

# Calissi / Crane

A business concern in agriculture and food

## Small-Scale Agri-Food

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**Back to the Land:  
Report 4 - Development  
Strategies**

*Community Futures Development Corporation of  
Thompson Country*

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### **Important Notice**

Crane Management Consultants Ltd. and Calissi Consulting, Inc. directed this project under contract to Community Futures Development Corporation of Thompson Country. Human Resources Development Canada funded the project through its Local Labour Market Partnerships Program.

This report was funded and written to produce information on small- and medium-scale agricultural issues and opportunities in the Thompson, Nicola Valley, Upper Fraser Canyon, and south Cariboo areas. The information is intended to be used in the planning processes of agricultural producers, prospective producers, Community Futures Development Corporation of Thompson Country, Community Futures Development Corporation of Sun Country, Community Futures Development Corporation of Nicola Valley, First Nations, BC Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries and other interested parties.

The authors, administrators and funders of this report accept no liability for any direct or indirect damage caused to any person or organization or property as a result of use of or reliance on this report and its contents. Any parties interested in pursuing or supporting or participating in any of this report's suggested proposals or ideas should undertake or fund their own research and should not rely on this report for definitive information, direction or advice.

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# 1 Executive Summary

Strategies for further development of small- and medium-scale agriculture in the Thompson, Nicola, south Cariboo and upper Fraser Canyon areas are presented in this report. The development strategies are based on an extensive research process, which included producer surveys, interviews with industry experts, review of secondary literature on small-scale farming, direct marketing, and agri-food product trends and an investigation of efforts to promote and encourage small-scale agri-food production in other areas of North America.

It is report no. 4 of a five report series, that included the production of nine GIS maps. Community Futures Development Corporation of Thompson Country (CFDC-TC) sponsored the “Back to the Land” project and a steering committee of stakeholders guided the consultants’ work. Human Resources Development Canada provided project funding.

Development strategies were prepared in the areas of organizational development, communications, marketing and financing. The recommended strategies are as follows.

## Organizational Development

- ✓ Establish a regional direct farm marketing association or a regional agriculture development organization.
- ✓ Identify and hire a qualified person to act as Executive Director (shared position) for the new development organization.
- ✓ Recruit a Board, consisting of both private sector and public sector appointees, to oversee the development organization.
- ✓ Invite First Nations to be directly involved in the new development organization.

## Communications

- ✓ Design and implement a program aimed at communicating the progress of strategy implementation to stakeholders and to the public.
- ✓ Post the five reports and maps from the Back to the Land project on a web page of the CFDC-TC’s web site.

- ✓ Stage a forum on small- and medium-scale agri-food production in January or February 2001.
- ✓ Use material from the Back to the Land reports as the basis for newspaper columns.
- ✓ Develop a mailing list of agriculturalists in the region.
- ✓ Create a booklet or brochure that lists direct farm marketers and their products and services.

## Marketing

- ✓ Hire a person, through the local Community Futures organizations, to act as a marketing extension officer for agri-food products (a shared position with the new development organization).
- ✓ Research the capability of the Interior Vegetable Marketing Agency to service producers in the study area.
- ✓ Establish a farmers’ market in Merritt and further upgrade the Kamloops Farmers’ Market.
- ✓ Support the efforts of the KOFA to establish a permanent organic retail outlet and the North Shore Business Improvement Association to establish a retail incubator and public market.
- ✓ Establish an agri-tourism and Farm Trails initiative.
- ✓ Encourage more tourism interpretation of the region’s agricultural sector.
- ✓ Stage SuperHost and FoodSafe workshops specifically for direct farm marketers in the study area.
- ✓ Stage a continuing education course, through University College of the Cariboo, on marketing agri-food products in the main communities of the study area.

## Financing

- ✓ Promote the availability of government financial assistance programs.
- ✓ Establish a small-scale food processing loan program in the region through the local Community Futures organizations.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

- ✓ Monitor plan implementation and evaluate effectiveness of projects.



## 2 Introduction

Strategies for further development of small- and medium-scale agriculture in the Thompson, Nicola, south Cariboo and upper Fraser Canyon areas are presented in this report. The development strategies are based on an extensive research process, which included producer surveys, interviews with industry experts, review of secondary literature on small-scale farming, direct marketing, and agri-food product trends and an investigation of efforts to promote and encourage small-scale agri-food production in other areas of North America.

Community Futures Development Corporation of Thompson Country (CFDC-TC) has a mandate to facilitate the development of new, small businesses and support the growth of existing, small businesses. Agri-food businesses have comprised a small portion of its lending and other activities. It secured funding from Human Resources Development Canada to identify and promote agricultural opportunities for small agri-food operations in the Thompson-Nicola Regional District and part of the Squamish-Lillooet and Cariboo Regional Districts.

CFDC-TC hosted a meeting in September 1999 to explore new opportunities for further development of agriculture in its service area. Many interested organizations had representatives in attendance: provincial and federal agriculture ministries, transportation concerns, agri-tourism businesses, market gardeners, organic and non-organic produce farmers, ranchers, retailers, First Nations, Interior

Science and Innovation Council, University College of the Cariboo Department of Horticulture, and economic development agencies. The participants developed the idea of staging a regional forum for presenting information about opportunities, various marketing strategies and available resources for smaller agri-businesses.

Coming out of this meeting, a large ad hoc committee of stakeholders was formed. The committee identified a need for a coordinated review to assess the current state of micro agri-business in the area. It decided that a feasibility study would assist in the development of a strategy for supporting entrepreneurs who pursue small-scale agriculture business ventures. A number of priority areas were identified, such as value-added products, agri-tourism, identifying marketing mechanisms to access new and existing markets, and assessing the current flow of information and support (training and financing).

CFDC-TC has designed a three phase project. This assignment is the first phase, a study that identifies and analyzes agriculture opportunities and the means to support the development of these opportunities. The second and third phases will provide for dissemination of information from Phase 1 and implementation of some support mechanisms for further development of the region's small agri-food businesses.

### 2.1 Purpose

The purposes of this project are to:

- Explore the history of small acreage agriculture in the area and provide an overview of the changes that have occurred over time and the impact of these changes on the area.
- Review recent literature to identify new and existing agriculture related business opportunities that may be viable on land from one to one hundred acres within the area.
- Make recommendations for new and alternative opportunities.
- Assess land availability, soil quality, water sources, and climatic conditions used to grow or to process agricultural products within the area. Make recommendations for new and alternative opportunities.
- Assess/identify current marketing strategies that are successfully used by small acreage producers, processors and agri-tourism

- operators. Provide suggestions for future marketing strategies.
- Assess current financial and management skills of the operators of existing and future agriculture businesses. Make recommendations for new and alternative financial and management training opportunities.
- Identify sources of financing to assist individuals to establish new or expand existing operations. Make recommendations for new and alternative financing options.

