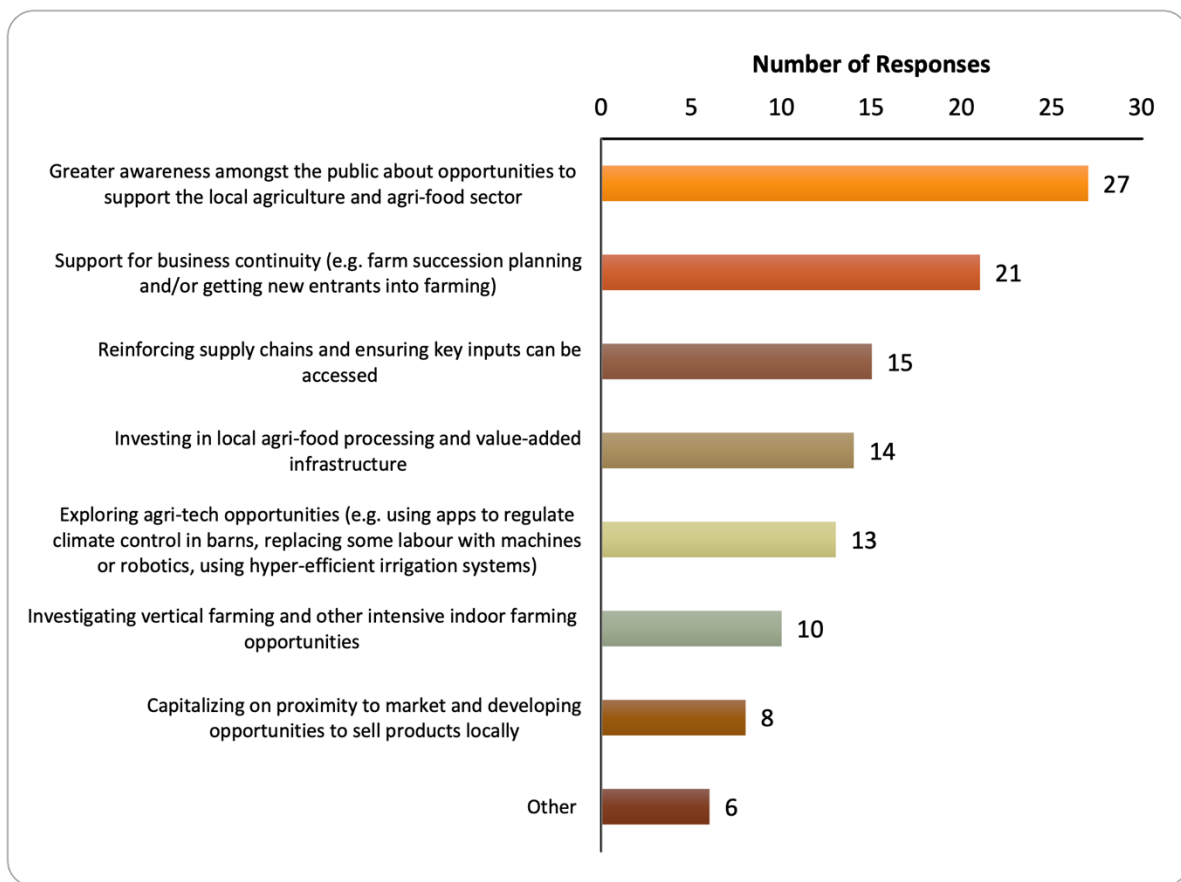


Figure 7 Opportunities for growing the agriculture and agri-food sector in Pitt Meadows

The three most important activities identified for the City of Pitt Meadows to support the agriculture and agri-food sector are (Figure 8):

1. Maintaining dikes and flood control infrastructure, facilitating the use of ditch water for irrigation;
2. Implementing policies and bylaws to protect farmland for farming (e.g., restricting size of homes on ALR lands, reducing truck storage); and
3. Providing more information about living near active farming areas (e.g., minimizing conflicts between recreational/trail users and farming areas).

