

NO: R253

COUNCIL DATE: **November 21, 2016**

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: **Mayor & Council**

DATE: **November 16, 2016**

FROM: **General Manager, Planning & Development**

FILE: **0540-30**

SUBJECT: **Regional Food System Action Plan**

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning & Development Department recommends that Council:

1. Receive this report as information;
2. Endorse the 2016 Regional Food System Action Plan (Appendix “I”) as a collaborative approach through which local governments can jointly advance a sustainable, resilient, and healthy regional food system;
3. Acknowledge the consolidation into the Action Plan of food system actions already endorsed by or planned for implementation by Surrey; and
4. Direct staff to explore applicable new collaborative actions in conjunction with other local governments and Metro Vancouver as identified in the Action Plan (Appendix “II”).

INTENT

The intent of this report is to provide Surrey City Council with the opportunity to endorse the 2016 Regional Food System Action Plan (Action Plan), acknowledge how Surrey has already been contributing regionally to a sustainable food system, continue to support upcoming projects that will work toward supporting a regional food system, and designate staff to coordinate between Lower Mainland municipalities to continue to support and expand food system sustainability.

BACKGROUND

In February 2011, Metro Vancouver adopted a Regional Food System Strategy with the intent of supporting a fully sustainable region including ensuring food security and the healthy function of a Regional Food System. The Strategy directed Metro Vancouver Staff to prepare an Action Plan to be used as an implementation tool of the Strategy. The Action Plan was to be prepared with the input from a Steering Committee made up of implementation partners from government agencies, the food sector and community organizations. These groups took part in a series of roundtable discussions in 2013-2014 to identify opportunities and priorities. This information was then used by a Task Force formed in 2015 to prepare the Regional Food System Action Plan, with a particular focus on local government actions over the near term.

The draft Action Plan was presented to Surrey City Council in January 2016, and was sent to internal City staff to review and provide comment. The final version of the Action Plan was endorsed by the Greater Vancouver Regional District Board on April 15, 2016. Part of the recommendations included in the endorsement report was to convey the Action Plan to member municipalities for their individual endorsement.

DISCUSSION

In early 2015, Metro Vancouver created a Regional Task Force responsible for preparing an Action Plan as an implementation tool for Metro's Regional Food System Strategy. Preparation of the Action Plan was a joint effort by multiple municipalities and represents a consolidation of planned local government efforts to advance and support the goal of creating a sustainable and resilient regional food system.

The process of preparing the Action Plan provided the opportunity to learn from the experience of other municipalities, expand on innovative approaches across the region, and embark on new collaborative initiatives (Appendix "II") to address persistent challenges and emerging regional food system issues.

While providing some new direction for regional collaborations, the Action Plan also serves as an illustration of the significant time, energy and resources already expended by municipalities to advance a healthy regional food system. The Action Plan, while heavily focused on local government actions and policies, also recognizes the important role that non-profit and civil society groups play in the food system, as well as the role local governments play in supporting their vital work.

The Action Plan accomplishes the following:

- Highlights the contemporary relationships that allow each community the flexibility to build on their own strengths and unique circumstances, to address relevant food system issues, and to collaborate on issues of mutual concern.
- Recognizes that collective actions are more effective at resolving food system issues, rather than acting in isolation.
- Identifies regional actions that local governments are already taking to protect and advocate for the protection of agricultural land.
- Consolidates 160 planned actions identified by municipalities which have already been reviewed and endorsed, and are already reflected in existing municipal policy documents (see "Sustainability Considerations" section of this report).
- Highlights where a regional food system could benefit from more local government actions in order to: improve access to farmland for food production; support new farmers; facilitate local food processing capacity; increase awareness of local food; promote food recovery; and prepare for impacts of change.

The Action Plan acknowledges that the City of Surrey has taken action on a broad range of initiatives, and is a leader among local governments in the region.

These actions include:

Protect Agricultural Land for Food Production

- Address truck parking on agricultural lands by investigating the feasibility of designated parking areas.
- Conduct research and implement Farm Home Plate regulations.
- Reduce and prevent damage or erosion of the Agricultural Land Reserve by non-farm uses to support production and economic development in the agricultural sector.

Restore Fish Habitat and Protect Sustainable Sources of Seafood

- Restore and enhance riparian and fish habitat, including partnering with community organizations.
- Host, fund and in-kind support for celebratory and educational public events drawing attention to importance of fish habitat.
- Develop new Riparian Area Development Permit Guidelines to protect fish bearing streams.
- Establish, support or maintain fish hatcheries.

Enable Expansion of Agricultural Production

- Implement Farm Protection Development Permit Guidelines.
- Complete and implement Integrated Stormwater Management Plans to minimize any stormwater increases for farmland.

Invest in a New Generation of Food Producers

- Create a Virtual Incubator Farm Project Online System to connect potential farmers with agri-related resources.
- Establish an agri-business Financial Literacy Program to provide accredited ag-business financial training for the John Volken Academy Bio-Pod students.

Expand Urban Commercial Food Production in Urban Areas

- Establish the Bio-Pod initiative which is an Agriculture Training and Research Demonstration Greenhouse.

Increase Direct Marketing Opportunities for Local Foods

- Develop and promote local farm tours and agri-tourism opportunities.
- Provide in-kind support or direct incentives for farmer's markets (e.g. space, infrastructure, advertising, discounted leases).
- Support alternative food/retail distribution models including Community Supported Agriculture Programs and fresh food deliveries to recreation and civic facilities.

Review Government Policies and Programs to Ensure they Enable the Expansion of the Local Food Sector

- Amend/promote bylaw changes that support bee keeping in some residential and other zones.
- Amend the Procedure Bylaw to permit staff authority to issue Flood Hazard Lands Development Permits in the Agricultural Land Reserve.
- Update the Sustainability Charter to guide development and incorporate decisions related to agricultural production and access to food.
- Prepare the West Clayton Neighbourhood Concept Plan to support the protection of agricultural land.

Enable Residents to Make Healthy Food Choices

- Develop partnerships with community groups and health authorities to deliver outreach and workshops on healthy eating and growing food.

Communicate How Food Choices Support Sustainability

- Promote local agriculture on the municipal website with information on local food events and markets.
- Prepare Surrey's version of the Farm Fresh Guide that highlights organic, u-pick and crop information on Surrey farms and support the Food for Thought Program that showcases farm and food producer information.

Enhance Food Literacy and Skills in Schools

- Host the Stewart Farm Day Camp where children can experience what it's like to be a farmer, "Farmhand Fever".

Celebrate the Taste of Local Foods and the Diversity of Cuisines

- Cloverdale Rodeo
- Surrey Ag-Info Week
- Party for the Planet on Earth Day
- Old Harvest Festival at Stewart Farm
- Surrey Salmon Run
- Harvest Fall Festival

Improve Access to Nutritious Food Among Vulnerable Groups

- Offer discounted nutritious meals for seniors, immigrants or refugee families.
- Provide grants to social service agencies to help increase the nutritional quality of meals served.
- Support trips to local farms for refugee families to enable direct access to fresh, local food and compile information on low cost sources of food.

Encourage Urban Agriculture

- Continue outreach and launch pilot project to test the feasibility of permitted new types of urban agriculture (e.g. bee keeping, backyard chickens, container gardening, fruit bearing trees on public lands).

Facilitate Adoption of Environmentally Sustainable Practices

- Promote the Seed Sale and Exchange to increase planting of heritage vegetables, flowers and herb seeds, fruit trees, and nursery plants.

Prepare for the Impacts of Climate Change

- Continue to implement the Serpentine and Nicomekl Lowland Flood Control Strategy.

In addition, there are a number of Action Items that staff is proposing to undertake in keeping with established Council policy over the next three years, as resources permit and as Council's priorities determine.

These upcoming actions include:

Enable Expansion of Agricultural Production

- Develop road design criteria for farmland.

Invest in a New Generation of Food Producers

- Implement the Colebrook Park Master Plan that aims to create a leasing program for incubator farms on agricultural land.

Expand Urban Commercial Food Production in Urban Areas

- Support an Ag-Research Program to develop agri-tech and crop science R&D for the commercial greenhouse industry.
- Support research and development into new food production methods/models.
- Establish a Research and Demonstration training facility.

Increase the Capacity to Process, Warehouse and Distribute Local Foods

- Examine the feasibility of creating farming co-ops and Surrey-based wholesaling.

Review Government Policies and Programs to Ensure they Enable the Expansion of the Local Food Sector

- Review zoning bylaws to expand support for local food.
- Host staff education activities to ensure consistent implementation of agricultural legislation.
- Prepare Grandview Neighbourhood Concept Plan to support the protection of agricultural land.

Enable Residents to Make Healthy Food Choices

- Develop an implementation strategy that supports the Blue Dot movement, which includes the right to eat nutritious food.

Communicate How Food Choices Support Sustainability

- Help fund signage on farmland that identifies crops being produced in the fields.

Improve Access to Nutritious Food Among Vulnerable Groups

- Support education, skill building and cooking activities for people most vulnerable to food insecurity.

Encourage Urban Agriculture

- Review and improve the approval process for community gardens.
- Establish new community gardens, and in some circumstances, with an intent to improve physical access (e.g. through universal design).

Protect and Enhance Ecosystem Goods and Services

- Create and enhance pollinator habitat through research, new policies and on-the-ground projects.
- Engage agriculture representatives in the Biodiversity Farm Trust regarding dykes and waterways.

Facilitate Adoption of Environmentally Sustainable Practices

- Minimize environmental impacts from pesticides through Integrated Pest Management educational programs.

The final preparation phase of the Regional Food System Action Plan involves a phased endorsement process which sees all member municipalities supporting the following:

- Endorsing the Action Plan as a whole.
- Reaffirming actions already considered by the participating municipalities.
- Considering or exploring the new collaborative actions applicable to each municipality.
- Assigning staff resources to coordinate participation in advancing the Action Plan.

This approach follows previous processes used for past projects where municipalities and Metro Vancouver have jointly adopted or supported a plan with specific actions proposed to be undertaken by various local governments.

The Action Plan is not a regulatory document, but rather a tool that is available to guide and direct individual municipalities to work collectively on regional food system issues. The Action Plan seeks to balance the concerns about issues of commercial agriculture with those of urban agriculture and food security, within a framework that supports environmental protection and enhancement. Some of the actions are more relevant to Surrey than to other municipalities, and there is no expectation that municipalities will implement all of the actions listed in the Plan.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

From a sustainability perspective, contributing to the vitality of Surrey's food system is supported in several of Surrey's policy documents, including the Official Community Plan; the Agriculture Protection and Enhancement Strategy; and the Sustainability Charter 2.0.

Official Community Plan

- Section D1: Green Infrastructure and Ecosystem Management
- Section D3: Greener Site Development
- Section E3: Agriculture

Agriculture Protection and Enhancement Strategy

- Strategy 3.1: Investigate ways of improving access to an adequate and safe water supply.
- Strategy 5.2: Encourage producers to diversify crops and agricultural operations to maintain a balanced and resilient food system, as needed.

Sustainability Charter 2.0

Desired Outcomes (DO) and Strategic Directions (SD):

Inclusion:

- DO5: New immigrants and refugees are supported to settle, integrate and become thriving members of the community.
- DO11: All individuals and families have adequate access to culturally-appropriate, sustainably-grown food.
- SD15: Work at the neighbourhood level to empower local clubs, groups and individuals and agencies to contribute to a vibrant community.
- SD 18: Celebrate and build upon what makes us proud of our community.