- Review and describe existing information resources for agriculture business. Identify areas that are lacking within this information system. Investigate the viability of an information network that would be primarily used to link area producers, processors, buyers and the public. Provide recommendations to improve the access to existing information.

## 2.2 Study Area

The study area generally includes the Regional District of Thompson-Nicola as well as a small portion of Squamish-Lillooet Regional District in the Lillooet area and the southernmost portion of the Cariboo Regional District. More specifically the study is confined to valley and plateau areas where the favourable climate provides the most opportunities for the production of a wide range of agricultural commodities.

It includes the following areas:

- Fraser River valley from the vicinity of Pavilion downstream to Lytton;
- Thompson River valley from Clearwater southward to Kamloops and onward to Lytton including the tributary Bonaparte

and Nicola River valleys and Deadman Creek valley;

- South Thompson River valley eastward from Kamloops to Chase;
- that part of the Salmon River valley in the vicinity of Westwold;
- and the lower plateau areas in the vicinity of Merritt and south of Kamloops.

A map of the study area and its most viable crop-growing areas is presented on the opposite page. The crop growing areas are listed as sections on the map. Section numbers do not indicate an order of precedence. Nine GIS maps that show detailed agricultural capability for the study area were also produced for the project.

## 2.3 Farm Size

There is no widely-accepted definition for small-scale farming. Statistics Canada, in its publication entitled "Canadian Agriculture at a Glance", defined them as having product sales of \$40,000 or less before expenses are deducted. Under this definition half of all Canadian farms are small farms. Almost 80% of BC farms (and in the study area) in the 1996 Census of Agriculture had incomes of less than \$40,000. Only a quarter of these BC small farms reported a positive net income. However, the number of BC small farms increased by 14% between the 1991 and 1996 Census years, bucking an overall national decline of 5.6% in farm numbers.

The US authorities set a higher bar for defining a small farm, gross income of \$250,000 (US) or less.

Size of farm is another way of classifying farm size but a small grain farm will have many more hectares than a large vegetable or tree fruit operation.

The number of in the study area of less than 10 acres increased by 29% between the two most recent Census years (1996 and 1991). Thirteen percent of farms were ten acres or less in the 1996 Census.





This project's steering committee chose not to construct an arbitrary definition because, in practise, farmers define themselves. Livestock production was not included in the project because

it has been the subject of previous reports and is dominated by ranchers who view themselves as having large or at least medium-scale ranches or farms.

## 2.4 Project Process

This project has been directed by CFDC-TC and a steering committee that includes agricultural producers and representatives from BC Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, BC Ministry of Community Development and Cooperatives, CFDC of Sun Country, CFDC of Nicola Valley, First Nations Agricultural Lending Association and Interior Science and Innovation Council.

The consulting team was led by Calissi/Crane, a joint venture of Crane Management Consultants Ltd. and Calissi Consulting, Inc. Kelowna-based Herb Luttmerding and John Vielvoye worked on resource capability issues. Victoria-based Sa Su Services compiled the GIS maps. Gerry Hutchison of Kamloops and Pritchard consulted with members of First Nations. Jodi Houghton of Chase researched and drafted several profiles. Glen Lucas of Kelowna interviewed persons in the retail, wholesale and HRI segments. Jill Brown-John of

Horsefly and Kamloops prepared a piece on delivery of organic foods.

The consultants completed the following tasks.

- compilation of BCMAF and Statistics Canada data;
- agricultural resource capability analysis;
- GIS analysis and mapping;
- mail survey of small and medium-scale agricultural producers;
- interviews with members of First nations who are involved with agriculture;
- phone interviews with agricultural extension officers, farmers, food makers, retailers, wholesalers, and institutional food buyers in and outside the study area;
- identification and review of print and internet sources of information.

## 2.5 Project Reports

Five reports and nine GIS maps were prepared.

Report 1 - Resource Opportunities: study area agricultural statistics; resource capability for agricultural production; and agricultural production possibilities for small- and medium-scale producers in the study area.

Report 2 - Survey Results: presentation of results from a mail survey of small-scale agricultural producers and interviews with First Nations agriculturalists.

Report 3 – Marketing: local market; agri-food products; post-harvest management; marketing channels; collaboration; and branding.

Report 4 – Development Strategies: Organizational development, communications, marketing, and financial strategies for furthering the growth of small-scale agriculture in the study area.

Report 5 – Appendices: information sources and financial programs

The GIS maps use the Canada Land Inventory system for identifying areas of better agricultural potential.

Several profiles of interesting agri-food producers from around BC are included in Report 3. Their business approaches and efforts illustrate the potential for smaller-scale agri-food production and some key operational points.

## 3 Development Framework

This chapter has five sections, categorized as follows.

- Organizational development
- Communications
- Marketing

- Financing
- Monitoring and evaluation

The project did not delve into production techniques, knowledge and skills so development strategies are not presented in this area.

### 3.1 Organizational Development

#### ***Background***

From the standpoint of creating and sustaining small- and medium-scale agri-food ventures over the long haul, a supportive environment will be the fundamental prerequisite to success. In this report, we have emphasized the resource capabilities of the area and general categories of opportunities. Some specific opportunities are cited and many more possibilities could have been listed. However we wanted to avoid the creation of a list, one that is relevant today and not so, tomorrow. A long list of “shoulds” and “coulds” is transient and doesn’t have the necessary ownership of stakeholders that leads to action. The “Back to the Land” report needs to be acted upon, become the basis for new ideas and debate, to avoid the fate of many consultant-produced documents, ‘dust collection’.

We have endeavoured to examine gaps at the individual and group or community level and suggest strategies to address them.

The field of economic development is becoming increasingly complex and specialized and a well-

planned organization with a clear mandate is well worth establishing and defending.

#### ***Recommendations***

- **Establish a regional direct farm marketing association or a regional agriculture development organization.**
- **Identify and hire a qualified person to act as Executive Director (shared position) for the new development organization.**
- **Recruit a Board, consisting of both private sector and public sector appointees, to oversee the development organization.**
- **Invite First Nations to be directly involved in the new development organization.**

### 3.1.1 ***Establish a regional direct farm marketing association or a regional agriculture development organization.***

#### ***Rationale***

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In the absence of a well-established local or regional agricultural organization to undertake the implementation of this report, it will soon be forgotten and eventually collect dust, rather than attention.

The region lacks an organization that specifically targets the further development of its agricultural sector, much less the needs of small- and medium scale producers.