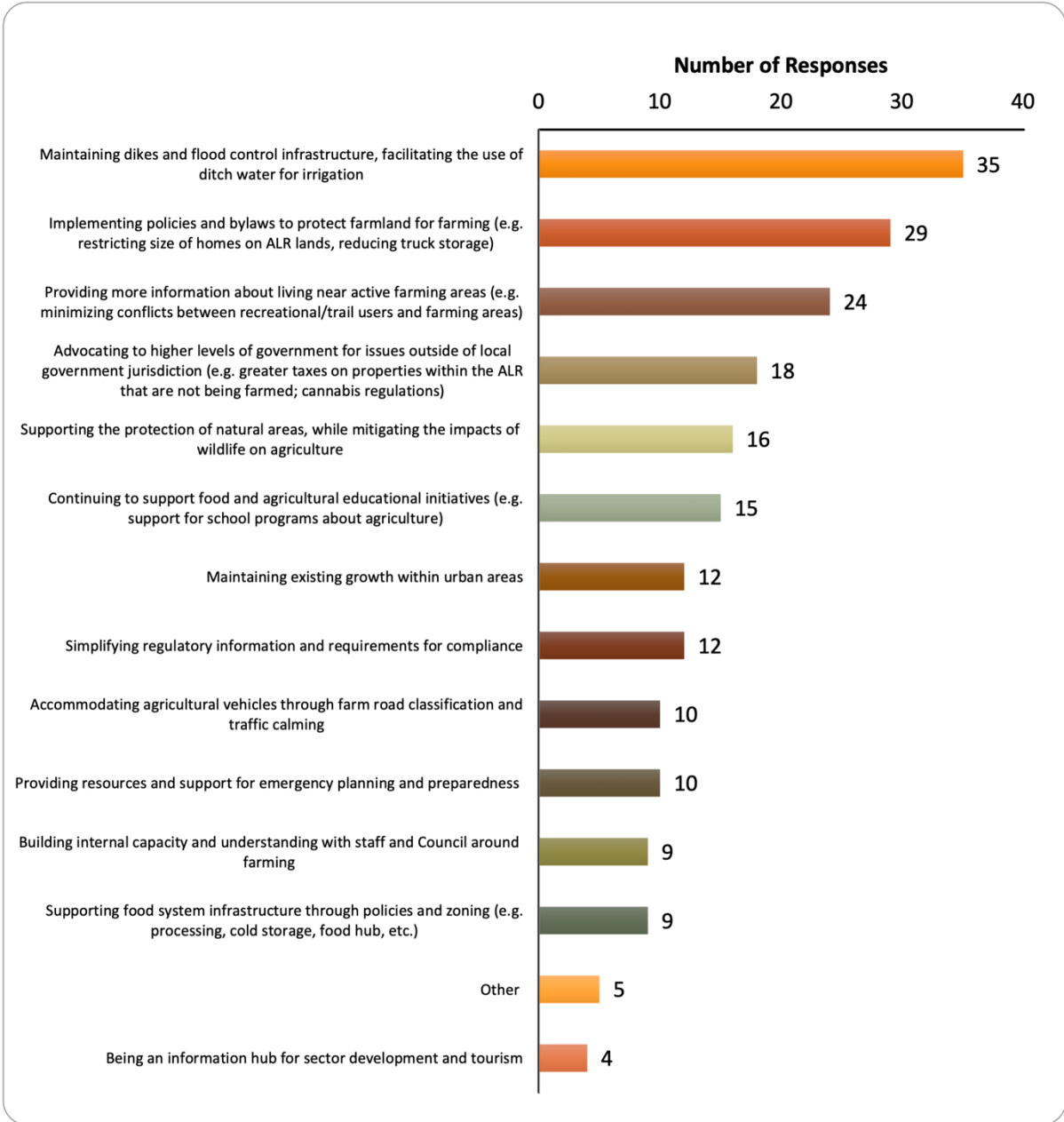


Figure 8 Ways in which the City of Pitt Meadows can continue to be a supportive agriculture and agri-food sector partner

The top three responses for how the public can support the sector were:

1. Buying food directly from farmers;
2. Respecting agricultural vehicles on the roadways; and
3. Respecting farms while and while using trails adjacent to farmland.

Support for agricultural stewardship

Over half (52%) of agricultural survey respondents indicated that they would support the collection of an annual fee from residential properties to develop a fund to support ecosystem restoration and maintenance on farmland (Figure 9). Approximately 32% would not support a fee. Of the 16% who responded “other” some indicated that ecosystem restoration should not be at the expense of producing food, and others responded that they would need more information on how the money would be spent, to ensure it was spent effectively.

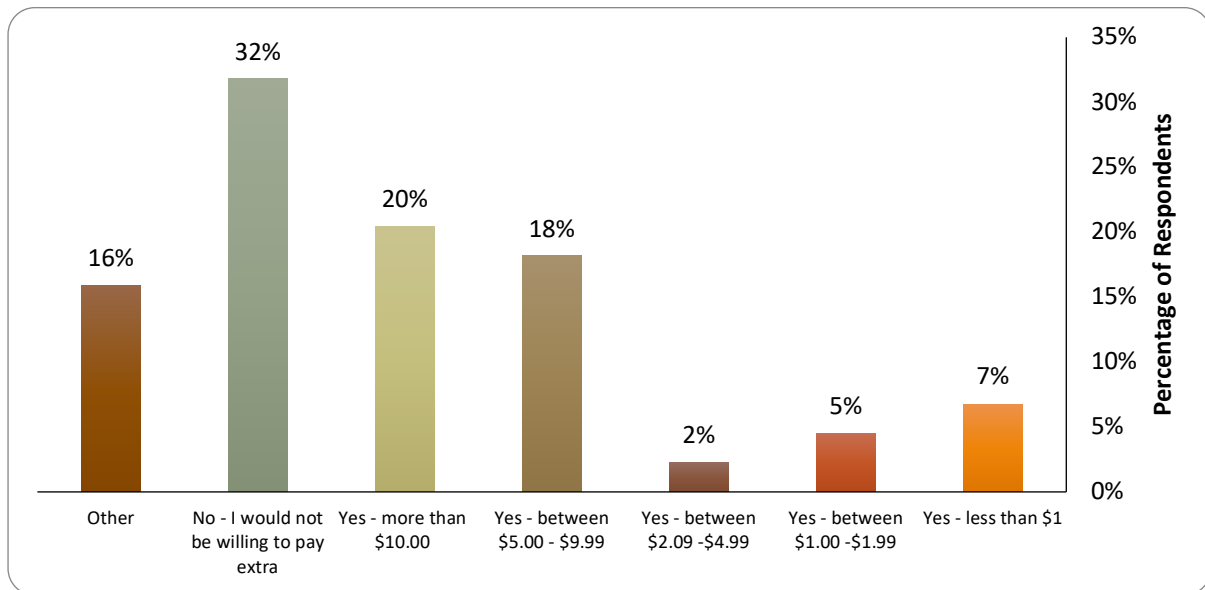


Figure 9 Agriculture and Agri-Food Respondents’ support for collecting a fee from residential properties to develop a fund to support ecosystem restoration and maintenance on farmland

Important topics for a successful Pitt Meadows’ agriculture and agri-food sector

An open-ended question was asked of the respondents about what the most important topics are related to Pitt Meadows’ agriculture and agri-food sector. The following topics were mentioned most often from the 34 responses received for this question:

- 1. Protection and preservation of farmland:** Many comments expressed concerns about preserving farmland and preventing urban encroachment or industrial/commercial development on agricultural land. There is a desire to maintain the agricultural nature of the community and ensure that the land is used for farming and food production.
- 2. Regulatory challenges:** Concerns were raised about the challenges faced by local farmers, including increasing government regulations, bylaws, and permitting. There is a call for less bureaucracy and more support for farmers, particularly in terms of succession planning and ensuring the viability and profitability of farming for future generations.