Built Environment and Neighbourhoods:

- DO6: Land use used efficiently and sensitively and development minimizes the impacts on the natural environment, views, agricultural land and urban wildlife.
- DO10: Opportunities for commercial food production are integrated into the private and public realm.
- SD12: Encourage and enable opportunities for community-based food production and capacity-building programs.

Economic Prosperity and Livelihoods:

- DO4: Surrey's economy is diversified with a mix of service, industrial, agricultural and innovation-based businesses.
- DO10: The Agricultural Land Reserve is maintained, agricultural enterprises are sustainable and food production and processing are enhanced.
- DO11: Food production and food enterprises of all scales are an integral part of the local economy.
- SD6: Facilitate connections between businesses to support sourcing of local services, expertise and products.
- SD7: Support and expand the use and availability of agricultural land and food processing facilities, while enhancing the ability of agricultural enterprises to directly access the local market.
- SD8: Support farmers to adapt their businesses to the impacts from climate change.
- SD10: Connect business, universities, industry associations and non-profits to collaborate on research and innovative economic development planning and projects.

Ecosystems:

- DO5: Surrey takes pride in its rich biodiversity, including fish-bearing streams, marine habitat and natural areas such as forests, meadows and wetlands.
- SD6: Develop and encourage stronger policies and strategies that support clean water, soil and air.
- SD7: Ensure water quality and base water levels are maintained in Surrey's river systems.
- SD14: Encourage food pollinators corridor development.

Health and Wellness:

- DO11: Fresh, healthy and culturally-appropriate food is affordable and readily available.
- DO12: Community-based and small-scale commercial food growing and preparation opportunities are available.
- DO13: Residents have a varied and healthy diet.
- SD9: Support residents, neighbourhoods and organizations in growing, preserving, preparing and sharing food.
- SD10: Work collaboratively at the neighbourhood level to ensure the dignified access to healthy food for everyone.
- SD11: Promote design and development that incorporates spaces for food growing at the neighbourhood and site level.

Infrastructure:

- DO1: City facilities and infrastructure systems are well managed, adaptable and long-lasting and are effectively integrated into regional systems.
- DO6: The City anticipates changing weather patterns and sea level rise as a result of climate change and implements appropriate infrastructure, land use planning and emergency response solutions that will be resilient over the long term.
- DO15: All water is used efficiently and per capital water use is decreasing year over year.

- DO17: Water is efficiently and fairly distributed to support agricultural needs while maintaining ecological functions.
- SD8: Address long term sea level rise and related climate impacts in Surrey's lowlands and affected communities.
- SD12: Continue to explore, develop and implement policies and tools to support water conservation and recovery.

CONCLUSION

Metro Vancouver's Regional Food System Action Plan is intended to be used as an implementation tool to further the goals of the Regional Food System Strategy, as well as the goals, actions, projects, and policy directives established by each participating municipality. Municipalities in the Lower Mainland experience myriad issues in maintaining a viable, efficient, and effective food system; however, many local governments tackle these issues in silos, working only within the borders of their municipalities. For region-wide issues, this can be an ineffective method in truly managing and moving forward with food system issues, creating inefficient responses to complex challenges. Using the Regional Food System Action Plan is a good step in the direction of creating a sustainable, healthy, and vibrant food system and region.

Based on the above discussion, it is recommended that Council:

- Endorse the 2016 Regional Food System Action Plan (Appendix "I");
- Acknowledge the action items consolidation into the Action Plan that Surrey has already endorsed or planned for implementation; and
- Direct staff to explore new collaborative actions that are applicable to Surrey (Appendix "II").

Original signed by
Jean Lamontagne
General Manager,
Planning & Development

CS/ss

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Attachments:

- Appendix "I" - Regional Food System Action Plan
Appendix "II" - Action Plan Collaborative Items

A photograph of a market stall filled with various fresh vegetables, including leafy greens, asparagus, and root vegetables, arranged in black plastic crates.

REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM ACTION PLAN

2016

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THE REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM STRATEGY

The *Regional Food System Strategy (RFSS)* was adopted by Metro Vancouver in 2011, with a vision to create, “a sustainable, resilient and healthy food system that will contribute to the well-being of all residents and the economic prosperity of the region while conserving our ecological legacy.” This food system approach illustrates the multiple ways food reaches our plates and the linkages among agencies, the private sector and communities working on food issues. The RFSS contains five goals and twenty-one strategies (see below) that highlight opportunities for all levels of government, the private sector, and civil society to advance actions that support the vision and public benefits derived from the regional food system.

THE REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

Goals	Strategies
Goal 1: Increased Capacity to Produce Food Close to Home	1.1 Protect agricultural land for food production
	1.2 Restore fish habitat and protect sustainable sources of seafood
	1.3 Enable expansion of agricultural production
	1.4 Invest in a new generation of food producers
	1.5 Expand commercial food production in urban areas
Goal 2: Improve the Financial Viability of the Food Sector	2.1 Increase capacity to process, warehouse and distribute local foods
	2.2 Include local foods in the purchasing policies of large public institutions
	2.3 Increase direct marketing opportunities for local foods
	2.4 Further develop value chains within the food sector
	2.5 Review government policies and programs to ensure they enable the expansion of the local food sector
Goal 3: People Make Healthy and Sustainable Food Choices	3.1 Enable residents to make healthy food choices
	3.2 Communicate how food choices support sustainability
	3.3 Enhance food literacy and skills in school
	3.4 Celebrate the taste of local foods and the diversity of cuisines
Goal 4: Everyone has Access to Healthy, Culturally Diverse and Affordable Food	4.1 Improve access to nutritious food among vulnerable groups
	4.2 Encourage urban agriculture
	4.3 Enable non-profit organizations to recover nutritious food
Goal 5: A Food System Consistent with Ecological Health	5.1 Protect and enhance ecosystem goods and services
	5.2 Reduce waste in the food system
	5.3 Facilitate adoption of environmentally sustainable practices
	5.4 Prepare for the impacts of climate change

THE REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM ACTION PLAN

While the broad framework of the RFSS considers the role of stakeholders across the entire food system, the Regional Food System Action Plan (Action Plan) adopts a narrower focus on actions that local governments are planning to undertake in the next 3-5 years that will concretely advance implementation of the RFSS. It also identifies a number of new strategic and collaborative actions that local governments can undertake together to advance efforts toward a resilient and sustainable food system in Metro Vancouver. The Action Plan is set within the context of the dedicated, progressive and innovative work already accomplished or underway by local governments, civil society groups and other food system stakeholders. In addition, this Action Plan is intended as a reference guide for local governments to learn from each other's respective actions and experiences.

Staff from local governments identified the actions in the Action Plan, including the new collaborative initiatives being proposed to respond to gaps and emerging directions. The Action Plan:

- Demonstrates the local government role through ongoing and planned actions;
- Identifies areas of the RFSS where more local government efforts are desirable;
- Recommends opportunities for collaborative local government action;
- Highlights actions that could be expanded across the region; and
- Provides a resource to learn from each other and signals where new partnerships can be pursued to address food system issues.

The Action Plan was developed by Metro Vancouver, member municipalities, the Tsawwassen First Nation and the BC Ministry of Agriculture. Input was also provided by regional and municipal Agricultural Advisory Committees, external stakeholders and a series of three Roundtable events hosted by Metro Vancouver in 2013 and 2014.

Ongoing engagement with stakeholders has resulted in an Action Plan that highlights:

- 160 existing actions planned by local governments to advance RFSS implementation;
- 18 new collaborative local government actions;
- Where local governments are most active in the food system, which is in: protecting agricultural land, supporting direct marketing, aligning policies to food system goals, supporting vulnerable populations' access to nutritious food, and encouraging urban agriculture;
- Areas where local governments are less engaged, including: using farmland for food production, supporting new farmers, facilitating local food processing capacity, increasing awareness of local food, promoting food recovery, and preparing for impacts of climate change;
- Emerging issues that have become more pertinent since the RFSS was adopted in 2011 and that require local government attention, including: food emergency planning; linking poverty, food & health issues; and building local government capacity to work with civil society groups; and
- A collaborative approach to implementation that ensures ongoing coordination among local governments.

Why an Action Plan?

The Action Plan is focused on the actions that local governments are planning to undertake in the next 3-5 years that will concretely advance the region towards a sustainable food system.

By consolidating planned local government activity, the Action Plan achieves more than the sum of its parts, by:

- Enabling knowledge transfer among local governments
- Providing an opportunity to expand best practices across the region
- Identifying opportunities to collaboratively address persistent and cross-jurisdictional regional food system issues

ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN THE REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM

Food system issues span government, private sector and community organizations, yet necessitate government leadership at all levels. The federal government has authority over national and international issues related to trade, agriculture, fisheries, health, and food safety. The province of British Columbia shares the government mandate for agriculture and health, while also having authority over economic growth, job creation, social welfare, transportation and the environment.

Local governments are more directly connected to communities and therefore are well-positioned to address food system issues related to land use, utilities, community services and to work directly with the civil society groups that are actively engaged in food system issues in their communities. Municipalities can capitalize on strengths to manage growth and development, diversify the economy, educate residents, support vulnerable populations and adapt to a changing environment. The regional district provides regional utility services for water, wastewater and solid waste and undertakes regional planning with an aim to guiding anticipated growth to the right places. This includes supporting the development of complete communities, protecting important lands (including agricultural lands), and enabling the provision efficient infrastructure, including transportation.

In Metro Vancouver, the combined efforts of the regional district, 21 member municipalities and the Tsawwassen First Nation creates an opportunity for a collective approach that can effectively address a wide range of food system issues. There remains a strong reliance on the provincial government to enable the policy, regulatory and fiscal framework. Partnerships with business, community organizations and educational institutions are also essential to advancing innovative solutions to address the challenges in the regional food system.