Each of the other main agricultural regions, Okanagan, Lower Mainland, Peace and southern Vancouver Island, have some fairly strong regional associations. The absence of one in the study area probably reflects the historical importance of beef production and the longstanding headquarters location of the BC Cattlemen's Association in Kamloops.

Study area agriculturalists belong to a variety of agricultural organizations. They show up as members of the many provincial organizations organized on a commodity basis. The Thompson-Shuswap Organic Producers Association is a rare example of a regional agricultural organization in the study area. Another is the Kamloops Farmers' Market.

There is a general economic development organization in the region, VentureKamloops and an economic development officer with the City of Merritt.

It is important to have an organization that provides stakeholders with a forum to debate and implement ideas and recommendations coming out of a strategy or opportunity analysis report. In the absence of an institutionalized stakeholder organization, the likelihood of any organization following up on the report's ideas and recommendations are very low. Recent contrasting examples are the Shuswap and Chilliwack agricultural strategy processes. In the latter instance, a Chilliwack Agricultural Commission acts in partnership with the local economic

development body, Chilliwack Economic Partners. They acted in tandem to sponsor a agriculture sector development strategy and are guiding its implementation. There is very strong participation from the local agricultural community, all major producing groups are represented on its board and the president and staff of Chilliwack Economic Partners provide some support services to it. Agriculture is viewed as a growth sector in Chilliwack and the local economic development body is very aggressive; for example, staging a conference on agricultural sector development and developing an initiative to source outside investment for further development of this sector, with financial assistance from the Federal Program for Export Market Development. The Chilliwack Agricultural Commission is an institution with the self-interest and resources to implement its agricultural sector strategy.

By contrast, there is no broad-based, independent agricultural sector development group in the Shuswap region. The Salmon Arm CFDC has an agricultural sub-group. This CFDC sponsored a consultant-prepared agriculture sector development strategy in 1999 but there has been little formal follow-up to date. The issue is not a matter of strategy quality. In our view, it strictly amounts to whether or not there is a body with enough self-interest and resources to move a strategy along into the implementation phase. Chilliwack has such a body but the Shuswap area lacks one.

A side benefit to creating an agriculture development or direct marketing association is the ability to access several government programs that disallow individual or corporate applications and permit association applications for funding support. This benefit is related to the need to have a strong, united voice for agriculture in the region.

CFDC-TC along with several other organizations spearheaded the creation of an informal ad hoc committee that has supported the 'Back to the Land' report-making process. It is fundamental to the future development of agriculture in the study area, whether large- or small-scale that the Ad Hoc Committee forge itself into a permanent institution.

The most likely scenario is for the creation of a Direct Farm Marketing Association but the importance of creating a broader group should not be overlooked. The experience and financial muscle of the bigger players, especially the ranchers and ginseng growers, would add more importance to the new organization in the eyes of other parties and individuals that local agriculturalists wish to influence. There are many common issues that can be tackled together and sector specific issues can be handled through sub-committees and task forces.

- ✓ Review budget commitments to the new organization.

### ***Priority and Timing***

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High and immediate.

### ***Responsibility***

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Ad Hoc Committee

### ***Actions***

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- ✓ Mandate the Ad Hoc Committee to establish a steering committee to oversee and make recommendations for development of a permanent agriculture development organization.
- ✓ Obtain organizational structure details from a few other agricultural development organizations in BC.
- ✓ Seek out the input of the executive director of the BC Agricultural Council<sup>1</sup>.
- ✓ Seek funding from Investment Agriculture or the Pilot Projects Initiative of the Canadian Rural Partnership for a consultant to prepare an organizational plan for review by the Ad Hoc Committee:
  - ✓ Legal structure
  - ✓ Board structure and size
  - ✓ Reporting relationships
  - ✓ Contractual obligations
  - ✓ Budgeting
    1. Stage information session for producers in the late Fall and Winter so they can debate the merits of this initiative.
    2. Identify options for physical location of the Executive Director, including piggy-backing on current locations of other community development organizations, such as Community Futures. This would greatly facilitate the one-stop shopping approach.
- ✓ Establish a time-table for re-organization.

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<sup>1</sup> The Kelowna-based BC Agricultural Council lobbies governments on behalf of its member organizations and sponsors a general agricultural awareness initiative.

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Following is a Profile of a successful BC agricultural organization initiative.

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## **Profile: The Island Farmers' Alliance (IFA)**

A concern that agriculture was fast disappearing on Vancouver Island, enough so that even the urban public were beginning to notice, prompted the agriculture community to band together and find a solution.

"About 1 ½ years ago, the Island producers got together because we could see that something was desperately needed before agriculture died completely on the Island, forming the Island Farmers' Alliance" says Judy Thompson, Chair of the IFA. "There were several issues needing to be addressed immediately. 1) we needed to unify all the Island agriculture so that we could work together; 2) be able to easily identify Island products; 3) work with government regulations and cut some of the red tape involved in production; and 4) find ways to help producers reduce input costs. With funds from the industry, Investment Agriculture and the provincial government, the IFA hired a marketing firm and together we created the rooster logo and a marketing plan."

The provincial government agreed with the idea in the form of a \$2 million trust fund. This is designed to help expand the number of producers and products involved in the Red Rooster campaign. The \$2 million Island Agriculture Trust Fund was recently created by the provincial government which leads the IFA to believe that the work that it has been doing is getting attention and agreement from all over the Island. \$300,000 of this fund went directly to the Island chicken producers to help them find a way to keep their industry on the Island. The

remaining \$1.7 million will be put in a Trust Fund. The creation of this Trust and an action plan for its tasks will be developed at a Roundtable Discussion, which will be held in October 2000. A Steering Committee has been set up to help with the preparations for the Roundtable.

Two facts that were targeted by the producers were: 1) that only 10% of the Island's food is grown on the Island; and 2) as a result of the lack of local production it is also very difficult to maintain food security. The Red Rooster campaign was designed to educate the urban public to these facts. "We want the urban and rural public to realize that we will lose our agriculture if we don't do something NOW and help each other out," Thompson emphasizes. "We need to teach the Island that agriculture can be a benefit, to all of us."

The Island Farmers' Alliance (IFA) represents the needs of agriculture and farmers on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. The membership includes all types of agriculture and all food commodity groups. Their mandate is to develop goodwill and support through communication and the banding together of producers, processors, industry representatives, retail, media, government and the public. The objective of the IFA is to ensure sustainability of Island agriculture.

Supporting opportunities for growth that offer potential for both primary and secondary agriculture, leading to increased employment, skills and services to the industry, the IFA is committed to growth and development of agriculture and the food industry on a regional level, through public education and consumer awareness.

