

**DATE:** February 7, 2020**FILE:** 1700-02/2020/512**TO:** Chair and Directors  
Committee of the Whole**FROM:** Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative OfficerSupported by Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative Officer***R. Dyson*****RE:** Regional Agriculture Plan**Purpose**

To provide information on an agricultural plan implementation option for the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) Board in its consideration of whether to direct staff to undertake an agricultural plan.

**Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:**

This report is provided for information.

**Executive Summary**

- At its January 14, 2020 meeting, following a delegation from the Food Policy Council, the Committee of the Whole instructed staff to report back with options for the preparation of an agriculture plan.
- Directors remarked that the last agricultural plan was undertaken within the Comox Valley in 2002. Staff note, however, that as part of the 2014 rural Official Community Plan (OCP) review extensive engagement with the local agricultural community and Ministry of Agriculture was undertaken and resulted in clear rural OCP policy support for producers and their operations as well as the creation of an agriculture buffer development permit area intended to protect agriculture from encroachment by non-agricultural uses.
- The agricultural community in the Comox Valley is diverse, very engaged and has extensive expertise in production, marketing, policy development and regulatory frameworks. The agricultural community is best positioned to advise what its needs are and, specifically, what is needed from the CVRD.
- A regional strategy focussed on implementing existing policies beginning with confirmation of the agricultural community's needs relative to the role of the CVRD, could serve as an important next step in working towards Goal 6 of Bylaw No. 120, being the "Comox Valley Regional District Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 120, 2010" (RGS): "*Support and enhance the agricultural and aquaculture sectors and increase local food security*".
- An agricultural coordinator model, similar to the models used in the Alberni-Clayoquot and East Kootenay Regional Districts, could be considered as a way to work with the agricultural community to assess needs, priorities, and action items as well as establish a direct contact for the industry to the CVRD. Staff has prepared a multi-year, high level, project plan, focused primarily on implementation (versus the development of new policy), for the board's consideration (Appendix A).
- Staff note that the RGS review will serve as a good vehicle to identify any policy and indicator gaps that exist relative to supporting agricultural production within a contemporary context (e.g. climate change adaptation, food security, and agricultural land reserve regulations). An agricultural implementation strategy could follow.

- Staff identifies the following options:
  1. Direct staff to initiate implementation work in 2021 (e.g. project plan in Appendix A) and pursue grant funding for implementation through the Investment Agriculture Foundation if eligible (i.e. program currently under review); or
  2. Revise 2020 work plan and direct staff to initiate implementation work in 2020 (or development of new plan); or
  3. Direct staff to report back on timing/implementation options following the RGS review.

Prepared by:

***A. Mullaly***

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**Stakeholder Distribution (Upon Agenda Publication)**

Comox Valley Food Policy Council	✓
CVRD Agriculture Advisory Planning Commission	✓
Comox Valley Farmers' Institute	✓
Mid-Island Farmers' Institute	✓
Jill Hatfield, Regional Agrologist, Ministry of Agriculture	✓

Attachments: Appendix A – “Regional Agriculture Implementation Plan”

## CVRD Regional Growth Strategy Service Project Plan

### Project: Regional Agriculture Plan Implementation

Completed in 2002, the Comox Valley Agricultural Plan laid the groundwork for agriculture-supportive Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) policy as well as the Rural Official Community Plan. The Plan identified issues and opportunities and included a number of action items/strategies. Over the years, the Plan provided leverage for a range of programs and services initiated by other agricultural organizations, including the Comox Valley Growers' guide. A contemporary plan, built on the 2002 plan, focused as an implementation strategy, could help to tackle some of the complex issues faced by agricultural producers and further advance RGS Goal 6: "Support and enhance the agricultural and aquaculture sectors and increase local food security".

### Objective:

Long-term: To work towards implementing Goal 3 of the RGS: "Achieve a sustainable, resilient and dynamic local economy that supports businesses and the region's entrepreneurial spirit" and Goal 6: *"Support and enhance the agricultural and aquaculture sectors and increase local food security"*.

Medium-term: To prepare an agriculture plan implementation strategy, including the coordination of an agricultural outreach/support function for the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD).

Short-term: To ask agricultural stakeholders how the regional district can support agriculture and producers. To identify the tools that the CVRD could use to address the complex issues that agricultural producers face.

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**Year 1 Budget:** \$30,000

**Projected Start Date:** TBD (relative to board's direction on other projects)

**Projected Completion Date:** Ongoing

Year	Task	Budget
1	Pursue funding opportunity. Hire an agricultural coordinator. Establish an agriculture plan implementation steering committee (e.g. producers, Ministry of Agriculture staff, Farmers' Institute(s) representatives, Agricultural Advisory Planning Commission, CVRD staff, etc.). Agricultural stakeholder targeted engagement – "what role can the CVRD play in supporting agricultural producers?". Convene stakeholders to understand range of agriculture initiatives (e.g. programs and services) currently underway.	\$30,000* (to engage a coordinator)
2	Broad public engagement and policy review through RGS review	\$30,000*
3	Develop an agriculture outreach program with core funding. Develop implementation/action plan by jurisdiction/mandate.	\$50,000*

\*Estimates to be confirmed through financial planning processes.

**Next Steps:** Develop a scope of work for an agriculture plan implementation coordinator. Issue a request for proposals. Hire an agriculture plan implementation coordinator. Develop a terms of reference for the steering committee.

**Background:** CVRD Committee of the Whole recommendation (January 14, 2020):

*“THAT staff report back to the Committee of the Whole regarding the request for funding from the Comox Valley Food Policy Council to complete a Comox Valley Agricultural Plan.”*

**Connection to Board’s Strategic Drivers:**

*Community Partnerships:* regional initiative with opportunities to work with member municipalities, K’ómoks First Nation, Farmers’ Institutes (2), Ministry of Agriculture, Agricultural Advisory Planning Commission, Island Health, School District No. 71, non-profit service providers (e.g. Young Agrarians, Lush Valley, Comox Valley Economic Development Society).

*Climate Crisis and Environmental Stewardship and Protection:* Project presents an opportunity to infuse the RGS with regional climate change mitigation and adaptation planning for agriculture and local food security.

*Indigenous Relations:* opportunity to engage K’ómoks First Nation in the design of the project relative to K’ómoks First Nation’s economic development, food security and community health objectives.

*Fiscal Responsibility:* proposal to undertake the work under existing RGS service; phase the work over three budget years and seek opportunities for grant funding as they arise.

**Project Lead:** Planning services lead with support from CVRD communications, emergency management services and member municipalities.