The Action Plan acknowledges a distinctive role for local governments in the Metro Vancouver region while recognizing that each local government has unique characteristics and circumstances and therefore addresses agriculture and food issues in its own way. For example, municipalities with

Definitions

With many sectors involved, there can be differing assumptions regarding some of the terminology. The following key terms were identified by stakeholders as important to define as used in the context of this Action Plan:

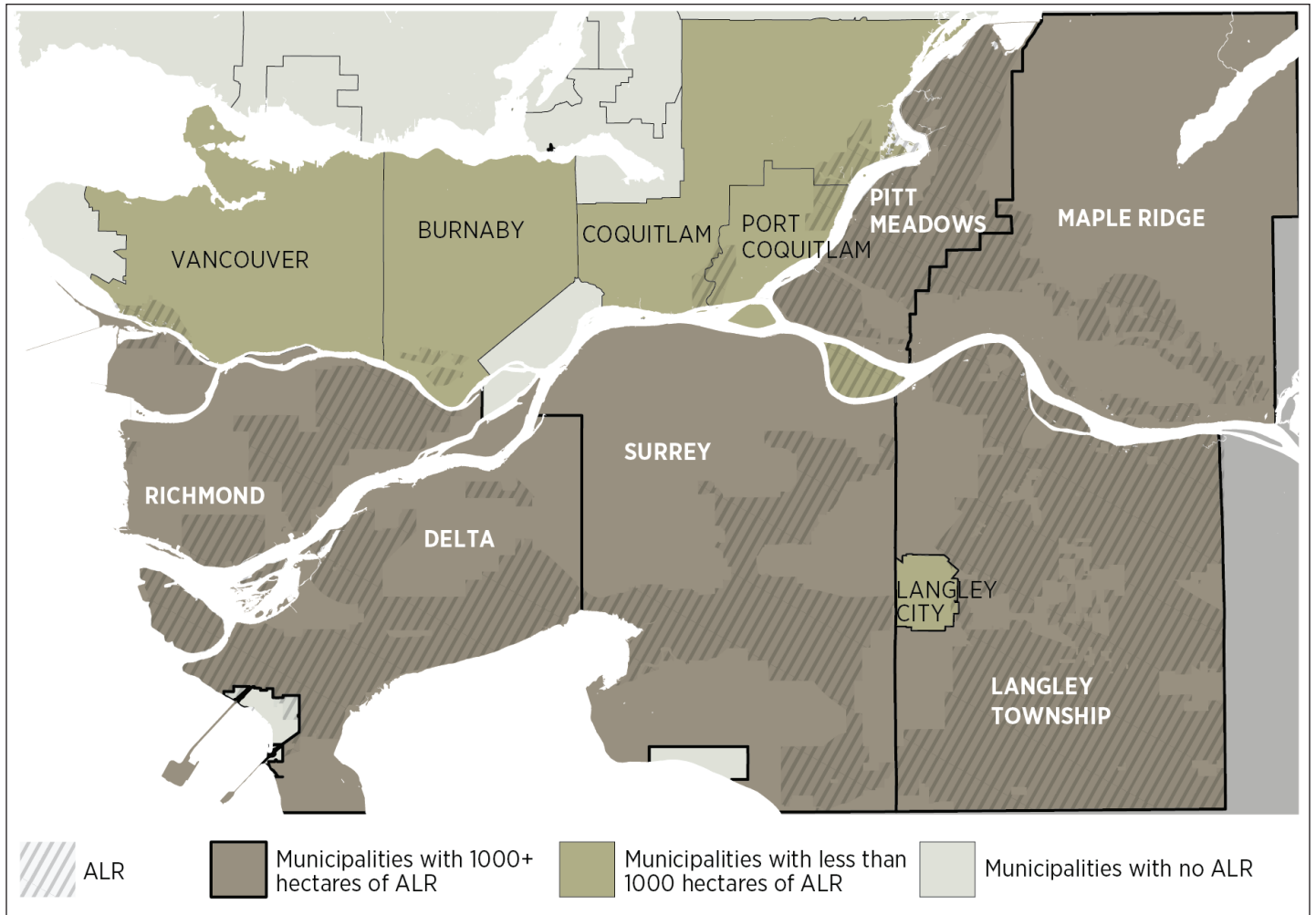
A Sustainable Food System is one that requires protecting and conserving the region's rich ecological legacy while taking actions that provide for ongoing profitability in the food sector, support healthier eating habits and address inequities in food access. A sustainable food system must also be resilient - capable of recovering from unforeseen setbacks and short-term crises. And, a sustainable food system is also a healthy system, one that improves the well-being of individuals and reduces the stress on the health care system through better food choices and eating habits (Metro Vancouver Regional Food System Strategy, 2011).

Food Security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy lifestyle (United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, 2001).

Food Insecurity refers to the inability to acquire or consume an adequate diet quality or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so. It is often associated with lack of financial ability to access adequate food. (Health Canada, 1994)

significant agricultural land play a crucial role in protecting farmland and promoting the viability of agriculture. In Metro Vancouver, there are six municipalities that contain 95% of the region's agricultural land (Delta, Langley Township, Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows, Richmond, and Surrey). For the purposes of the Action Plan, these municipalities are referred to as the "Agricultural" municipalities. Although other municipalities are also stewards of the Agricultural Land Reserve, most of the remaining lands are located within the Urban Containment Boundary, as defined by *Metro Vancouver 2040: Shaping our Future (Metro 2040)*, the regional growth strategy.

THE AGRICULTURAL LAND RESERVE IN METRO VANCOUVER



CHALLENGES

The challenges identified in the RFSS remain pertinent - supporting healthier diets, reducing the carbon footprint of food, preparing for uncertain global food supplies, ensuring food security and creating opportunities for local food businesses. The ability of government agencies to work across multiple jurisdictions to capture synergies also remains a challenge.

Through the development of the Action Plan, municipalities expressed a strong desire to ensure that nutritious food is available to everyone, local agri-food businesses thrive, agricultural land is protected and associated ecological goods and services are maintained over the long term. Additional challenges faced by local governments in responding to local food issues identified during the development of the Action Plan include:

- local governments having many competing priorities and obligations;
- a lack of adequate resources committed to food and agricultural issues;
- a lack of consistency in terms of where and how agri-food issues are addressed within each municipality, which makes it difficult to coordinate among departments and across the region; and
- the range of levels of political commitment to a food system approach often results in actions being completed when staff time and funding become available, rather than as a strategic priority.

KEY FINDINGS

A number of notable themes emerged through the development of the Action Plan. First, it has become evident that a regional federation of local governments working together on some issues provides an effective way to optimize the building of resilient, sustainable regional food system. The Action Plan's success is reliant on the complementary relationships that allow each community to build on its own strengths and unique circumstances to address food issues, but also to work

together on cross-cutting actions. This Action Plan provides the opportunity to learn from the experiences of others, expand innovative approaches across the region, and embark on new initiatives to address the persistent challenges and emerging regional food system issues.

Next, the importance of the interdependent relationship between the communities that are producing most of our local food, and the communities that are primarily the consumers, cannot be overstated. For example, agricultural municipalities tend to be focused on protecting agricultural land and expanding commercial food production, while the municipalities with less agricultural land can help bring local food awareness and social benefits to residents through activities such as farmers' markets and urban agriculture. Building an awareness and understanding of the respective roles and interdependence of local governments is key to effectively expand local food production.

Efforts to expand the supply and demand for local food also strengthens the call to protect agricultural land by containing growth within the urban containment boundary, as defined in *Metro 2040*. Strong connections between communities can further increase understanding of the issues that will confront the region in the future, especially as climate change and emergency management take a higher priority on all government agendas.

Lastly, there is a wide range of food-related policies, plans and programs being implemented by local governments, yet these initiatives are often not labeled as such. In addition to the agriculture plans, food strategies and food charters prepared by municipalities, actions in support of a food system approach have emerged from a broad range of other policy tools such as Official Community Plans, zoning bylaws and development permit area guidelines. There are also supportive actions embedded in Local Area Plans, Park Plans, Climate Action Plans, Environmental and Social Sustainability Strategies, and Healthy Built Environment initiatives. While municipalities are responding to the growing interest in local food issues by using available tools and resources. A more strategic, integrated long-term approach that includes dedicated staff, funding, and partnerships is needed.

A SPECIAL MENTION – COMMUNITY GROUPS, NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS & HEALTH AGENCIES

In addition to local governments, key players in the regional food system include non-governmental organizations, community groups, educational institutions and the private sector. Many of these groups are leading actions that support the implementation of the *Regional Food System Strategy*, and are often crucial partners for local governments.

Provincial Health Authorities also take a strong leadership role in putting food on the public agenda, and in providing partnership opportunities that support local government and community groups to better engage with food system challenges.

Most local governments rely on community organizations to be on the front lines for food security issues. With senior governments continuing to reduce support for research and extension¹, agricultural producers are increasingly reliant on educational institutions for job training and skills development. In the Metro Vancouver region, post-secondary institutions have been active in advancing research, as well supporting on the ground initiatives, such as changes in institutional procurement practices to include local foods. The connections between the private sector and local government are becoming more collaborative as businesses recognize social obligations and opportunities to be agents of change, and as food issues become more complex. In addition, food banks, charitable organizations and foundations are providing critical community services and conducting public engagement and education activities.

Civil Society

Civil society groups, non-government organizations and community associations are the true engines of innovation and progress. Although this Action Plan is focused on the role of local government, the ongoing work of civil society groups on the ground is critical in advancing food security issues throughout the region.

WHAT'S IN THE ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan uses the RFSS goals and strategies framework to structure planned and new local government actions. Each of these five Action Plan goals has a chapter that includes:

Local Government Role – describes the current state of RFSS implementation in 2015 and the types of actions that have been completed since the adoption of the RFSS in 2011.

Planned Actions – identifies specific actions local governments are planning to undertake within the next five years. These actions are occurring on an ongoing basis, or are planned for the next 3-5 years. The planned actions were identified by local government staff for their own jurisdictions. *These planned actions have been previously considered and approved by local government decision-makers.* The list of actions represents a 'snapshot' in time, is forward looking and therefore does not include completed actions and may not be fully comprehensive. The Action Plan is intended as a "living resource" that is flexible and adaptable: it will be updated as local governments complete new actions, or choose to submit new planned actions that weren't initially identified. This approach supports regular updates to the Action Plan.

¹ As noted in the RFSS: "Agricultural extension encompasses a wide range of scientific, technical, marketing and other business support for agricultural producers and is usually provided by a government agency or university."

New Collaborative Actions for Local Governments –

identifies actions to address the current gaps in RFSS implementation, many which can be achieved by aligning efforts among local governments. These new actions form the basis for collaborative implementation of the Action Plan. *These recommended actions have not yet been endorsed by local government decision-makers.* There are two types of collaborative recommendations:

- New actions that harness the collaborative potential of local government to jointly address the identified gaps in the RFSS; and
- Expansion of practices currently underway in one or more jurisdictions. These are initiatives that have the potential for broader application throughout the region.

Emerging Issues in the Regional Food System

The last section of the Action Plan addresses actions that were not included in the original scope of the RFSS, but that since its adoption, have become more prevalent throughout the region.

What's not in the Action Plan

It is important to acknowledge that local governments have already adopted, funded and implemented many programs and initiatives that support the regional food system. Past actions have contributed to the strength of the regional food system today, and have set the stage for the future actions identified in the Action Plan. As expressed in the figure below, **actions that have been completed since the adoption of the RFSS are not included in the Action Plan.**

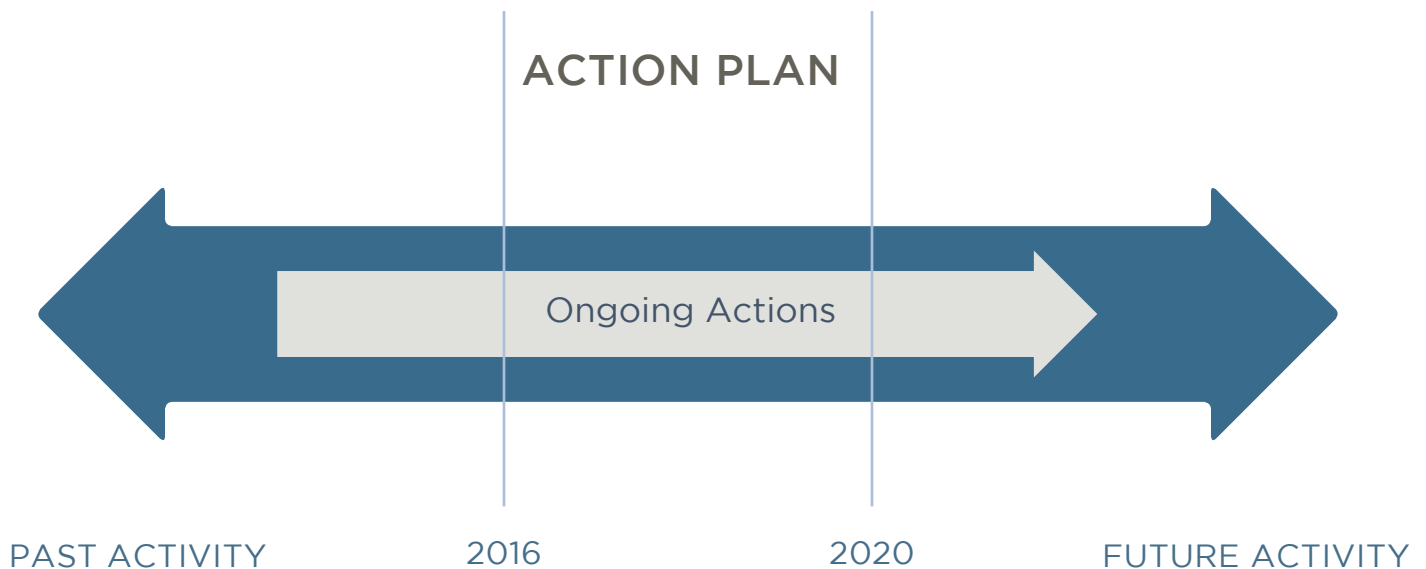


Figure 1. Scope of the Action Plan

GOAL 1

Increase Capacity to Produce Food Close to Home

This RFSS goal aims to expand the amount of food that can be commercially produced in the region. The five strategies under this goal address: agricultural land, fish habitat, avenues to invest in future farmers and the expansion of commercial food production in rural and urban areas. Protecting the agricultural land base is critical, but is only the first step – equally important is enabling farmers to operate a viable business and the use of agricultural lands for food production.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROLE