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**3.1.2 Identify and hire a qualified person to act as Executive Director (shared position) for the new development organization.****Rationale**

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The development strategy will only yield results if there is dedicated commitment of resources to its implementation and this is unlikely to occur solely through a volunteer effort. Volunteer efforts are essential to the success of the organization but they should not be over-taxed and are best suited to project facilitation and advocacy, not primary implementation. Industry and sectoral development are becoming increasingly complex and sophisticated and there is a clear trend toward hiring professionals to undertake implementation.

Industry and community development often falls down when the process moves from the planning stage to the implementation stage. The fact is that even some of the more modest initiatives in this strategy require dedicated time commitments, which can only be partially offset by volunteer contributions and enthusiasm.

The recommendation is that the position be a shared one. The hired person would wear two hats, one, as Executive Director for the new development organization (1/3 of time) and two, as an agri-food marketing extension advisor (2/3 of time).

It is unlikely that financial sources of support will come from local agriculturalists to support this position, at least at the outset. If the new organization takes hold then a small contribution could possibly be collected to fund some of its activities, including the Executive Director position. The proposal is that the three Community Futures

organizations in the area, (and perhaps the newest and fourth one) would be responsible for 2/3 of this position. There are funding sources that they could attempt to tap to off-set their portion.

**Responsibility**

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Ad Hoc Committee

**Actions**

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- ✓ Prepare a first-year operating budget.
- ✓ Request from Investment Agriculture funding support annually for three years in support of the initiative.
- ✓ Use base funding to apply for matching funds from other government programs.
- ✓ Form a Hiring Committee for the purposes of hiring an Executive Director / Agri-Food Marketing Extension Advisor. At least one Human Resource professional should be asked to join the committee. The duration of the hiring process would be approximately eight weeks, after which the hiring committee would be dissolved.
- ✓ Identify candidates.
- ✓ Prepare and submit an employment-contract offer.
- ✓ Conduct orientation procedures.

**Priority and Timing**

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High and immediate.

### **3.1.3 Recruit a Board, consisting of both private sector and public sector appointees, to oversee the new development organization.**

#### **Rationale**

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The involvement of a cross-section of persons who will have considerable impact on the development of small- and medium-scale agriculture will be fundamental to its long-term success. There are some local or regional agriculture organizations having a special interest focus, such as farmers' markets and the Thompson-Shuswap Organic Producers, that should directly appoint a board representative. Some important infrastructure partners, such as the Pacific Research Station, Community Futures and BCMAFF, should be represented, too.

A well-appointed board will provide the leadership and links to community decision-makers without which it will be difficult to accomplish many of the strategies and initiatives in this report.

#### **Responsibility**

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Ad Hoc Committee

#### **Actions**

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- ✓ Prepare evaluation criteria for selecting Board.
- ✓ Recruit initial Board members.
- ✓ Ensure all Board appointments have terms for succession to optimize performance.
- ✓ Prepare a policy for appointing board members, perhaps by directing that new members be drawn from other committees and task forces.

#### **Priority and Timing**

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High and immediate.

### **3.1.4 Strategy: Invite First Nations to be directly involved in the new development initiative.**

#### **Rationale**

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First Nation producers are well-represented among the region's beef ranchers but there is some activity and considerable interest in diversifying into other agricultural activities.

The region's First Nations are important landowners now and, after the completion of treaty negotiations, will control more lands. In the interim, they are gaining more influence over handling of Crown lands.

Issues such as low returns and need for business training came out of the First Nation interviews that are evident among non-First Nation agriculturalists and aspiring ones. Some issues unique to First Nations were raised, as well, such as Indian Act regulations inhibiting on-reserve development, adequacy and availability of land on some reserves, and impact of treaty negotiations.

Many interests, opportunities and challenges are shared in common between First Nation and non-First Nation agriculturalists and aspiring ones. Building bridges with those in the First Nations having a strong interest in agriculture will tremendously benefit First and non-First Nation communities. There is only one economy in the region and it includes both the native and non-native communities, so it makes sense to meet and compare strategies, identify initiatives of mutual benefit, establish networks and consider joint actions. It would be especially beneficial if First Nation representatives sat on the board of the new agricultural development organization from the outset.

First Nation members who have become involved with the Ad Hoc Committee have set an excellent precedent in this regard.

An important point that arose out of the interviews undertaken for Report no. 2 was that the tribal



councils in the region do not have specific agricultural development initiatives. Although the new organization will not be an Aboriginal one, it could provide a vehicle for further agricultural development on First Nation lands, as well as on non-First Nation acreage.

***Responsibility***

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Ad Hoc Committee

***Actions***

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- ✓ Formally invite First Nation participation onto the Board of the new agriculture development organization.

- ✓ Attempt to establish regular, informal discussions with First Nations representatives who are interested in agriculture issues. Establishing strong long-term relationships, based on mutual respect and trust, is perhaps the most important initiative that can be undertaken to further progress in facilitating First Nations economic development and relations.
- ✓ Meet with other neighbouring First Nations to discuss possibility of a joint workshop. The basis of the workshop discussion could be those initiatives presented in this Strategy that require or could benefit from partnerships with other stakeholders.

***Priority and Timing***

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High and immediate.

## 3.2 Communications

### ***Background***

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Ultimately the main purpose of the new organization will be communication: advocating to governments the interests of local agriculture, networking, providing technical information to agri-food producers and aspiring ones, and informing consumers about the products of local producers.

The communication activity should not wait for the establishment of the new organization. There is a gap in this area right now that needs filling.

The importance of building awareness within the broad community but also in the agricultural community should not be overlooked, as most development initiatives require not only a capacity for implementation, but also broad community approval and support. Without these prerequisites, the plan may flounder because most activities involve cooperation among multiple stakeholders rather than individuals or individual organizations. The mechanics of plan implementation requires all partners, stakeholders and the public to be up-to-date on current affairs. This makes it easier to marshal support and cooperation as initiatives are implemented.

### ***Recommendations***

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- **Design and implement a program aimed at communicating the progress of strategy implementation to stakeholders and to the public.**
- **Post the five reports and maps from the Back to the Land project on a web page of the CFDC-TC's web site.**
- **Stage a forum in January or February 2001.**
- **Use material from the Back to the Land reports as the basis for newspaper columns.**
- **Develop a mailing list of agriculturalists in the region, with the intention to eventually creating a newsletter.**
- **Create booklet or brochure that lists direct farm marketers and their products and services.**

### 3.2.1 *Design and implement a program aimed at communicating the progress of strategy implementation to stakeholders and to the public.*

#### **Rationale**

There will be a significant level of interest in strategy implementation, among agricultural stakeholders and the public. To broaden and deepen the base of interest levels and support, it will be very helpful to have a planned, coherent communications strategy.