3. **Traffic and infrastructure:** Some comments mentioned the need for improved infrastructure, such as control of ditch levels for drainage and irrigation, as well as addressing traffic issues and ensuring the safety of farm vehicles on the roads.
4. **Local food production and food security:** Several comments emphasized the importance of locally sustainable food production and the need to support local farmers to ensure local food security. There is a desire for accessible markets, such as farmers' markets and local grocery stores that sell local products.
5. **Local economy and job creation:** The creation of local jobs and supporting the local economy through initiatives like farm-to-table programs and encouraging the growth of local businesses are mentioned as important issues.
6. **Environmental conservation and biodiversity:** Preservation of biodiversity and the natural environment is mentioned, highlighting the importance of protecting the land, wetlands, and maintaining a healthy living environment for workers.

Future of Pitt Meadows' agriculture and agri-food sector

There were 34 answers to the question “In your ideal world, what does agriculture in Pitt Meadows look like in 10 years – what might it add to the richness and resilience of the community?” The ideas brought forth most often included:

1. Protecting and preserving farmland;
2. Economic viability and support for farmers;
3. Local food production, accessibility and food security;
4. Improved transportation and infrastructure;
5. Environmental sustainability; and
6. Community engagement and awareness of the sector.

Other Comments

Other comments received from the agriculture and agri-food survey included the following:

Road Safety and Infrastructure

- Install more signs to raise awareness and promote respectful behavior towards farm vehicles on the road.
- Review road safety measures for farm vehicles, particularly in areas experiencing increased commuter and truck traffic.
- Support improvements to flood gates and pump stations to manage water levels in ditches during droughts and heavy rainfall.

ALR and Farmland Protection

- Maintain the integrity of the ALR and oppose the development of housing and commercial properties on fertile land.
- Advocate for higher farm tax thresholds and stricter enforcement of ALR rules.
- Oppose the removal of land from the ALR and the construction of large houses on farmland.
- Address the need for easier housing options for farm families.

Use of Farmland

- ❑ Concerns about the negative impact of the cannabis industry on farmland and the need to prevent non-agricultural operations on prime agricultural land.
- ❑ Encourage estate properties on ALR land to be used for farming purposes (e.g. can lease out land to farmers) and discourage the construction of large homes or storage of recreational vehicles.
- ❑ Seek community input and address concerns regarding unused farmland, waste and plastic container cleanup, and the protection of land for farming.
- ❑ Prioritize food production.
- ❑ Recognize the potential opportunities for crop variety and the importance of the horticulture industry.
- ❑ Support the development of financial incentives and options to encourage the use of unused farmland.

3.4.2 Community Survey Results

A survey was developed for the public to gauge interest and levels of support for local agriculture, identify areas of urban/rural tension, and canvas questions regarding community food security. The survey was distributed online through the “Have Your Say” platform and was promoted through local social media, websites and newspapers. The survey was open from May 29 to June 29, 2023.

The community survey received 75 responses. Approximately 60% of the respondents were female and around half (48%) were between the ages of 30-50.

Attitudes around and engagement with the local food system

Community respondents indicated that they buy local products at the farmers market, grocery stores, and directly from producers. It is common for people to cook and garden (Figure 10). Over 60% of respondents indicated that they purchase local food often, or on a weekly basis (Figure 11).