Local governments are strongly engaged in responding to Goal 1 through policy and regulations for managing land use issues within their jurisdictions. Agricultural municipalities and Metro Vancouver support the Agricultural Land Commission by protecting the region’s agricultural land base. There are also ongoing efforts to expand the region’s food production capacity both in rural and urban areas.

Since the adoption of the RFSS, local governments have undertaken actions such as:

- **protecting** agricultural land through the implementation of *Metro 2040*, including the policy limiting sewer connections on *Metro 2040* Agricultural and Rural designated lands, yet significant effort is spent

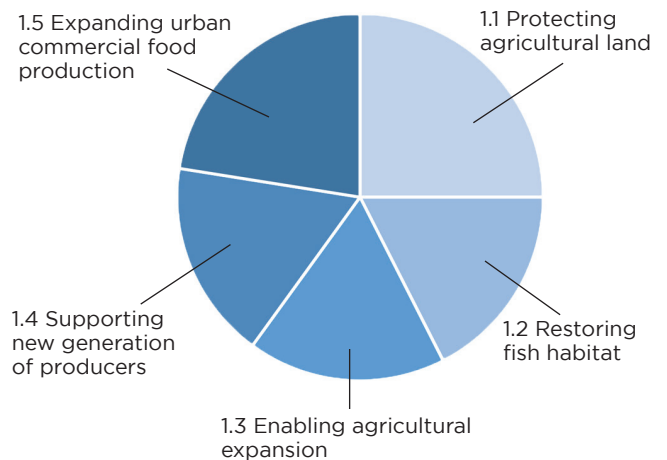
addressing the everyday threats of non-farm use on agricultural lands.

- **adopting** guidelines to restore and enhance fish habitat;
- **investigating** options to increase actively farmed land and discourage non-farm uses in the ALR;
- **continuing** to address the deposition of illegal fill on farmland through municipal bylaws and enforcement activities;
- **investing** in irrigation and drainage infrastructure, at a cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars, to enable farmers to maintain expand food production in the ALR; and
- **continuing** to seek ways to facilitate commercial food production in urban areas.

PLANNED ACTIONS

Local governments identified 40 planned actions for the next five years to advance implementation of Goal 1. These planned actions include a mix of short- and medium-term and ongoing initiatives. The chart below illustrates the distribution of the actions. Due to the combined efforts of the regional district, agricultural and other municipalities, most of the activity is evenly distributed among the five RFSS strategies. The distribution of actions by RFSS strategy is illustrated in the following chart.

Goal 1: Planned Actions (2016–2020)



1.1 PROTECT AGRICULTURAL LAND FOR FOOD PRODUCTION

Local governments continue to protect the region's farmland in support of the provincial Agricultural Land Reserve.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Respond to proposed new transportation and other infrastructure to minimize or mitigate the loss of agricultural land or capability	Delta, Richmond, Metro Vancouver	
Ensure zoning and farm bylaws are consistent with the provincial "Guide for Bylaw Development in Farming Areas"	Langley Township, Port Coquitlam, Richmond	
Address truck parking on agricultural land by investigating the feasibility of designated parking areas	Surrey	
Conduct research and implement Farm Home Plate regulations	Surrey	
Advocate for the preservation and enhancement of the ALR for food production	Metro Vancouver, Vancouver	
Reduce and prevent damage or erosion of the ALR by non-farm uses to support production and economic development in the agricultural sector	Burnaby, Richmond, Surrey	
Lead a pilot project to seek preventative solutions to illegal fill deposition on farmland in partnership with municipalities		Metro Vancouver
Partner with the Ministry of Agriculture to update the Regional Agricultural Land Use Inventory with participation from member municipalities	Metro Vancouver	
Represent regional interests in regulatory and policy changes to provincial legislation and federal development proposals impacting agriculture	Metro Vancouver	
Continue to work to minimize and mitigate the recreation / agricultural interface impacts along the Boundary Bay dyke	Delta	

1.2 RESTORE FISH HABITAT AND PROTECT SUSTAINABLE SOURCES OF SEAFOOD

Protecting, restoring and enhancing fish habitat is essential to sustaining commercial fisheries as well as protecting salmon for community and ceremonial use by First Nations. These actions represent only a small component of the broader aim to support sustainable sources of fish and seafood. Most local governments with fish-bearing streams recognize the multiple values associated with protecting fish habitat and are actively involved in streamside enhancement projects.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Restore and enhance riparian and fish habitat, including partnering with community organizations	All local governments	
Host, fund and in-kind support for celebratory and educational public events drawing attention to importance of fish habitat	All local governments	
Implement Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) guidelines and watercourse protection regulations to protect fish bearing streams	Burnaby, Maple Ridge, New Westminister, Port Moody	
Develop new Riparian Area Development permit Guidelines to protect fish bearing streams	Surrey	New Westminister
Maintain fish programs for Capilano smolt trap and truck program to transport salmonid populations around Cleveland Dam	Metro Vancouver	
Establish a fish migration & capture facilities (e.g. at Metro Vancouver new proposed hydroelectric facility at Cleveland Dam; sites in Maple Ridge)		Maple Ridge, Metro Vancouver
Establish, support or maintain fish hatcheries	Maple Ridge, Metro Vancouver, Port Moody, Surrey	

1.3 ENABLE EXPANSION OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Local governments have an interest in expanding commercial food production. Agricultural municipalities continue to invest in irrigation, drainage and other infrastructure projects and advance their agricultural plans, while many urban municipalities are supporting research to expand local food production on small lots.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Support, through financial or other means, the Kwantlen Polytechnic University's Southwest BC Bio-Region Food System Design Project that will explore the economic, environmental stewardship and food self-reliance of a bio-regional food system	Burnaby, Delta, Langley City, Langley Township, Maple Ridge, Metro Vancouver New Westminister, North Vancouver City, North Vancouver District, Pitt Meadows, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Richmond, Tsawwassen First Nation, Vancouver, White Rock	
Continue to improve water infrastructure/drainage upgrades including activities such as dyke and pump upgrades and maintaining ditch conveyance	Burnaby, Delta, Pitt Meadows, Richmond, Surrey	
Implement Farm Protection Development Permit guidelines	Surrey	
Develop road design criteria for farmland		Surrey
Complete and implement Integrated Stormwater Management Plans to minimize any stormwater increases to farmland	Surrey	New Westminister
Advance the Garden City Lands Legacy Landscape Plan that focuses on detailed design and on-site water management to enable farming activity		Richmond
Investigate farm property tax policies to identify options to encourage actively farmed land and discourage non-farm use of the ALR		Metro Vancouver

1.4 INVEST IN A NEW GENERATION OF FOOD PRODUCERS

A major barrier for new producers in starting a farm business is gaining access to agricultural land and capital. Three Agricultural municipalities identified taking a direct role in encouraging new farms by putting resources into establishing incubator farms and supporting business and skills training.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Support the Langley Sustainable Agriculture Foundation to host workshops to assist new farmers		Langley Township
Advance the Gardens Agricultural Park Plan for incubator farms and community gardens		Richmond
Advance the Garden City Lands Legacy Landscape Plan through the development of the Agricultural Management Strategy using a "one farm, multiple farmers" approach		Richmond
Create a Virtual Incubator Farm Project Online system to connect potential farmers with agri-related resources	Surrey	
Establish Agri-business Financial Literacy Program to provide accredited ag-business financial training for the John Volken Academy BioPod students	Surrey	
Implement the Colebrook Park Master Plan that aims to create a leasing program for incubator farms on the agricultural land		Surrey
Host the Kwantlen Polytechnic University's Farm School initiative		Tsawwassen First Nation

1.5 EXPAND URBAN COMMERCIAL FOOD PRODUCTION IN URBAN AREAS

Most municipalities support increased commercial food production in urban areas.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Zoning and regulatory updates to further encourage agricultural production and allow urban farming		Burnaby, New Westminster, Vancouver
Secure tenure for Loutet Farm in Loutet Park and support the establishment of a new farm in the Sutherland Schoolyard	North Vancouver City	
Establish the Bio-Pod Initiative which is an Agricultural Training and Research Demonstration Greenhouse		Surrey
Support an Ag-Research Program to develop agri-technology and crop science R&D for the commercial greenhouse industry		Surrey
Support research and development into new food production methods / models		Surrey, Vancouver
Establish a Research and demonstration training facility		Surrey
Create policy to enable commercial food production in the City including a farming business license		Vancouver
Increase the number of urban farms in Vancouver from 17 to 35 by the year 2020 (backyard farms to mid-scale operations)		Vancouver
Facilitate development of Klee Wyck commercial food production facility through business licensing and other in-kind support		West Vancouver

COLLABORATIVE ACTIONS

Local government responses to Goal 1 suggest that although there is significant activity across the region to protect agricultural land and expand commercial agricultural production, some gaps exist that can be addressed by increased collaboration among municipalities and Metro Vancouver, including:

- advocating for provincial and federal funding to support irrigation and drainage infrastructure necessary to maintain and expand food production in the Agricultural Land Reserve, especially in the face of climate change; and
- supporting the ability of new farmers to access land and start a farm business.

The recommended actions to collaboratively address these gaps are:

New Actions	Agency	Timeline
1. Collectively advocate to senior governments for funding programs to expand investments in irrigation and drainage infrastructure necessary to adapt to climate change	Metro Vancouver and Agricultural municipalities	1-3 years
2. Investigate the feasibility and desirability of a regional land trust to increase access to agricultural land	Metro Vancouver and Agricultural municipalities	1-3 years
3. Expand municipal involvement in programs that enable new farmers to start a business such as Surrey's Virtual Incubator Farm Project Online system	All local governments	years

GOAL 2

Improve the Financial Viability of the Food Sector

The aim of RFSS Goal 2 is to strengthen economic prosperity for farmers and the food industry by creating opportunities to distribute and sell primary and value-added products to residents and institutions. The five strategies under this goal address facilities for processing and distribution, institutional food procurement policies, direct marketing, a collaborative approach to marketing, as well as a review of government policies and programs.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROLE

Actions to support the financial viability of the agri-food sector often fall beyond the sphere of local government, yet there is a role to enable the expansion of the local food businesses. This is achieved by considering ways to increase private investment and procurement by public institutions, while also ensuring that existing policies, programs and regulations help foster local food activities. Metro Vancouver has less of a direct role in Goal 2, but can promote the agri-food sector’s contribution to the regional economy.