In the absence of a communications strategy and its implementation, there will be much preaching to the converted and little adding to the flock.

It must be recognized that timing is all important when attempting to communicate with the agricultural community. Efforts during growing and harvest seasons have to be tailored to their time constraints. The late Fall and Winter can be the time for communications activities that demand more time from local producers.

#### **Responsibility**

CFDC-TC, and later the Executive Director.

#### **Actions**

- ✓ Prepare for public distribution a newsletter featuring key pieces of information from the Back to the Land reports.
- ✓ Prepare an annual report card on the progress of development strategies.
- ✓ Prepare a communications plan outlining procedures for promoting positive events in the community, and outside the community. This would include developing a database of key media contacts and refining criteria for deciding upon what makes a newsworthy event.
- ✓ Conduct an annual open house.
- ✓ Conduct regular press releases on important economic events.
- ✓ Place press releases on the events page of the CFDC-TC's web site.
- ✓ Obtain some radio spots.

#### **Priority and Timing**

High, ongoing.

### 3.2.2 *Post the five reports and maps from the Back to the Land project on a web page of the CFDC-TC's web site.*

#### **Rationale**

The Internet offers an extremely cost-effective distribution system for making the Back to the Land reports and maps generally available.

The Back to the Land reports were written to be easily placed on a web page. Appendix 5 lists many information sources, so their URLs can be listed as links on this web page.

CFDC-TC has a good web site and additional pages can easily be added to to it. The distribution of the reports can be enhanced by creating links with this new page to other web sites, such as the CFDC-Nicola Valley, VentureKamloops, FBMIInet and others.

The web page should be the start of an eventual web site for the new organization but the CFDC-TC site is an excellent interim location.

This distribution should be complemented by placing paper copies of the report in the public and college libraries in the study area.

#### **Responsibility**

CFDC-TC

#### **Actions**

- ✓ Prepare a new home page to report on Strategy progress.
- ✓ Convert the Back to the Land reports and maps to pdf format.

- ✓ Update the Strategy accomplishments periodically (e.g. quarterly) to keep it current.
- ✓ Add the links for information sources that are listed in Appendix 5.
- ✓ Identify and access project funds for web site development.
- ✓ Discuss access to the Student Connection Program (<http://www.scp-ebb.com/>) with UCC for development of the new association's web site and links to local producers. This program hires senior college and university students through their institutions to train small and medium businesses and non-profit organizations in business applications of the information highway. The program is structured so that UCC would hire and train the students and manage the interaction with agri-food producers. The target businesses would then be approached by UCC and offered the training. Each business would receive an average of three days of training in the use of Canadian on-line business services and would be asked to pay a nominal amount of \$100 for the three day exercise. The idea would be to have the Executive Director enlisted as an eligible business in order to receive the training support.
- ✓ Investigate feasibility of using the Technology First Work Placement Service (<http://www.cthrb.ca/1tech/english/welcome.htm>) (TFWPS) program for web page development. The TFWPS is a national, not-for-profit placement service that has

been established to provide unemployed graduate technologists and technicians with valuable first work experience. After gaining this work experience, the graduate technologists and technicians will be better able to find full-time work in their field of study. The idea behind this initiative is to find a host employer who is able to provide web services (e.g. home page design and development) to a user, in this case the EDO. The employer then registers with TFWPS and requests a web programmer/technologist who would come into the region and over an eight to 12 week period work with all the economic development agencies in the area to coordinate and enhance web services. The host employer would be a web service or an Internet Service Provider already doing business in the region. A brief work plan would have to be developed describing the scope and scale of the improvements, prior to registering with TFWPS. Once the employer is identified and has agreed to a work plan, it should register with TFWPS by sending in an e-mail notice.

- ✓ Prepare an e-mail list of local business, community and government contacts which can be used for issuing press releases and other communications activities.

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### ***Priority and Timing***

High

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### **3.2.3 Stage a forum in January or February 2001.**

#### **Rationale**

There is a significant level of interest in the *Back to the Land* project among agriculturalists, community and economic development agency staff and board members, local government elected representatives and members of the general public who are interested in food issues.

Although the Ad Hoc Committee is open to all, in practise, few interested persons attend its meetings. A forum will provide a focal point for all interested

parties, those who have been working on the *Back to the Land* project, and those are interested but do not have the time to attend its meetings to date.

The Island Farmers Alliance evolved out of a highly successful forum, which provided a sense of momentum that resulted in a well-funded successful organization.

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#### **Responsibility**

Ad Hoc Steering Committee.

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strongly promoted once funding confirmation is realized.

**Actions**

- ✓ Strike a Steering Committee and appoint a chairperson to organize a one-day forum.
- ✓ Establish a tentative schedule, promotion program, and budget and submit them in a request to a funding agency, as soon as possible, to top up any monies from the Back to the Land project.
- ✓ Hold regular meetings of the planning committee and ensure that the forum is

**Priority and Timing**

High, ongoing.

**3.2.4 Use material from the Back to the Land reports as the basis for newspaper columns.**

**Rationale**

A regular newspaper column is an excellent way to reach interested persons in a very cost-effective way. Local newspapers are often seeking well-written, informative local content. It will be important for the Ad Hoc Committee and its successor to reach out to its stakeholder base and a regular newspaper column is a tried and true method for doing so.

Finding time to research and write newspaper columns is always difficult because they are viewed as a secondary task by development organizations. By using material from the Back to the Land reports, this barrier will be overcome, at least in the short-term, until a person can be identified to assume the responsibility in the long-term.

One long-term possibility is to make arrangements with UCC's journalism program for column writing as a class project, where students share the responsibility for producing a regular rural affairs column.

**Responsibility**

CFDC-TC and Ad Hoc Committee

**Actions**

- ✓ One person should be designated for producing or managing a column on a regular basis, such as bi-weekly.
- ✓ UCC's journalism program should be approached to ascertain its interest in assuming responsibility for a regular rural affairs column.

**Priority and Timing**

High, ongoing.

**3.2.5 Develop a mailing list of agriculturalists in the region, with the intention of eventually creating a newsletter.**

**Rationale**

The district offices of BCMAFF create informal databases of agriculturalists for their internal use. It is doubtful that BCMAFF would allow an outside organization to use its Thompson Region database. If it is willing to make its database available to the

new organization, then there would be a significant start to creating a useful, comprehensive database.

The arrangement could be made into a win-win situation if BCMAFF is given access to a new, expanded and maintained computerized database.