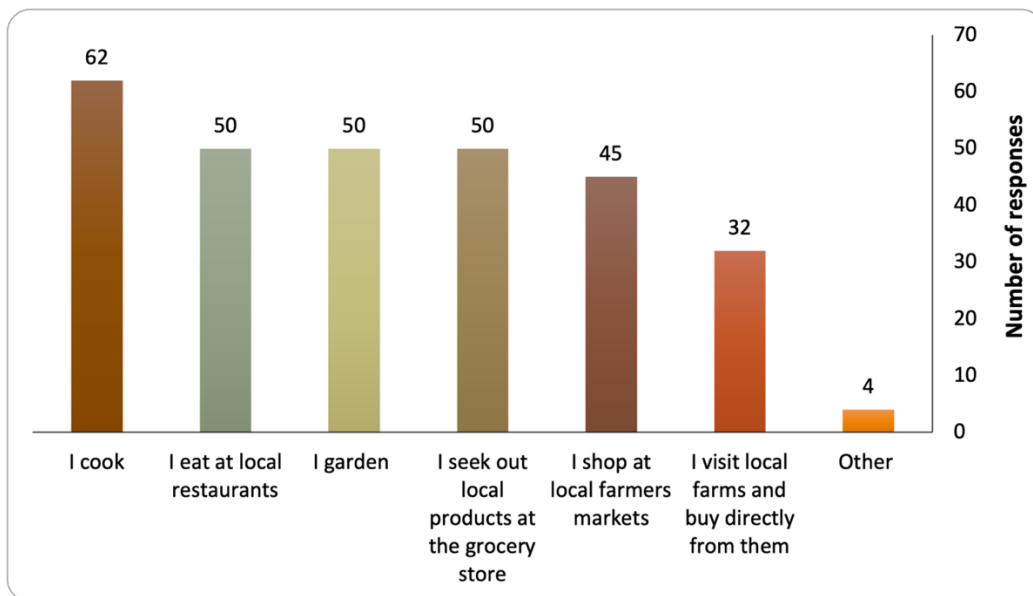


Figure 10 Relationship to the food system

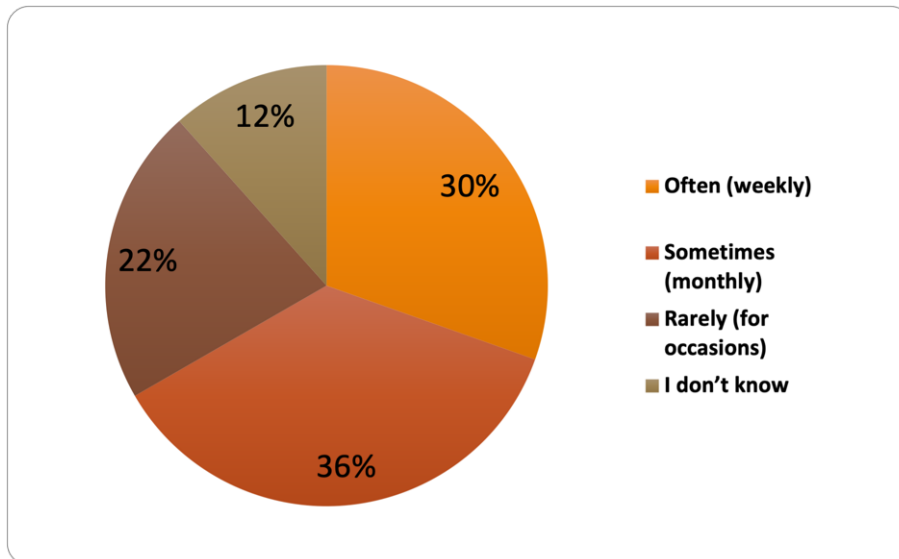


Figure 11 Frequency of purchasing local foods

Respondents indicated that they would be encouraged to purchase local more often if local foods were more convenient to purchase, more affordable and if there were more processed local foods available (Figure 12). The public would find the following information useful in encouraging more local food purchases:

1. Resources about finding local foods (e.g., maps);
2. Information about the farms and farmers producing foods; and
3. Information about the health and environmental benefits of local food products.

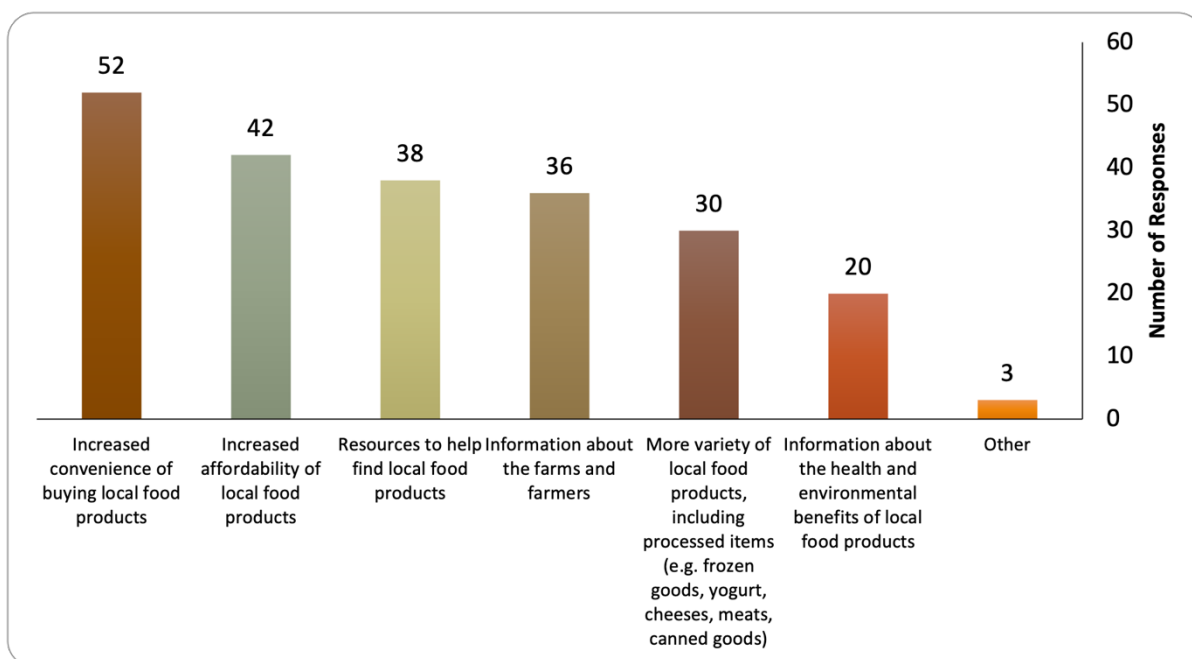


Figure 12 Actions for encouraging more local food purchases

Benefits and drawbacks of living near active farms

Respondents see value in living near active farms. Top benefits respondents see from active farming in Pitt Meadows include access to fresh produce, agriculture’s contribution to the local economy, the connection to nature and views, and community food security (Figure 13). Some of those who responded “other” indicated that farming areas have lower populations and there is less crime. In addition, a high number of survey respondents (88%) say they use the recreational dikes located adjacent to agricultural areas for activities such as biking, walking, or running (Figure 14).