Since the adoption of the RFSS, local governments have undertaken actions such as:

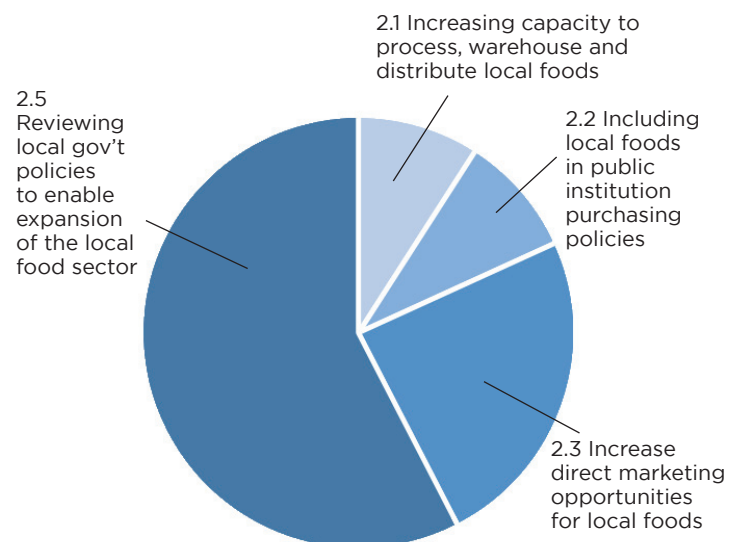
- **reviewing** their procurement policies and investigating ways to include local food in purchasing agreements where appropriate;

- **expanding** efforts to support the direct marketing of local foods by enabling farmers markets through leases on city owned lands, providing access to utilities and municipal services, and improving signage and promotion of farm tours and events; and
- **developing** plans to address food related issues and reviewing regulations, bylaws and policies to remove obstacles and to create a more enabling business environment for local food enterprises.

PLANNED ACTIONS

Local governments identified 33 actions that will be undertaken over the next five years to advance Goal 2 implementation. The most common activities planned are to increase direct marketing opportunities and to review and align government policies and programs. Few local government actions are planned to increase capacity to process and distribute local food or leverage the purchasing policies of public institutions. Creating value chains of collaborative networks among industry stakeholders is not addressed as it is largely outside the scope of local government jurisdiction. The distribution of planned actions by RFSS strategy is illustrated in the following chart.

Goal 2: Planned Actions (2016–2020)



* there are no actions currently identified for Strategy 2.4

2.1 INCREASE THE CAPACITY TO PROCESS, WAREHOUSE AND DISTRIBUTE LOCAL FOODS

A few municipalities have identified actions to address the lack of facilities for processing and distributing locally produced food.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Conduct or fund a food hub feasibility study		Langley Township, Richmond, Vancouver
Examine the feasibility of creating farming co-ops and Surrey-based wholesaling		Surrey
Identify opportunities for multi-purpose structures and other infrastructure to be used for farmers markets and other community events		Vancouver

2.2 INCLUDE LOCAL FOODS IN THE PURCHASING POLICIES OF LARGE PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

A number of municipalities have adopted a 'buy local' policy to increase the purchasing of local foods by public institutions. However, experience to date suggests there may be challenges to overcome, including the challenge of defining 'local food', and the increase in scope to address nutritious food, sustainability and other considerations as part of the process.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Review purchasing agreements and integrate local food options where appropriate	Burnaby, Pitt Meadows	
Explore opportunities for mobile food business, schools and city facilities to increase local food purchases	Vancouver	
Measure the percentage of local food procured by the city and make recommendations for an appropriate target		Vancouver

2.3 INCREASE DIRECT MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL FOODS

Most municipalities support direct marketing of local foods through farmers' markets, farm tours, tourism, and other education activities within their communities.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Ensure local zoning / regulations align with liquor sale permits at farmers markets		New Westminister, Port Coquitlam
Provide in-kind support or direct incentives for farmers' markets (e.g. space, infrastructure, adverting, discounted leases)	Burnaby, Coquitlam, Delta, Maple Ridge, New Westminister, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Richmond, Surrey, Vancouver, White Rock	
Develop and promote local farm tours and agri-tourism opportunities	Langley Township, Richmond	Burnaby, Surrey
Provide direct and in-kind support to facilitate farm signage on municipal boulevards to inform the public of local farms and food sales	Delta	
Explore local street vending opportunities through an existing pilot program, or by adopting pilot program policy		New Westminister, Richmond
Support alternative food / retail distribution models including Community Supported Agriculture programs and fresh food deliveries to recreation and civic facilities	New Westminister	Surrey, Vancouver
Explore farm gate sales for urban farms		Vancouver
Support day trips to agri-food tourism destinations that encourage the purchase of local food products	White Rock	

2.4 FURTHER DEVELOP VALUE CHAINS WITHIN THE FOOD SECTOR

There is a limited role for local governments in developing connections between food businesses.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
No actions identified by local governments		

2.5 REVIEW GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS TO ENSURE THEY ENABLE THE EXPANSION OF THE LOCAL FOOD SECTOR

Municipalities across the region are making a concerted effort to review and align policies to be deliberately supportive of businesses producing and distributing local food. Equally important, many municipalities are also developing new environmental, economic and community plans and strategies that incorporate agriculture and food issues, an approach commonly referred to as adding a “food lens”.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Bylaws and regulatory updates:		
Review zoning bylaws to expand support for local food		Anmore, New Westminster, Surrey
Explore regulatory revisions to allow urban agriculture / ‘market food gardening’ in residential areas		New Westminster
Update regulations to support local craft brewing and distilling		Coquitlam, New Westminster, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody
Amend / promote bylaw changes that support bee keeping in some residential and other zones		Maple Ridge, North Vancouver District, Surrey
Prepare draft Development Permit Application Sustainability Checklist that includes a food sustainability category		New Westminster, North Vancouver City
Review current policies for protecting agricultural lands		North Vancouver District
Amend the Procedure Bylaw to permit staff authority to issue Flood Hazard Lands Development Permits in ALR	Surrey	
Host staff education activities to ensure consistent implementation of agricultural legislation		Surrey
Develop or incorporate food policy into plans:		
Explore developing a community based food strategy		Burnaby, New Westminster
Finalize and approve Environmental Sustainability Strategy which includes a food systems theme		Burnaby
Conduct an Economic Sustainability Strategy that will include promoting Delta’s rural character and farmland		Delta
Set short term goals for local food activity in the Urban Agriculture & Food Security Action Plan and revise policies/regulations as needed		North Vancouver City
Provide funds to support development of a business case for integrating local food into municipal plans and policies and develop a food policy		North Vancouver District
Adopt / implement a Food Charter and fund organizations to assist staff to integrate a food lens into municipal policies and processes	North Vancouver City	New Westminster, North Vancouver District
Include policies for new development that encourages on-site green space, community gardens and urban agriculture in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan		Port Moody
Update the Sustainability Charter to guide development and incorporate decisions related to agricultural production and access to food	Surrey	

Prepare the West Clayton and Grandview Neighbourhood Concept Plans to support the protection of agricultural land		Surrey
Update Official Community Plan to include or revise food security and related policies		New Westminster, West Vancouver, White Rock
Apply a 'food systems lens' to planning processes by creating a food system checklist to assist in reviewing development applications, rezoning and/or community plans and a toolkit to help development applicants incorporate food system elements in new developments		Vancouver

COLLABORATIVE ACTIONS

Local government responses to Goal 2 reflect that there is only a minor role in directly supporting value-added processing of primary agricultural products, with the exception of some engagement with implementing provincial regulatory requirements. Other gaps in implementing this goal include:

- Identifying avenues to increase capacity for local food processing/ storage both within the Agricultural Land Reserve and in Urban Centres;
- Increasing effort to share information and lessons learned from existing local food purchasing policies, practices and investigations;
- Increasing effort to explicitly consider impacts on the regional food system when embarking on other local government planning processes (referred to as a *food lens*); and
- Building capacity to take a proactive role in supporting local food availability by advocating to the private sector about the importance of agricultural viability when engaging with businesses on other issues.

The recommended actions to collaboratively address these gaps are:

New Actions	Agency	Timeline
1. Develop policies to expand processing, storage and distribution of local food (e.g. revitalization tax exemptions)	All local governments	1-3 years
2. Share information on the potential opportunities to increase local food purchasing strategies	All local governments	1-3 years
3. Profile and incorporate agri-food business ventures into regional and municipal economic development plans	Metro Vancouver and Agricultural municipalities	3-5 years
4. Convene bulk food purchasers to explore how to increase local food purchasing	Metro Vancouver to facilitate with participation from all local governments	1-3 years

GOAL 3

People Make Healthy and Sustainable Food Choices

RFSS Goal 3 aims to help citizens build knowledge and skills around local food, healthy eating and the connection to sustainability. Four strategies address supporting healthy food choices, promoting local food, education and celebrating our international cuisines. A key dimension lies in increasing awareness of the opportunities to promote the local food.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROLE

Local government has a role in raising awareness about local, nutritious food and why it is important to communities. This role is often delivered through public education and partnerships with civil society groups and health authorities. Municipalities are connecting residents to fresh, locally grown products through, outreach, tourism and other community events. They also facilitate skills development opportunities for residents and for vulnerable populations through social service providers. Metro Vancouver has developed avenues to engage students and youth through curriculum development, fostering experiential learning, and teacher training.

Since the adoption of the RFSS, local governments have undertaken actions such as:

- **ongoing** outreach and educational activities within their communities including hosting annual events;

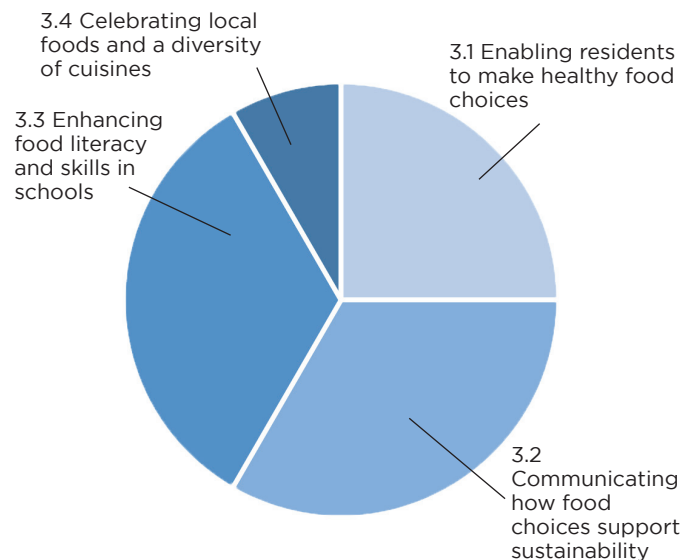
- **initiating** a program to increase student capacity to manage and expand teaching gardens, and supporting agricultural-related content and programming at the local museum; and
- **developing** new curriculum resources to support K-12 teachers and students on integrating ‘food systems’ thinking into the classroom.