In the absence of starting with the BCMAFF database, area organizations such as the farmers market societies could be approached and asked to contribute their names and contact information to start database construction.

The survey demonstrated clearly that local producers prefer to receive information through the mails. A database of agriculturalists and agri-food stakeholders would be an invaluable tool for the work of the new development organization.

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**Responsibility**

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Executive Director.

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**Actions**

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- ✓ Discuss with BCMAFF the possibility of using its informal database for the Thompson Region as the genesis for creating a larger database that would be maintained by the new organization
- ✓ Discuss with agriculture special interest organizations in the study area the possibility of accessing their data on members for helping to create a new database.

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**Priority and Timing**

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Medium

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**3.2.6 Develop a booklet or brochure that lists direct farm marketers and their products and services.**

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**Rationale**

Direct farm marketers are small- or medium-scale producers with limited resources to promote and advertise their products, services and selling locations. By coming together as a group small producers can provide basic information to retail customers and wholesale buyers through joint promotional initiatives.

The simplest project is to sponsor the creation of a booklet or brochure that lists products, services, and locales. It can be made available at libraries, city municipal halls, tourist information booths and other high traffic spots, as well as being distributed to buyers for study area food retailers, restaurants and institutions. Printing a good booklet is only half of the story; it must also be well-distributed to have an impact on sales.

Subsequent steps would be a farm tour day based on the booklet and a web site. The South Vancouver Island Direct Farm Marketers Association does all three, print publication, web site and farm tour day. The Fraser Valley Direct Farm Association also has an excellent print publication.

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**Responsibility**

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Executive Director.

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**Actions**

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- ✓ Discuss the experience of creating a booklet with Brent Warner of BCMAFF (250-655-5651), and representatives of the Fraser Valley and South Vancouver Island direct farm marketing associations.
- ✓ Prepare a business plan for the booklet, including its distribution.
- ✓ Apply to Investment Agriculture for funding to create and print a booklet.
- ✓ Select an author and graphics designer.
- ✓ Inventory direct farm marketers and ask for a nominal contribution for those who want to be included.
- ✓ Structure the publication.
- ✓ Collect resource information.
- ✓ Write, edit, lay out and print the publication.
- ✓ Distribute the booklet.
- ✓ Evaluate the booklet's impact.

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**Priority and Timing**

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Medium.

### 3.3 Marketing

#### ***Background***

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Marketing is a priority of the Ad Hoc Committee and was a main topic of concern at the Fall 1999 forum that initiated the *Back to the Land* initiative. The producer surveys demonstrated a general concern about marketing knowledge and skill levels, especially in the area of value-added products.

However marketing is a much broader subject than the individual abilities of producers to sell their products. Report 3 developed the range of marketing issues that are relevant for the study area.

#### ***Recommendations***

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- Hire a person to act as a marketing extension officer for agri-food products.
- Research the capability of the Interior Vegetable Marketing Agency to service producers in the study area.
- Establish a farmers market in Merritt and further upgrade the Kamloops Farmers' Market
- Support the efforts of the KOFCA to establish a permanent organic retail outlet and the North Shore Business Improvement Association to establish a retail incubator and public market.
- Establish an agri-tourism and Farm Trails initiative
- Encourage more tourism interpretation of the region's agricultural sector.
- Stage SuperHost and FoodSafe workshops specifically for direct farm marketers in the study area.
- Stage a continuing education course on marketing agri-food products in the main communities of the study area.

### 3.3.1 ***Hire a person to act as a marketing extension officer for agri-food products.***

#### **Rationale**

Many informed persons have commented about the general low level of comfort and expertise with marketing matters among small- and medium-scale producers. In the survey for this project, the respondents did not highly rate their marketing knowledge and skills. This issue is expected because of the time pressures of production, low margins in some agricultural pursuits and part-time characteristic of some small-scale agricultural sectors. There are exceptions and sometimes tremendous ones, where a small- or medium-scale producer has excellent marketing skills and instincts.

BCMAFF does not have marketing extension officers so there is a gap in this area. They have business specialists who are attached to commodity teams, working on a provincial level, who are oriented towards financial matters. The agricultural officers in district offices are tremendous resources but their primary mandates revolve around production issues, although they are often highly familiar with many marketing issues. With the restructuring of BCMAFF in the mid 90s, the extension services were largely removed and replaced with a sectoral development focus.

The Advanced Technology Centre has offered some marketing services for processed agricultural products in the past, with an emphasis on the herb and nutraceutical areas. It operates on a fee for service basis.

The recommendation is that same person fulfill the roles of Marketing Extension Advisor and Executive Director for the new development organization.

The Community Futures organizations have well-established offices and business counseling track records so we are recommending that they share the responsibility for funding and housing the agri-food marketing advisor. This person can also play an important role in helping to carry out the recommended strategy for a small-scale food processing program.

An example of a Community Futures organization becoming involved with a marketing outreach project is in the Fort St John area. Community Futures Development Corporation of Peace Liard has hired two persons under contract to undertake marketing for local craftpersons. The initiative started in Fall 1999 and was modeled after a Nova Scotia company. It is now being incorporated as Northern Exposure Gift Co. The CFDC-owned company buys products from local crafters and distributes them to retail and wholesale buyers. They provide marketing advice as well. Seed money has come from several sources, including HRDC and Canadian Rural Partnership. The objective is to eventually convert the company into a financially self-sustaining operation.

It is advisable that the location of the extension advisor be discussed with the Advanced Technology Centre. It may wish to play a role in this initiative, given its extension experience. We recommend that the CFDC organizations, BCMAFF, and the Advanced Technology Centre, along with the Ad Hoc Committee or the new development organization, establish an advisory board to supervise this service and coordinate it with their own activities.

#### **Responsibility**

CFDC-Thompson Country, CFDC-Nicola Valley and CFDC-Sun County and Central Interior First Nations CFDC

#### **Actions**

- ✓ Establish a committee of representatives from the CFDC organizations, Advanced Technology Centre, and BCMAFF to draft a job description and position advertisement.
- ✓ Identify and hire an appropriately qualified person to undertake the marketing extension function.
- ✓ Draft a business and operational plan for this service.

#### **Priority and Timing**

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High. Early 2001



### 3.3.2 *Research the capability of the Interior Vegetable Marketing Agency to service producers in the study area.*

#### **Rationale**

As a producer co-operative organization, the Interior Vegetable Marketing Agency (IVMA) is potentially a tremendous boon for study area producers. Unfortunately, the organization has chosen to limit its services. This creates a difficult situation for those that want to use a collaborative marketing vehicle to penetrate wholesale, retail and HRI outlets. Problems exist at both ends of the marketing spectrum. IVMA uses a centralized cooling and warehousing approach which is not helpful for smaller producers in the study area. As well, IVMA relies on order-taking rather than proactively promoting and selling its products. This situation creates an incentive for some producers to bypass the IVMA and sell direct to wholesalers, retailers and HRI outlets. It is an especially difficult circumstance for new greenhouse producers with substantial capital investments and a regulatory requirement to pay a marketing fee to the IVMA.