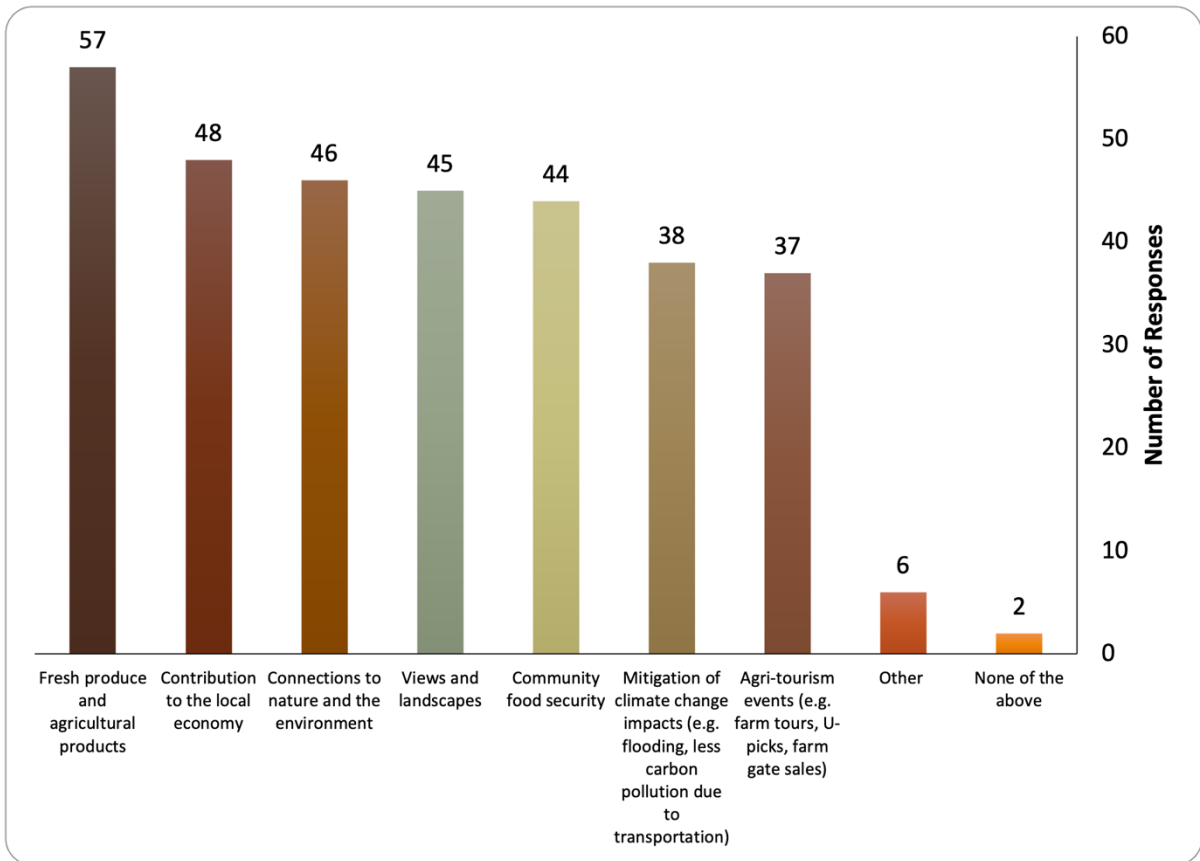


Figure 13 Benefits of living near active farms

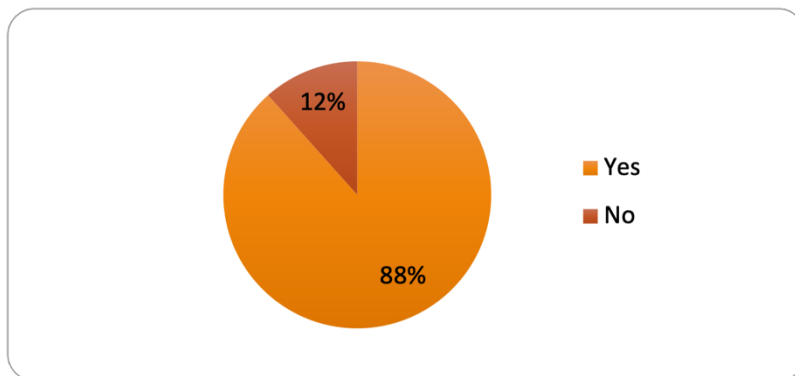


Figure 14 Percentage of respondents who use dikes adjacent to agricultural lands for recreation

Pitt Meadows’ residents are interested in engaging with the agriculture and agri-food sector in a variety of ways (Figure 15). The top activities are:

1. Purchasing foods directly from the farm or through u-pick;
2. Visiting a local winery, brewery, cidery or other farm-based drinking establishment; and
3. Attending farm tours.