Goal 3 reflects the supportive role local governments often play in funding or supporting non-governmental organizations, community groups, and educational institutions to increase knowledge, build capacity and make the community connections. Health agencies and civil society groups often take the lead on work in this realm. There may be opportunities for collaboration with health agencies to minimize overlap with local government efforts.

PLANNED ACTIONS

Local governments identified 24 actions that will be undertaken over the next five years to advance implementation of Goal 3. The majority of these actions are ongoing. The strategy receiving the most attention for local governments is the celebration of local food, followed by planned actions related to education. The distribution of actions among the four RFSS strategies is illustrated in the following chart.

Goal 3: Planned Actions (2016–2020)



3.1 ENABLE RESIDENTS TO MAKE HEALTHY FOOD CHOICES

Some local governments are educating the public about healthy eating, but for the most part, social service providers and health authorities take on this role, sometimes in partnership with local governments.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Support the Golden Ears Feast that provides cooking education programs for parents of low income families and host an Educational Speakers Series	Maple Ridge	
Continue involvement in Table Matters that provides education, public engagement and community development	North Vancouver City, North Vancouver District	
Support the Tasty Connections Program and cooking classes that helps individuals prepare a diversity of nutritious meals	White Rock	
Develop partnerships with community groups and health authorities to deliver outreach and workshops on healthy eating and growing food	Burnaby, Metro Vancouver, New Westminster, North Vancouver District, Port Moody, Richmond, Surrey, Vancouver	
Provide workshops teaching people to grow their own food, reduce their waste and support their local wild edible ecology	Coquitlam, Langley Township, North Vancouver City, North Vancouver District,	
Develop an implementation strategy that supports the Blue Dot movement, which includes the right to eat nutritious food		New Westminster, Surrey

3.2 COMMUNICATE HOW FOOD CHOICES SUPPORT SUSTAINABILITY

Providing information about locally produced food is the most common local government practice to increase awareness about food choices and sustainability.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 years
Implement a communications strategy that explains the connection between sustainability and nourishment, as part of Environmental Sustainability Strategy		Burnaby
Help fund signage on farmland that identifies the crops being produced in the fields	Delta	Surrey
Promote local agriculture on the municipal website with information on local food event and markets	Delta, Richmond, Surrey, Vancouver	
Promote the 'True North Fraser' local food brand and agricultural experience	Maple Ridge	
Promote local farm tourism through Circle Farms Tours, a self-guided tour of local farms and food producers	Langley Township	
Prepare Surrey version of the Farm Fresh guide that highlights organic, u-pick and crop information on Surrey farms and support the Food for Thought Program that showcases farm and food producer information	Surrey	
Increase access to multi-lingual food resources, groups and information materials	New Westminster	Vancouver
Develop "School District #40 Healthy School Vision" with one of the pillars being food programs and supports	New Westminster	

3.3 ENHANCE FOOD LITERACY AND SKILLS IN SCHOOLS

There is a strong response to student and youth education from local governments.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
In kind-support to promote the Youth Connection School Learning Gardens Project to increase capacity of students to manage and expand school learning gardens at all 8 secondary schools	Burnaby	
Host and support education programs, including the Barn Kids Program that includes children in gardening and cooking food produced at Hawthorne Grove/Harris Barn	Delta	
Support the Neighbourhood Champions program “More peas please” that teaches children how to grow food	Maple Ridge	
Develop the Green Ambassadors program for high school students to apply what they learn at City events	Richmond	
Host the Stewart Farm Day Camp where children can experience what it's like to be a farmer, “Farmhand Fever”	Surrey	
Update and develop new K-12 resources to support teachers and students to become “Food Systems Thinkers and Leaders”	Metro Vancouver	
Collaborate with K-12 schools and partners to increase food literacy of students and/or parents	Metro Vancouver, New Westminister	
Integrate Food Systems Thinking literacy into Metro Vancouver School & Youth Leadership Programs – in support of actions for sustainable schools	Metro Vancouver	

3.4 CELEBRATE THE TASTE OF LOCAL FOODS AND THE DIVERSITY OF CUISINES

Municipalities plan to continue to host food and agriculture related festivals and events and provide funding to civil society groups to support awareness and community events.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Award agricultural awareness grants to non-profit organizations across the region	Metro Vancouver	
Host or partner on food related events and educational activities that celebrates food:		
Multiple Festivals (including funding)	Burnaby	
Harvest Fall Festival	Delta	
Seedy Saturday	Delta	
Aldergrove Festival Days	Langley Township	
Country Celebration in Campbell Valley Regional Park	Langley Township	
Fort Langley Cranberry Festival	Langley Township	
Country Fest and 4H clubs	Maple Ridge	
Golden Harvest event	Maple Ridge	
Front Yard Food Garden Contest	Maple Ridge	

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Heritage Apple Festival at Derby Reach Regional Park	Metro Vancouver	
Feast of the Fraser	New Westminster	
StrEAT Festival	New Westminster	
Queensborough Urban Fall Fair	New Westminster	
Family Fusion Dinner	New Westminster	
Day of the Honey Bee	North Vancouver City	
Shipyards Friday Night Market	North Vancouver City	
Fingerling Festival	Port Moody	
Chefs to Field	Richmond	
Garlic Festival	Richmond	
Cloverdale Rodeo	Surrey	
Surrey Ag-Info Week	Surrey	
Party for the Planet on Earth Day	Surrey	
Olde Harvest Festival at Stewart Farm	Surrey	
Harvest Fall Festival	Surrey	
Surrey Salmon Run	Surrey	
Taste White Rock	White Rock	

COLLABORATIVE ACTIONS

Local government responses to Goal 3 indicate that there are opportunities to more effectively:

- communicate the connection between food choices and sustainability; and
- coordinate consistent messaging and activities about the importance of local food to sustainability.

The recommended actions to collaboratively address these gaps are:

New Actions	Agency	Timeline
1. Develop a communication strategy with common messaging for local governments to educate residents about the connection between farmland, food security, climate change and sustainability	Metro Vancouver to facilitate with participation from all local governments	1-3 years
2. Collaborate with non-profit organizations, build on existing multi-lingual initiatives to develop and distribute information on sustainable and local food programs to new immigrants	Surrey to share resources with other local governments	1-3 years

GOAL 4

Everyone Has Access to Healthy, Culturally Diverse & Affordable Food

The aim of RFSS Goal 4 is to address some of the challenges of food insecurity, given that some residents do not have reliable access to sufficient quantities of nutritious, culturally appropriate food. Barriers to food access can be rooted in physical, social or economic inequities; with ongoing growth pressures and future impacts from climate change, access to food may become more challenging, and not just for vulnerable populations. This goal encompasses some of the broader dimensions of an equitable food system, including working to increase the availability of healthy and nutritious food, as well as access to this food for all residents. It also addresses some of the indirect social benefits (e.g. health, place-making, education, community-building) that accompany the more direct economic and nutrition dividends of urban agriculture. The three strategies target access for those most vulnerable to food insecurity, urban agriculture and the necessity to recover nutritious food.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROLE

Local governments are taking a strong leadership role in ensuring equitable access to nutritious food by delivering programs, financing assets, and supporting outreach to vulnerable populations. Much has been achieved by working closely with community organizations, funding initiatives and by helping these groups navigate regulatory processes. Of all the RFSS goals, Goal 4 has the strongest local government response in terms of planned actions.

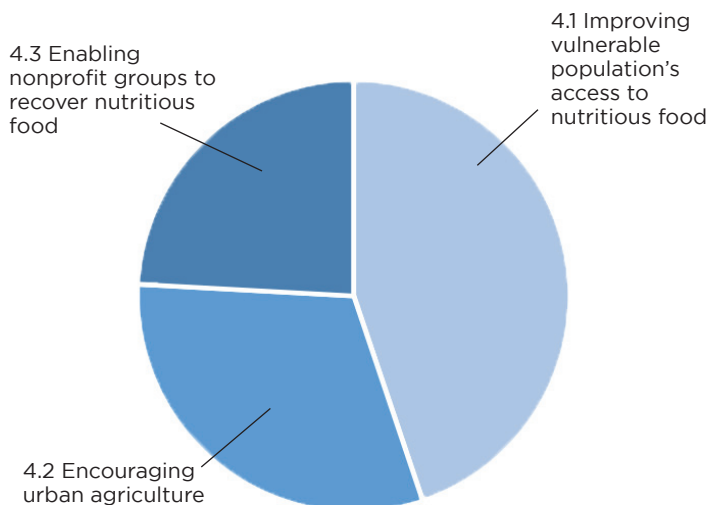
Examples of actions completed since the adoption of the RFSS include:

- **initiating** pilot projects to allow residential bee keeping (apiculture) and urban chickens in selected areas and under specific circumstances;
- **completing** research on how to improve food security in social housing sites;
- **supporting** programs to facilitate food access for vulnerable populations; and
- **creating** community gardens for residents, with plans for continuing to add new gardens.

PLANNED ACTIONS

Local governments identified 29 planned actions to be undertaken over the next five years to advance Goal 4 implementation. Although the majority of these actions focus on urban agriculture, more than a third seek to improve vulnerable populations’ access to food. The distribution of actions by RFSS strategy is illustrated in the following chart.

Goal 4: Planned Actions (2016–2020)



4.1 IMPROVE ACCESS TO NUTRITIOUS FOOD AMONG VULNERABLE GROUPS

Many municipalities have existing programs or partnerships with community associations to provide food access to vulnerable populations, by helping overcome physical (e.g. location), socio-cultural (e.g. culturally appropriate or acceptable food) or economic (e.g. financial capacity) barriers.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Support hosting of the bi-annual Empty Bowls Fundraising Gala to raise money for food programs	Burnaby	
Support education, skill building and cooking activities for people most vulnerable to food insecurity	Burnaby, Langley Township, New Westminster, Richmond	Surrey
Offer discounted nutritious meals for seniors, immigrant or refugee families	Burnaby, Langley City, Langley Township, New Westminster, Richmond, Surrey, White Rock	
Provide grants to social service agencies to help increase the nutritional quality of meals served	Burnaby, Langley Township, Maple Ridge, New Westminster, North Vancouver City, North Vancouver District, Port Coquitlam, Richmond, Surrey	
Investigate options for increasing access to nutritious food through mobile produce stands or food hubs with the Greater Vancouver Food Bank Society		Burnaby, New Westminster
Support trips to local farms for refugee families to enable direct access to fresh, local food and compile information on low cost sources of food	Surrey	
Improve access to information on participating in community gardens for under-represented ethno-cultural groups	Vancouver	
Analyze current opportunities and challenges facing community kitchens and compile an inventory of under-utilized kitchens		Vancouver
Increase the number of community food markets in Vancouver from 4 to 15 by 2020		Vancouver
Offer grocery shopping support programs for seniors and persons with disabilities	Burnaby, New Westminster	
Encourage integration of community food markets into community and non-profit organization's programming as part of nutritious food options for youth and families	Vancouver	
Update Community Poverty Reduction Strategy to include policies related to poverty reduction and food security		New Westminster
Develop an interactive asset map in the most commonly spoken languages, which includes information on food security and meal programs		New Westminster