The issues with the IVMA are not unique to the study area.

A revitalized IVMA is potentially a competitive advantage for study area producers. As a well-established co-operative organization with market

order powers, it could spearhead further development of the Southern Interior's vegetable production. Its economies of scale in marketing could circumvent a fundamental disadvantage that prevents small- and medium-scale producers from meeting the service and product quality expectations of retailers (which only reflect those of their customers).

#### **Responsibility**

Ad Hoc Committee, Council of Marketing Boards

#### **Actions**

- ✓ Ad Hoc Committee makes a formal request to the Council of Marketing Boards to sponsor a marketing audit of the IVMA as the first step towards developing a revitalized business strategy for this organization.
- ✓ The Ad Hoc Committee should contact other interested organizations, such as the Interior Greenhouse producers association, to arrange a meeting with the board of the IVMA to discuss further development of the Southern Interior's vegetable sector

#### **Priority and Timing**

High, ongoing.

### 3.3.3 *Establish a farmers' market in Merritt and further upgrade the Kamloops Farmers' Market*

#### **Rationale**

Direct marketing is the main channel for distributing products of small-scale producers to consumers. Farmers' markets have evolved into the main direct marketing channel for small-scale vegetable producers. Expanding the number of farmers' markets and growing established markets is a primary development strategy for small-scale agriculture.

There is a temptation in farmers' market societies to close participation, thereby restricting competition, and as well, reduce some administrative headaches. This is an unfortunate circumstance because it cuts

into their principal advantage; farmers' markets offer the benefits of economies of scale to participants. In their absence, small-scale producers must largely make their own arrangements to promote and sell their products.

Kamloops is fortunate to have a vibrant farmers' market and society. For a nominal fee, local producers can set up a stall and sell their produce in a fun atmosphere. By virtue of providing a tremendous direct marketing venue, the Kamloops farmers' market society is a strong, positive force in the further development of small-scale agriculture

in the study area. It is important that it recognize and gauge how to use this influence and power.

Merritt, the second largest community in the study area does not have a farmers' market when other, smaller communities in BC do so. It would be advantageous for further development of the small-scale sector to have another direct marketing outlet in Merritt for selling their products.

The East Vancouver Farmers' Market Society has set a precedent in BC for promoting new farmers markets by establishing a second market in the west end and setting up one in Coquitlam, operating it for a season and then turning it over to a local society.

The Kamloops farmers' market society should look at bringing a farmers' market into Merritt. Once the market is established a local society could be formed to assume control.

Farmers' markets dotted the province in the 1950s and into the 60s but got steamrollered under by mall stores, supermarket expansions and the materialistic value set of the 1970s. Their resurgence in the 1990s is a reflection of baby boomer values and the seeking of new shopping experiences. They compete with other retailers for the food dollar of consumers so it is appropriate that they adopt some of the strategic and business planning techniques, if not the business practices, of their well-heeled competitors.

The study area is also fortunate to have a post-secondary institution that offers a four-year business program. It would be worthwhile for the Kamloops farmers' market society to link up with UCC's business faculty and program to prepare a strategy and business plan for the markets further development. Alternatively a consultant could be secured to assist the local society to engage in this process. As an example, the market society has chosen to allow few processed food producers and craftpersons. Despite having less space the East Vancouver Farmers' Market Society allows more non-primary producers as a percentage of its vendors.

Who is allowed into the market affects the merchandising mix and the shopping experience. There is often a trade-off between physical capacity and demand for stalls at farmers markets and

Kamloops is no exception. By engaging in a formal process of strategy-making and business planning, the different expectations, including consumer, small-scale agriculture development, and competitive ones can be researched and considered in an organized framework.

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### **Responsibility**

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Kamloops farmers' market society

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### **Actions**

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Kamloops farmers' market

- ✓ Apply to the Pilot Projects Initiative of the Canadian Rural Partnership (CRP) for funding of a strategy and business plan.
- ✓ Discuss with UCC's business faculty the potential for its senior students to assist the farmers market society in either its business planning and/or with individual market participants about their merchandising.

Merritt farmers' market

- ✓ Discuss potential sites and regulatory issues for a Merritt farmers' market with the City of Merritt's planner and economic development officer and CFDC-Nicola Valley.
- ✓ Conduct a workshop on establishing a market.
- ✓ Invite speakers from other markets to make presentations.
- ✓ Prepare list of local farmers, ranchers, orchardists and crafts people who might be interested in a market.
- ✓ Use the workshop to scope out a trial market and an eventual board.
- ✓ Identify a mixed-used site for the market that will allow alternative uses when the market is not open, thereby maximizing infrastructure and space and drawing more traffic into Merritt.
- ✓ Undertake a controlled customer survey to get some feedback on who the customers might be and what their opinions are regarding key site issues including location, setup, parking and access.
- ✓ Access BCMAFF's Farmers' Market promotion program.
- ✓ List the Market on the British Columbia Farm Market Directory, a free web site listing maintained by FBMinet-BC.<sup>2</sup>

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### **Priority and Timing**

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High, ongoing.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://fbminet.ca/bc/direct.htm>

**3.3.4 Support the efforts of the KOFCA to establish a permanent organic retail outlet and the North Shore Business Improvement Association to establish a retail incubator and public market.**

**Rationale**

There are two exciting food marketing initiatives underway in Kamloops, a co-operative organic retail food store and a retail incubator / public market.

The Kamloops Organic Food Co-operative Association (KOFCA) will soon finish a business plan for establishing a retail outlet in Kamloops. Its opening would be the culmination of three years of work by a dedicated group of volunteers and provide an important new conventional marketing channel for regional producers.

It will supply produce year-round, sourcing from wholesalers in the off-season of local growers. In addition, the store will carry a full line of bulk and packaged foods. It will continue to be a co-operative, assessing a nominal annual membership fee of \$10.00. KOFCA is currently seeking a Victoria Street location (between 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. South Side – old pool hall). It would offer a spacious area for shopping, a juice bar, and area for seating. Extra room at the back of the store is intended as a multi-purpose space for meetings, storage, and educational forums. \$800,000 – 1 million of annual sales will be required to operate the store effectively. It is anticipated that a small profit will be made to put toward future growth. A “Capers” type of environment is planned, good

lighting, signage, good view of products and cheery atmosphere-aesthetics.