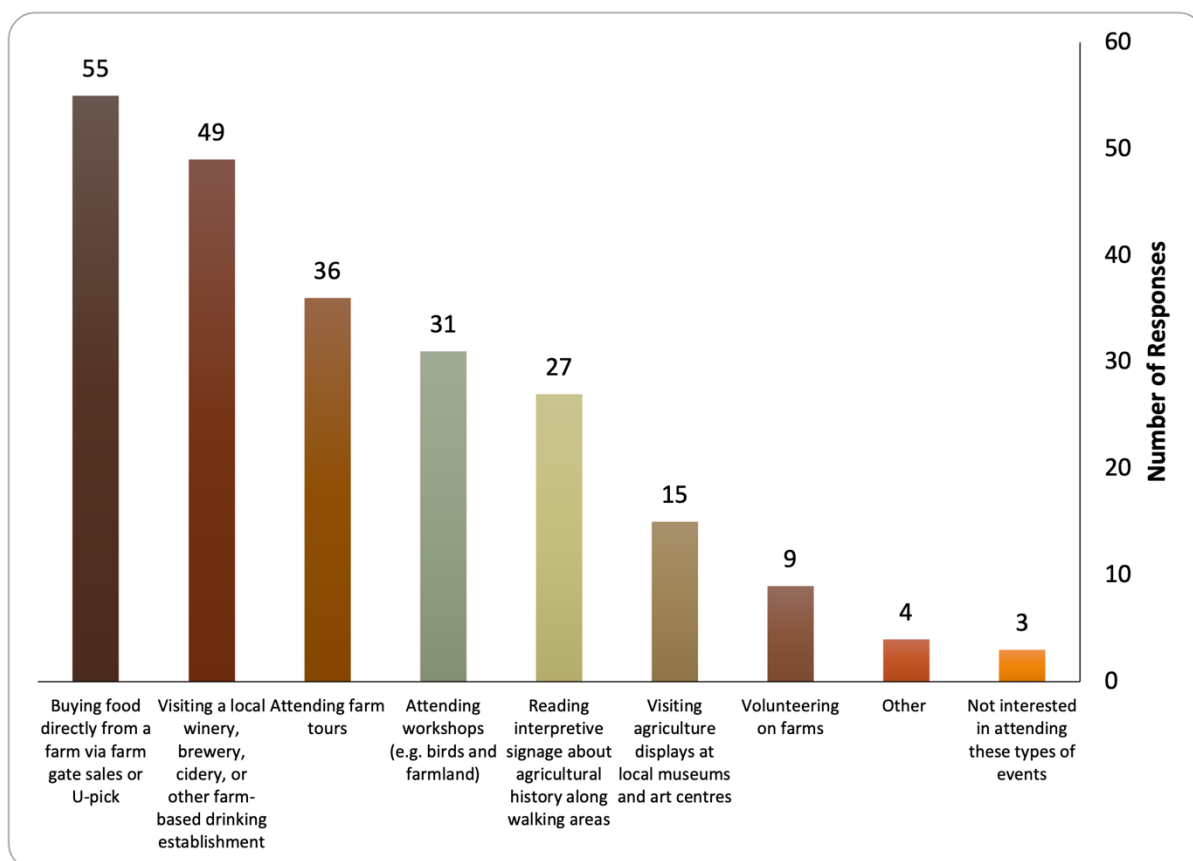


Figure 15 Types of agricultural activities that are of interest to respondents

Over 80% of respondents experience no negative impacts of living near farmland. The other 20% indicated they experience some negative impacts including: spraying of crops, odour, noise, increase in industrial use of the landscape, and farm vehicles on the road.

Support for agricultural stewardship

The majority of respondents (71%) would be willing to pay a fee from residential properties to develop a fund to support ecosystem restoration and maintenance on farmland (Figure 16). Nearly half (48%) would be willing to pay over \$5.00/year towards this fund. This indicates residents understand the agricultural land is currently and can be stewarded to protect habitat and support ecosystem services, and that these benefits contribute to their quality of life (Figure 13). Those who responded “other” indicated that they would need more information on how the money would be spent, to ensure it was spent effectively, and to ensure the primary use of farmland is for food production.

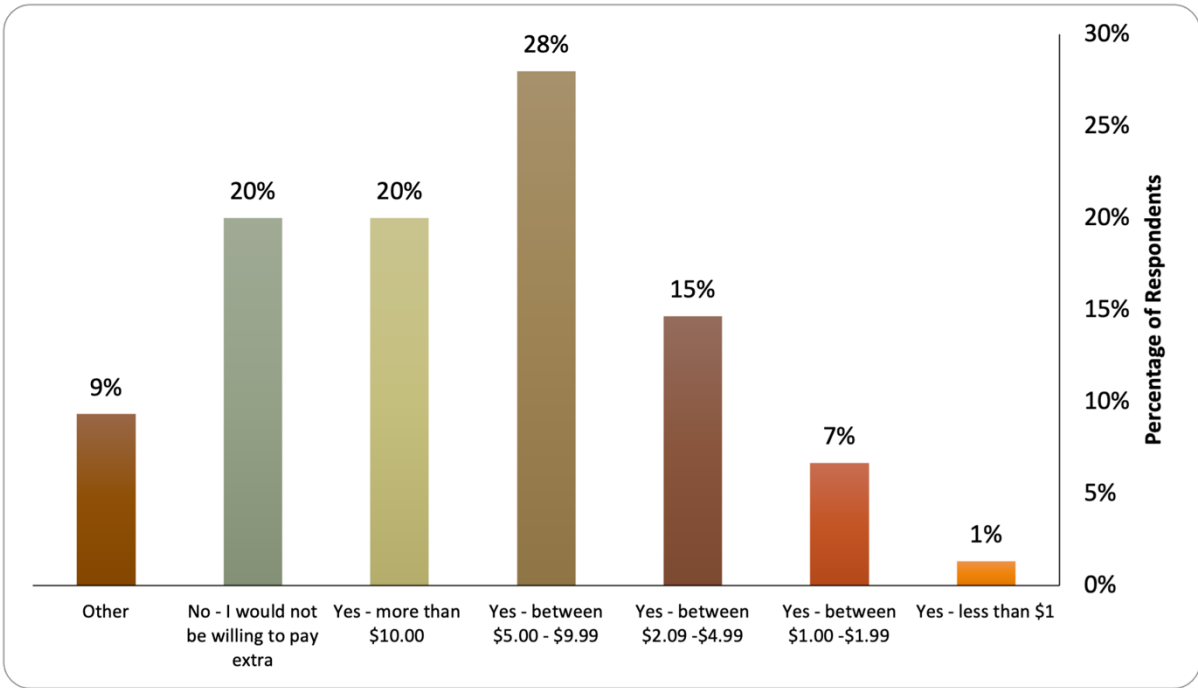


Figure 16 Community Member Respondents' support for collecting a fee from residential properties to develop a fund to support ecosystem restoration and maintenance on farmland

Attitudes towards the City of Pitt Meadows as a sector partner

Respondents support a range of activities for the City of Pitt Meadows to continue being a partner in the agriculture and agri-food sector (Figure 17). The three most important activities identified were:

1. Implementing policies and bylaws to protect farmland for farming (e.g., restricting size of homes on ALR lands, reducing truck storage);
2. Maintaining dikes and flood control infrastructure, facilitating the use of ditch water for irrigation; and
3. Supporting the protection of natural areas, while mitigating the impacts of wildlife on agriculture.