4.2 ENCOURAGE URBAN AGRICULTURE

Urban agriculture is being pursued by municipalities across the region. While a substantial amount of municipal effort goes toward improving the availability of community gardens for residents, or adding new gardens, there is a wide array of other activities planned to encourage urban agriculture and connect residents with the social benefits of local food.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Encourage, via in-kind support, backyard sharing programs that match homeowners with residents looking for gardening space	Burnaby, North Vancouver City	New Westminister
Continue outreach and launch pilot projects to test the feasibility of permitting new types of urban agriculture (e.g. bee keeping, backyard chickens, container gardening, fruit bearing trees on public land)	Port Moody, Vancouver	New Westminister, Surrey
Review development applications for opportunities to incorporate urban agriculture activities	Burnaby, New Westminister, North Vancouver City, North Vancouver District, Port Moody, Vancouver	
Host annual programs celebrating gardening and urban agriculture	Delta, Maple Ridge	
Establish a new Langley Urban Agriculture Demonstration Project		Langley City
Support the Maple Ridge Garden Club	Maple Ridge	
Community gardens:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and improve the approval process for community gardens 		New Westminister, Surrey
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fund, support or maintain residents' access to community gardens 	All local governments	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish new community gardens, and in some circumstances with an intent to improve physical access (e.g. through universal design) 		New Westminister, North Vancouver District, Richmond, Surrey, Vancouver, West Vancouver

4.3 ENABLE NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS TO RECOVER NUTRITIOUS FOOD

Food recovery efforts are being led by urban municipalities and Metro Vancouver, although much of the future work requires better coordination among all levels of government, health agencies and civil society groups.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Continue to support the “Food Runners” pilot project at two selected sites, and investigate opportunities for pilot project expansion	Burnaby	
Fund the “Scaling Up Food Rescue Project” that encourages partnerships between potential donors and recipients (social agencies)		North Vancouver City, North Vancouver District
Explore pilot food recovery programs and initiatives to channel surplus nutritious food to people		New Westminister, Vancouver
Participate in promotion of food recovery guidelines with the BC Centre for Disease Control		Metro Vancouver
Explore tax incentives to support food recovery		Metro Vancouver
Educate the public on how to reduce unnecessary discards of edible food		Metro Vancouver
Form partnership with the Local Health Authority, School District, Tsleil-Waututh Nation and community groups to explore ways to feed hungry children at school with recovered food donated by food retailers		North Vancouver District

COLLABORATIVE ACTIONS

While there is some activity underway across the region, specific aspects of food insecurity require further attention from local governments. Gaps in implementing this goal include:

- a lack of coordination among all levels of government, the private sector and civil society groups to respond to poverty and increasing numbers of residents that are reliant on food banks and social services for nutritious food; and
- actions in response to opportunities for the recovery of nutritious and edible food.

The recommended actions to collaboratively address these gaps identified are:

New Actions	Agency	Timeline
1. Promote the Food Donation Guidelines (developed by BC Centre for Disease Control and other partners), for instance, to food distribution and food service sectors through municipal and regional business correspondence and events	All local governments	1-3 years
2. Draw from Surrey's experience to create and share information on culturally relevant local food availability for refugee and new immigrants	All local governments	1-3 years
3. Draw from Vancouver's study on community kitchens to identify opportunities and challenges for expanding food preparation and processing in under-utilized kitchens	All local governments	1-3 years

GOAL 5

A Food System Consistent with Ecological Health

RFSS Goal 5 focuses on actions that contribute to sustaining our natural systems and resources and encouraging better land stewardship. The four strategies in this goal address ecosystem goods and services, food and packaging waste, best management practices and adaptation to climate change. A systems approach ensures environmental impacts are minimized across all functions of the regional food system from production to distribution, consumption and waste management.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROLE

Local governments are responding to this goal through programs and projects aimed at protecting and enhancing wildlife habitat, pollination, and soil quality, while concurrently reducing impacts from waste, pesticides, and water and air contaminants. Unlike other goals, most actions are being undertaken directly by local governments with less involvement of community organizations and other groups. Municipalities are vigilant in protecting ecological assets and the Agricultural municipalities have shown leadership by promoting best management practices on agricultural land. Metro Vancouver has a leadership role in addressing food waste across the region.

Since the adoption of the RFSS, local governments have undertaken actions such as:

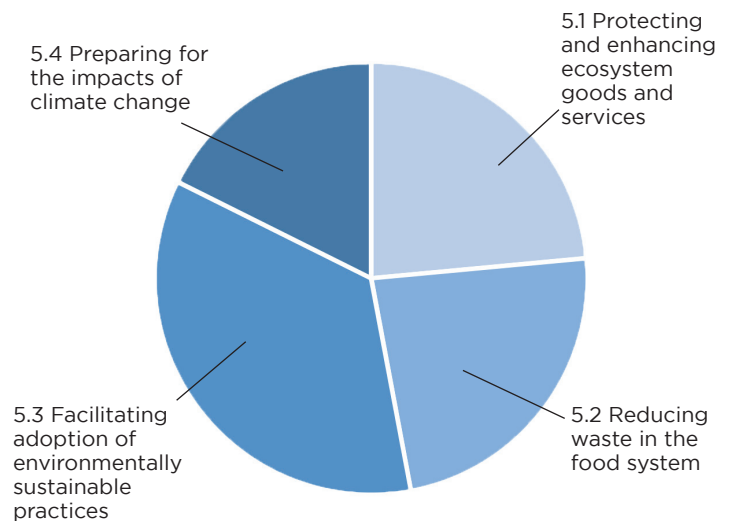
- **supporting** pollinator species by encouraging habitat enhancement projects;

- **developing** Integrated Stormwater Management Plans to manage water flowing from urban areas and the impact on aquatic and terrestrial species, vegetation manage, and groundwater recharge;
- **educating** residents and businesses about the disposal ban on food wastes through media campaigns and advising on ways reduce organics and food waste as part of the regional Organic Waste Ban;
- **launching** initiatives in support of Best Management Practices for stream crossings, and land management for horse and small-lot owners; and
- **developing** climate change adaptation strategies that considers impacts on local food production.

PLANNED ACTIONS

Local governments identified 34 planned actions to be undertaken over the next five years to advance implementation of Goal 5. Half of the actions are evenly split among protecting ecosystems and reducing waste, and approximately a third of all actions are focused on minimizing the environmental impacts of development and business activities. The distribution of actions by RFSS strategy is illustrated in the following chart.

Goal 5: Planned Actions (2016–2020)



5.1 PROTECT AND ENHANCE ECOSYSTEM GOODS AND SERVICES

Local governments continue to protect and enhance wildlife habitat, undertake flood protection, and support pollination and other ecological services.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Continue significant dyke upgrades by maintaining flood protection through pump stations, flood boxes, river and shoreline dykes	Burnaby, New Westminster	
New policies, plans and programs to protect eco-system health including investigating avenues for connecting existing high value habitat areas with habitat corridors		Burnaby, New Westminster
Support the Day at the Farm event hosted by the Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust, an organization that promotes the protection of migratory bird habitat through soil conservation and farm practices	Delta	
Implement a pilot Ecological Services Initiative for three years		Langley Township
Create and enhance pollinator habitat through research, new policies and on-the ground projects		Metro Vancouver, North Vancouver City, North Vancouver District, Richmond, Surrey
Implement the Winter Crop Cover Program as part of the snow geese management program	Richmond	
Engage agriculture representatives in the Biodiversity Farm Trust regarding dykes and waterways		Surrey
Adopt an Urban Forest Management Strategy with a focus on food systems		New Westminster

5.2 REDUCE WASTE IN THE FOOD SYSTEM

As waste management is part of Metro Vancouver's mandate, the regional district has a leading role in directing research, education and awareness on food waste, as well as developing initiatives to support municipal efforts in reducing organic waste and food packaging in their communities.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Develop a position statement on residential & commercial garburators including commercial digesters and macerators		Metro Vancouver
Develop a new bylaw for fermentation operations (grains/fruits, breweries, wineries and distilleries) discharging to the sewer system		Metro Vancouver
Promote the use of available commercial programs, to enable restaurants to measure, and then reduce food waste by improving food purchasing, storage and preparation methods		Metro Vancouver
Develop outreach programs for residential and commercial operations to keep grease out of the sewer		Metro Vancouver
Participate in the National Zero Waste Council's food working group in revising food labelling (best before/use buy/sell by dates)		Metro Vancouver
Implement a 3-year "Love Food Hate Waste" campaign to help residents reduce food waste through menu planning, buying local and seasonal foods		Metro Vancouver
Provide equipment and/or programming support for residents and schools to support organics collection and composting	Langley Township, New Westminster, North Vancouver District	
Support community composting education programs	Langley Township, New Westminster	

5.3 FACILITATE ADOPTION OF ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

Local governments are integrating best management practices into their plans and policies and are educating the public on ways to reduce water consumption, and air and other contaminants in the environment.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Minimize environmental impacts from pesticides through Integrated Pest Management educational programs	Burnaby, Richmond	Surrey, Metro Vancouver
Provide workshops for residents on natural pest control and composting	Burnaby, Delta, Langley Township, Richmond	
Develop a Stream Crossing Guide and promote a Land Management Guide for agricultural landowners demonstrating best management practices		Langley Township
Promote Environmental Farm Plan Workshops organized by community associations to increase awareness of the Environmental Farm Plan program	Langley Township	
Identify opportunities through community energy planning to address transportation emissions from imported food		North Vancouver District
Explore parks programming around native plant foraging for edible and medicinal plants		North Vancouver District
Identify opportunities for recycling greywater and reducing water use for parks, gardens and farms	North Vancouver District	Pitt Meadows
Promote the Council resolution to ban genetically modified crops	Richmond	
Promote the Seed Sale and Exchange to increase plantings of heritage vegetable, flower and herb seeds, fruit trees and nursery plants	Surrey	
Create healthy soil guidelines for urban farms		Vancouver
Determine whether to exempt pest management from the proposed outdoor burning regulation		Metro Vancouver
Conduct outreach to small & medium size enterprises to reduce energy and GHG emissions from food processors, wholesalers, and retailers		Metro Vancouver

5.4 PREPARE FOR THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Agriculture is at the forefront of experiencing impacts from climate change and therefore there are many direct actions to better understand and mitigate the risks to the region's food producing lands and the agricultural sector.

Planned Actions	Agency Timeline	
	Ongoing	Next 5 Years
Develop climate change adaptation strategies for the agricultural community, share results of an agro-economic flood study, support a flood preparedness toolkit and research into drainage and salinity implications for soil-based farms		Delta
Complete an agricultural communication strategy that will raise awareness of the changing climate and local food production		Delta
Include urban agriculture considerations as part of the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy		New Westminister, North Vancouver District
Refurbish old pump stations to increase capacity, improve the electrical system, and adding new pump stations		Pitt Meadows
Plan to accommodate up to 1metre of sea level rise by 2100	Richmond	
Continue to implement the Serpentine and Nicomekl Lowland Flood Control Strategy	Surrey	

COLLABORATIVE ACTIONS

Local government responses to Goal 5 reveal that the region is starting to formally recognize the ecological services that agricultural lands provide, in addition to the ecological benefits derived from the natural environment. Gaps identified in responding to Goal 5 include:

- recognition of the range of benefits provided by ecological goods and services (such as water, purification, climate regulation and nutrient cycling); and
- awareness and actions to prepare for the impacts of climate change on local food production and ecosystem services in urban environments.

The recommended actions to collaboratively address these gaps are:

New Actions	Agency	Timeline
1. Collaborate with provincial agencies to prepare a regional agriculture climate adaptation strategy for the Metro Vancouver region	Metro Vancouver and Agricultural municipalities	3-5 years

IMPLEMENTATION

EMERGING ISSUES IN THE REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM

The planned actions identified by local governments demonstrate how each of the RFSS goals is being addressed and where further action is warranted. However, in developing the Action Plan, new food system issues emerged that, although not part of the RFSS, are becoming increasingly important for local governments.

1. Food access in emergency planning

Local government is responding to legislative requirements to undertake emergency management planning. These efforts help address and mitigate some of the risks associated with natural disasters or the impacts of climate change. In many cases, emergency plans lack process and protocols to address food related issues such as the availability of food in an emergency and food safety risks. This disconnect appears to be more pronounced in non-agricultural municipalities, although agricultural municipalities also have an opportunity to broaden the focus of emergency planning to more explicitly consider food insecurity implications (e.g. access to food, transportation and supply chain disruptions, etc.) in emergency plans and procedures.

New Action	Agency	Timeline
1. Identify how food security and emergency food issues are being addressed in each local government's emergency management plans and processes	All local governments	1-3 years

2. Recognizing the linkages among poverty, health and food

The RFSS recognizes some aspects of food insecurity by focusing on improved access to food for vulnerable populations, and on supporting community groups to recover nutritious food. Since RFSS adoption in 2011, and with input from health authorities and municipal social planners, a better understanding of food insecurity has emerged. In recognition of the key role that income plays on food insecurity and health outcomes, there is a need to build understanding of, and advocate for, more supportive policies to address the interconnection of social planning and food system planning throughout the region.

New Action	Agency	Timeline
2. Recommend policies and programs to address health outcomes of poverty and food insecurity to senior governments	All local governments	1-3 years

3. Food safety and training

The RFSS discusses the importance of food safety, and although it acknowledges the value of further investment in skills and competency in this area, it does not identify actions to address the issue. Improved knowledge of food safety among participants is critical to ensuring consumer assurance that local foods -whether from community initiatives or commercial producers- are safe. While provincial and federal agencies generally maintain responsibility for food safety, local governments have an opportunity to work with stakeholders to ensure appropriate food safety considerations underpin the ongoing growth of community and commercial food production.

New Action	Agency	Timeline
3. Work with Health Authorities, industry and appropriate agencies to ensure food safety is considered in commercial and community food production.	All local governments	1-3 years

FACILITATING ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The Action Plan is intended to be a resource for local governments to work more effectively on regional food system issues by: offering a consolidation of 160 planned local government actions to advance a sustainable and resilient regional food system; and identifying 18 new collaborative actions for local governments to leverage partnerships and resources across the region.

As such, the Action Plan provides information and best practices for local governments as a means of information sharing and collaborative learning across municipal boundaries. The Action Plan takes a broad view of the food system, from growing food all the way through managing food waste, and it is intended to complement and strengthen other local government agricultural programs and plans. Although the Action Plan is focused on local governments, other food system stakeholders may find it a useful resource for identifying initiatives being advanced in different parts of the region and to take advantage of lessons learned.

Challenges can be magnified when coordinating actions among multiple jurisdictions. Implementation will require ongoing commitment by all local governments, and in particular will rely on:

- **A forum for collaboration** – Participants in the Action Plan process expressed a strong interest in convening a forum for staff from across the region to continue to meet, discuss challenges, share lessons learned, and undertake the new collaborative actions identified in the Action Plan.
 - **Flexibility** – To ensure ongoing relevance, the Action Plan needs to remain flexible and adaptable to accommodate new actions as opportunities arise.
 - **Shared resources** – The activity undertaken by local governments in the region represents a large community of practice, and also presents the potential for local governments to share best practices and find further opportunities to pool resources to jointly address shared issues or joint initiatives.
 - **Working with partners** – Building local government capacity to develop effective partnerships and to work more effectively with civil society groups will directly support the successful implementation of the Action Plan.
- As a result, participants in the development of the Action Plan noted the need for two additional actions to address both resourcing and capacity building:
- Assign staff to address food system issues.
 - Build capacity to work with civil society.
- **Dedicated resources** – Local governments have varying levels of engagement with the regional food system. To build capacity to better address food sector challenges, local governments need to ensure resources are dedicated to carrying out the planned actions within their jurisdictions, and consider how to best enable staff to participate in relevant collaborative actions.

1. ASSIGN STAFF TO ADDRESS FOOD SYSTEMS ISSUES

To ensure the Action Plan advances in alignment with the above noted needs, and to pursue the most efficient approach to the actions identified in the plan, **the strongest mechanism for implementation is for each local government to assign a staff person for food system issues to coordinate local government participation in advancing the Action Plan.**

New Action	Agency	Timeline
1. Assign a staff member to advance local government efforts on food system issues and to participate in semi-annual working group meetings	All local governments	1-3 years

Participants in the development of the Action Plan voiced strong support for establishing a collaborative working group. Although participation would be voluntary, the working group would be intended to meet semi-annually to:

- foster a network of municipal and regional representatives engaged in food and agricultural issues;
- facilitate knowledge transfer, and share successes/ challenges, best practices and resources;
- identify opportunities to advance collaborative and new planned actions;
- create a forum to engage with civil society groups, industry and other stakeholders; and,
- review Action Plan progress.

The working group would meet to monitor progress and help coordinate efforts to ensure an effective approach to the new collaborative actions described in the Action Plan. Members of the working group would also adjust meeting frequency to best meet interests and capacity.

2. BUILD CAPACITY TO WORK WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

The RFSS acknowledges the valuable role of civil society groups in addressing food system issues, and local government representatives have acknowledged they are not always well equipped to leverage the efforts and expertise of these groups and to work effectively in partnership with them. Work is already underway to help civil society groups better understand and be able to navigate local government programs and processes. However, **although linkages between local governments and civil society groups are strong, there is still room, and need for improvement.**

New Action	Agency	Timeline
2. Strengthen the linkages and understanding between local governments and civil society groups in relation to advancing food system issues	All local governments	1-3 years

Participants in the development of the Action Plan recognized the value of enhancing the effectiveness of local government relationships with civil society groups. Examples of specific actions to advance this broader objective include:

- convene a forum for local governments to explore how to build capacity to strategically support the work of civil society groups;
- local governments to share best practices for fostering working relationships with civil society groups; and,
- support civil society groups in learning about local government processes and policies.

SUMMARY OF NEW COLLABORATIVE ACTIONS

Member municipalities and the region are implementing their own planned actions. The proposed working group would provide assistance in this regard (for instance, through sharing of best practices or experiences addressing similar issues in their respective communities), but the primary role of the working group would be to advance the new collaborative actions identified in the Action Plan. The 18 new collaborative actions are summarized below.

New Collaborative Actions	Agency	Timeline
Goal 1		
1. Collectively advocate to senior governments for funding programs to expand investments in irrigation and drainage infrastructure necessary to adapt to climate change	Metro Vancouver and Agricultural municipalities	1-3 years
2. Investigate the feasibility and desirability of a regional land trust to increase access to agricultural land	Metro Vancouver and Agricultural municipalities	1-3 years
3. Expand municipal involvement in programs that enable new farmers to start a business such as Surrey's Virtual Incubator Farm Project Online system	All local governments	1-3 years
Goal 2		
4. Develop policies to expand processing, storage and distribution of local food (e.g. revitalization tax exemptions)	All local governments	1-3 years
5. Share information on the potential opportunities to increase local food purchasing strategies	All local governments	1-3 years
6. Profile and incorporate agri-food business ventures into regional and municipal economic development plans	Metro Vancouver and Agricultural municipalities	3-5 years
7. Convene bulk food purchasers to explore how to increase local food purchasing	Metro Vancouver to facilitate with participation from all local governments	1-3 years
Goal 3		
8. Develop a communication strategy with common messaging for local governments to educate residents about the connection between farmland, food security, climate change and sustainability	Metro Vancouver to facilitate with participation from all local governments	1-3 years
9. Collaborate with non-profit organizations, build on existing multi-lingual initiatives to develop and distribute information on sustainable and local food programs to new immigrants	Surrey to share resources with other local governments	1-3 years

New Collaborative Actions	Agency	Timeline
Goal 4		
10. Promote the Food Donation Guidelines (developed by BC Centre for Disease Control and other partners) to food distribution and food service sectors through municipal and regional business correspondence and events	All local governments	1-3 years
11. Draw from Surrey's experience to create and share information on culturally relevant local food availability for refugee and new immigrants	All local governments	1-3 years
12. Draw from Vancouver's study on community kitchens to identify opportunities and challenges for expanding food preparation and processing in under-utilized kitchens	All local governments	1-3 years
Goal 5		
13. Collaborate with provincial agencies to prepare a regional agriculture climate adaptation strategy for the Metro Vancouver region	Metro Vancouver and Agricultural municipalities	3-5 years
Emerging Issues		
14. Work with Health Authorities, industry and appropriate agencies to ensure food safety is considered in commercial and community food production	All local governments	1-3 years
15. Identify how food security and emergency food issues are being addressed in each local government's emergency management plans and processes	All local governments	1-3 years
16. Recommend policies and programs to address health outcomes of poverty and food insecurity to senior governments	All local governments	years
Facilitating Implementation		
17. Assign a staff member to advance local government food system issues and to participate in semi-annual working group meetings	All local governments	1-3 years
18. Strengthen the linkages and understanding between local governments and civil society groups in relation to advancing food system issues	All local governments	1-3 years

Review of progress on the Action Plan will be an iterative and ongoing process. The Action Plan is intended as a “living resource” that is flexible and adaptable. It will be updated as local governments complete actions, or choose to submit new planned actions. This approach supports annual reporting of progress updates to respective regional and municipal decision-makers, and ensures local governments have the capacity to contribute to the ongoing implementation in a manner that best reflects their interests and capacity.

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Appendix “II”

Action Plan Collaborative Items

The following new Action Items, for each Goal from the Regional Food System Action Plan, are recommended to be addressed from a collaborative, region-wide approach:

Goal 1: Increase Capacity to Produce Food Close to Home

- Collectively advocate to senior governments for funding programs to expand investments in irrigation and drainage infrastructure necessary to adapt to climate change.
- Investigate the feasibility and desirability of a regional land trust to increase access to agricultural land.
- Expand municipal involvement in programs that enable new farmers to start a business such as Surrey’s Virtual Incubator Farm Project Online system.

Goal 2: Improve the Financial Viability of the Food Sector

- Develop policies to expand processing, storage and distribution of local food (e.g. revitalization tax exemptions).
- Share information on the potential opportunities to increase local food purchasing strategies.
- Profile and incorporate agri-food business ventures into regional and municipal economic development plans.
- Convene bulk food purchasers to explore how to increase local food purchasing.

Goal 3: People Make Healthy and Sustainable Food Choices

- Develop a communication strategy with common messaging for local governments to educate residents about the connection between farmland, food security, climate change and sustainability.
- Collaborate with non-profit organizations and build on existing multi-lingual initiatives to develop and distribute information on sustainable and local food programs to new immigrants (with Surrey sharing resources with other municipalities).

Goal 4: Everyone Has Access to Healthy, Culturally-Diverse and Affordable Food

- Promote the Food Donation Guidelines (developed by BC Centre for Disease Control and other partners) for instance, to food distribution and food service sectors through municipal and regional business correspondence and events.
- Draw from Surrey’s experience to create and share information on culturally-relevant local food availability for refugee and new immigrants.
- Draw from Vancouver’s study on community kitchens to identify opportunities and challenges for expanding food preparation and processing in under-utilized kitchens.

Goal 5: A Food System Consistent with Ecological Health

- Collaborate with provincial agencies to prepare a regional agriculture climate adaptation strategy for the Metro Vancouver region.