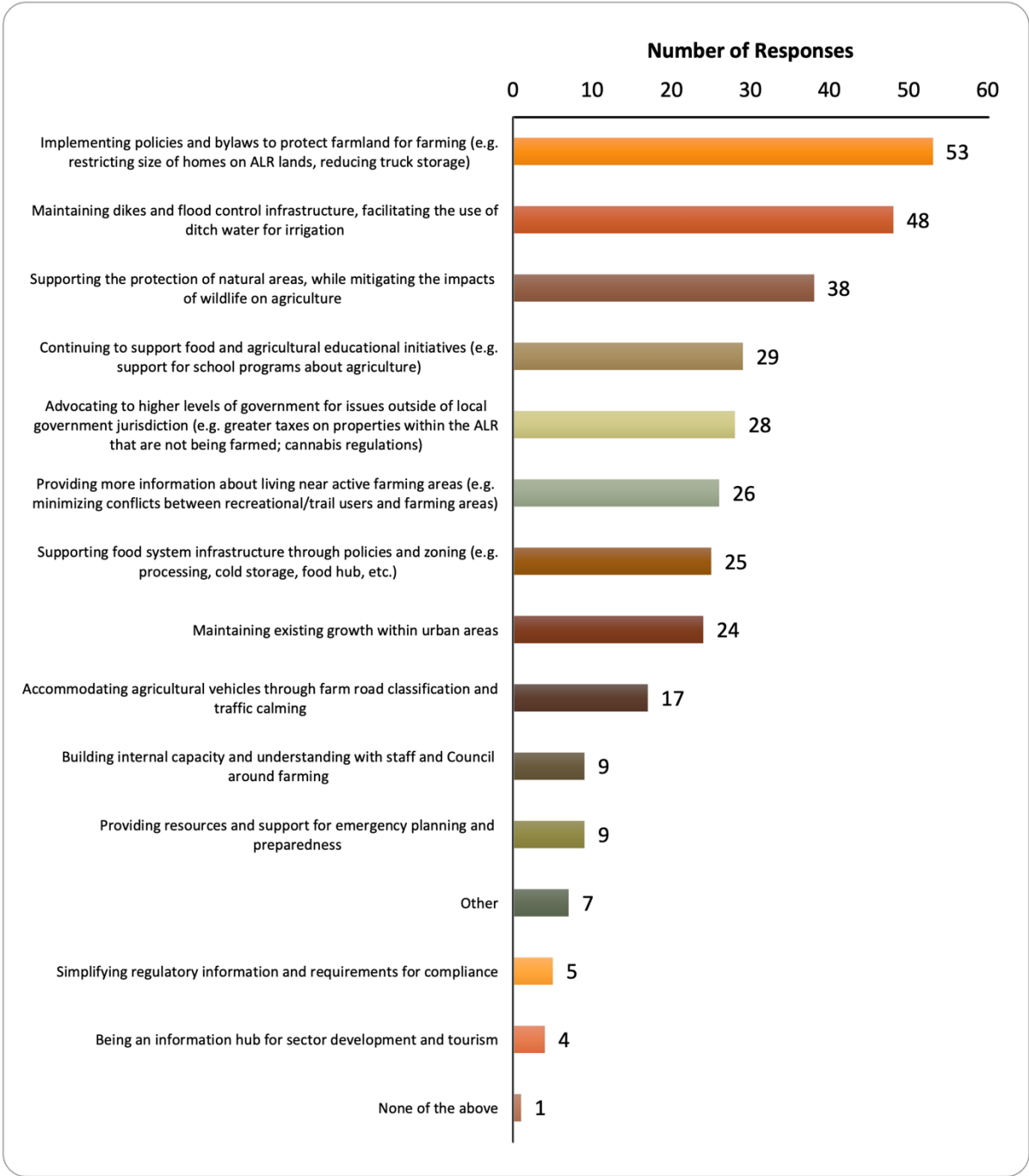


Figure 17 Ways in which the City of Pitt Meadows can continue to be a partner in the agriculture and agri-food sector

Future of Pitt Meadows agriculture in 10 years

There were 53 answers to the question “In your ideal world, what does agriculture in Pitt Meadows look like in 10 years – what might it add to the richness and resilience of the community?” More than half of the respondents (59%) want to ensure that farmland is protected (i.e., not converted to industrial or residential uses) and used to its full potential for food production. Over a third of respondents (35%) want to see an increase in the availability and diversity of local food in 10 years, with local food being accessible at the farm gate, and clearly identified in grocery stores. Other

comments included the continued use of recreation on the dikes and ensuring agricultural practices steward the environment and contribute to climate change mitigate.

4.0 Next Steps – Round 2 Engagement

The results of the Round 1 of engagement, along with the background research and policy analysis, will inform the development of the draft Agricultural Plan Update document. The draft update will be completed by the end of the summer, after which Round 2 of engagement will begin. Table 4 outlines the engagement activities that will occur during the Round 2 of engagement from September to December 2023.

Table 4 Activities anticipated for Round 2 of engagement

Round 2 Engagement	Timeline
1. Presentation of Draft Plan to AAC and External Review	Late Sept- Oct 2023
2. Online Feedback and Open House	October 2023
3. Draft Plan Presentation to Staff and Council	Late October – November 2023
4. Creation of Agricultural Plan Infographic	Early December 2023
5. Presentation of Final Agricultural Plan Update	Early December 2023

4.1 Presentation of Draft Plan to AAC and External Review

The draft Agricultural Plan will be presented to the AAC for comment at a meeting in the fall of 2023. At this point in the project timeline, the consultants recommend also submitting the draft Plan to the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC), Ministry of Agriculture and Food (AF), and other organizations for external review.

4.2 Online Feedback and Open Houses

Input from the local farming community, rights-holders, and general public about the draft Agriculture Plan Update will be gathered through an online feedback process. The draft Plan may be posted through “Have Your Say” with an opportunity for the public to provide feedback through submission of an online comment form. This secondary forum for feedback will ensure that as many voices are heard, regardless of their ability to attend in-person events.

The open house will be geared towards presenting the draft Agricultural Plan Update to interested and affected individuals and gather feedback to be incorporated into a final draft of the Plan.

4.3 Presentation to Staff and Council

The consultants will present the draft Agricultural Plan Update to staff. Additionally, the consultants will support Pitt Meadows staff in preparing to present the draft Plan to Council. The feedback from these presentations will guide the development of the final draft of the Agricultural Plan Update.

Appendix C: Ongoing Actions for Supporting Agriculture

Goal 1: Protect Farmland for Farming

Ongoing Actions Supporting Goal 1: Protect Farmland for Farming
Ensure that all planning documents, such as the OCP, Zoning Bylaw, Transportation Plan, infrastructure plans, etc., continue to clearly state support for the ALR and recognize agricultural uses as the highest priority within the ALR.
Ensure that any amendments/changes to the Zoning Bylaw continue to protect the agricultural land base and are consistent with the ALC Act and regulations.
Continue to preserve large agricultural parcels by discouraging boundary adjustments or other forms of subdivision that result in smaller parcels, regardless of the minimum parcel sizes outlined in the Zoning Bylaw.
Follow best practices for DPA guidelines for Protection of Farming as published by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food (AF) and by learning from other local governments (e.g., City of Kelowna).
Continue to refer Zoning Bylaw updates that impact the ALR to the ALC and AF for an opportunity to comment.
Continue to ensure that local policies and zoning support the establishment of large-scale processing and retail activities into industrial and commercial areas, and that processing size is commensurate to agricultural production.
Refer to the <i>Farm Practices Protection Act (Right to Farm)</i> as a method for identifying a farm operation. For example, a farm operation may be located outside of the ALR.
Continue to ensure that residential development is directed to urban containment boundary outside of the ALR.
Ensure that residential use and house size within the ALR is in alignment with (or is more restrictive than) the AF Home Plate guidelines.
Support temporary local food retail options, such as pop-up markets, in commercial zones.
Advocate to Metro Vancouver and AF to provide compensation for the stewardship of ecosystem goods and services on farmland.
Stay involved in the Metro Vancouver AAC to keep a regional perspective on agricultural and food system planning initiatives.
Ensure continuation of the AAC as an advisory body for the City and consider adding an AAC member that brings a food security lens to the membership. The AAC should be consulted on all matters that intersect with the agriculture and agri-food sector.

Goal 2: Plan and manage infrastructure assets to ensure they are well-functioning for agriculture and supported through thoughtful decision-making

Ongoing Actions Supporting Goal 2: Plan and manage infrastructure assets to ensure they are well-functioning for agriculture and supported through thoughtful decision-making
Assign and identify specific City staff to liaise with the agricultural community on water-related issues.
Explore how to improve irrigation water supply, pressure and redundancy in the northern parts of the City.
<p>Continue to implement and manage drainage systems in the floodplain to support agricultural production. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Maintaining flood protection through pump stations, flood boxes, and dikes. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensuring drainage improvements are considered comprehensively with the agricultural community. <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting policies and standards requiring the placement of driveway culverts and culverts installed on key drainage courses so as not to impede the flow of the rural drainage systems. <input type="checkbox"/> Maintaining and refurbish pump stations and watercourses critical to field drainage and agricultural water use. <input type="checkbox"/> Continuing to protect drainage utility corridors (rights-of-way) for drainage maintenance where required, and establish building, landscaping and cropping setbacks in rural areas to ensure that access to drainage corridors is protected. <input type="checkbox"/> Continuing to restrict the expansion of the storm drainage service beyond the Urban Containment Boundary. This will require ensuring that drainage ditches are adequate on rural properties, if no additional stormwater infrastructure will be extended into farmland.
Include the AAC in discussions on matters related to water planning and irrigation in Pitt Meadows.
Continue to encourage agricultural landowners to apply for irrigation water licences through FrontCounterBC.
Continue to encourage the development of on-farm water storage options such as dugouts or water holding tanks/ponds, and rainwater retention systems. Seek to identify and understand barriers to adoption on-farm water storage.
Discourage the use of potable water for irrigation and agri-industrial uses where other sources of water are available. This may not be possible for all agricultural activities (e.g., livestock watering).
Continue to update Pitt Meadows' Transportation Master Plan (specifically Action Area 3: Rural Network Enhancements) to support agricultural use.

Ongoing Actions Supporting Goal 2: Plan and manage infrastructure assets to ensure they are well-functioning for agriculture and supported through thoughtful decision-making

Continue to manage and maintain rural roadways to ensure they are in good condition for agricultural vehicles (potholes, road width, signage etc.).

Goal 3: Support the Economic Viability of Agriculture and Agri-Food Sector

Ongoing Actions Supporting Goal 3: Support the Economic Viability of the Agriculture and Agri-Food Sector

Continue to support and promote the Pitt Meadows Farmers Market.

Goal 4: Help the Agricultural Sector Adapt to Future Challenges by Adopting New Technology, Embracing Innovation, and Becoming Resilient to Climate Change

Ongoing Actions Supporting Goal 4: Help the agricultural sector adapt to future challenges by adopting new technology, embracing innovation, and becoming resilient to climate change

Continue to organize and attend farm tours and virtual events in collaboration with the farming community and ensure that City Council and staff are invited to attend.

Collaborate with q̓ičəy̓ (Katzie) First Nation to incorporate Indigenous approaches to food production and agriculture, for their experience as long-term stewards of lands and waters.

Continue to provide regular agriculture updates at council meetings on topics affecting the agricultural community either directly or indirectly.

Stay up to date with other Pitt Meadows organizations' projects as they relate to agriculture and share findings with City staff.

Work with Metro Vancouver on implementing regional initiatives that support the agriculture and agri-food sector. For example, the Metro Vancouver Food Systems Strategy; Metro Vancouver Climate 2050 Roadmap; etc.

Post existing information regarding climate change adaptation (tools, studies, and guidebooks) as well as information regarding funding opportunities to implement best practices (e.g., Environmental Farm Plan) on Pitt Meadows' website.

Goal 5: Help the Community Support and Be Proud of Agriculture in Pitt Meadows

Ongoing Actions Supporting Goal 5: Help the Community Support and Be Proud of Agriculture in Pitt Meadows

Provide informational resources to the Real Estate Board, Real Estate Associations or directly to local realtor groups, to inform them and potential property buyers or developers about land use restrictions, normal farm practices, and the *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act*. This may include [The Countryside and You](#) brochure.

Provide informational resources to existing residents in the rural areas of Pitt Meadows to convey the value and importance of agriculture in their community and how to be a good neighbour to agricultural operations.

Update and enhance the agriculture webpage on the City of Pitt Meadows website to keep the community up to date on changes in the agriculture sector and opportunities for agricultural producers.

Provide information on agriculture and its importance for the regional economy and local food systems. This could include publishing infographics, videos, and other messaging through City of Pitt Meadows communications channels.