North Shore Business Improvement Association in Kamloops sponsored the preparation of a feasibility study for a market themed business incubator. It is discussing the next steps for this project with CFDC-TC.

The concept includes a business incubator offering professional assistance and training, linked to a public market, and production assistance for small food processors through a shared-use commercial kitchen. The project is referred to as the “New Beginnings Market”. Incubator tenants are seen as coming from home-based businesses wishing to grow without assuming heavy capital costs and persons who have developed business plans through CFDC-TC.

**Responsibility**

Ad Hoc Committee and new development organization

**Actions**

- ✓ Ask the KOFCA and North Shore Business Improvement Association to make presentations on their projects to the Ad Hoc Committee so they are fully informed about these endeavours.

**Priority and Timing**

Medium.

**3.3.5 Encourage more tourism interpretation of the region’s agricultural sector.**

**Rationale**

Agriculture and tourism share much in common, and the potential for joint development in some areas of the US has been rapid, although in BC the economic potential for this pairing has hardly been

explored. Agricultural tourism is the visitation of agricultural attractions as part of a leisure time activity. Agricultural tourism may include visits to dude ranches, pick-your-own farms, roadside stands, wineries, farm or ranch B&Bs, agricultural festivals and food processing facilities.

Agricultural tourists are interested in having a farm experience and they often want to buy agri-food products. Agricultural producers need to be aware that they are selling services as well as products. Value can be added to their products not just by further processing, but also by providing various services or experiences along with the product. Profit potential is increased when an undistinctive raw commodity is converted into a unique product or experience.

The study area has tremendous potential for agri-tourism and has some interesting agri-tourism products. The Okanagan's aggressive push into agri-tourism with its wine country and orchard promotions presents a good example of the possibilities in this field.

### **Responsibility**

Ad Hoc Committee and VentureKamloops

### **Actions**

- ✓ Help organize a group of farmers and ranchers interested in value-added and tourism development. The following tasks can only be undertaken with the cooperation of an identifiable group of clients.
- ✓ Expand the Chamber of Commerce visitor survey to gather feedback on agricultural experiences tourists would be interested in.
- ✓ Inventory agriculturalists with existing tourism features or facilities.
- ✓ Identify opportunities for local entrepreneurs to develop other money-making activities to be offered as part of the ranch or farm experience. One example is the Caravan Farm Theatre project, which was an innovative and informative school field trip offered in May 1994 in the Okanagan area. Students were taken by a horse drawn wagon to see fields, animals and gardens. At the garden, they met a farmer who talked about seeds, composting, food and the different ways that people farm. The wagon then took participants to the woods to see a puppet show where the audience heard stories about four farmers from different corners of the world. The Theatre is now a major tourist attraction. Another example is the Annual Bus Tour and Luncheon conducted during Abbotsford's annual Berry Festival.

Ideas for value-added tourism include:

- Guided tours
- Horse/hay rides
- First Nations interpretation and story-telling
- B&Bs
- Vacation on a working farm
- On-farm camping
- ✓ Identify and promote other (already existing) complementary activities as part of the ranch or farm experience. Examples might include:
  - Museum
  - Rec centre activities and facilities
  - Annual Fall Fair
  - Golfing
  - River activities
- ✓ Encourage accommodation facilities to provide overnight cooling and storage of fruit and produce.
- ✓ Enlist Tourism BC and Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association officials to stage a one-day workshop on agri-tourism in both Kamloops and Merritt.
- ✓ Develop a targeted, interpretive guide for the region (see next strategy)
- ✓ Research how Okanagan tourism officials and winery owners have built up their region's agri-tourism. A first stop can be the BC Wine Institute, which represents all registered grape growers in the province. The Institute coordinates marketing efforts to enhance the image of B.C wines, and develops educational materials for the purpose of informing the public. Past projects of the Institute include: restaurant promotions, wine festivals, the "Wine Route" touring program, and the promotional booklet "B.C Wine Country".
- ✓ Contact an established touring company such as Specialty Agricultural Tours to determine how best to organize tours locally.<sup>3</sup>
- ✓ Tourism BC recently commissioned a pilot project in the Okanagan on further developing agri-tourism. Its progress should be monitored and possibly a joint effort undertaken.

### **Priority and Timing**

High, ongoing.

<sup>3</sup> (604) 946-3929 fax (604) 596-8085

### 3.3.6 *Establish an agri-tourism and Farm/Ranch Trails initiative.*

#### **Rationale**

There is a vibrant guest ranch sector in the study area, which includes the Cattle Drive project and a BC Guest Ranchers Association in Kamloops, but there are few examples of other agri-tourism products in the study area. The noticeable exceptions are the buffalo ranch near the McClure Ferry, the Ginseng Education Centre, operated by Sunmore Heath Tech, the annual Provincial Winter Fair in late September at the KXA facility and Horsting's farm market in Cache Creek. Smaller scale agri-tourism products are lacking, especially farm-based bed and breakfast experiences.

VentureKamloops has a summer student looking at agri-tourism issues and when it hires a new tourism manager further development of agri-tourism is expected to be a priority.

In adjacent areas, agri-tourism on a small-scale is further developed. Several Shuswap area agricultural producers banded together to create a farm trail initiative, entitled, "Country Roads of the Shuswap". Other farm trail initiatives have been undertaken in the Okanagan (wineries), the Fraser Valley and southern Vancouver Island. Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association has issued a well done booklet entitled "Tours of Abundance", a guide to agriculture and wine tours but its focus is largely on the Okanagan because of the further development of agri-tourism there.

Any farm/ranch tour guidebook should be linked to other promotional vehicles, such as the Thompson/Okanagan Tourism Association's and the VentureKamloops' web sites.

#### **Responsibility**

Ad Hoc Committee and VentureKamloops

#### **Actions**

- ✓ Establish a task force with representatives from VentureKamloops and the Ad Hoc Committee to establish a farm/ranch trail organization.
- ✓ Discuss the experience of establishing a farm trail organization and products with other sponsors of BC farm trail initiatives.
- ✓ Apply to Investment Agriculture for funding to create and print a farm/ranch trail map and web page (for the VentureKamloops web site).
- ✓ Determine the objective of the guide. The two main approaches are a single topic or a touring guide.
- ✓ Select an author for the guide.
- ✓ Inventory local attractions and resources and prioritize those that will be part of the guide.
- ✓ Structure the publication.
- ✓ Collect resource information.
- ✓ Write, edit, lay out and print the publication.
- ✓ Distribute the guide.
- ✓ Evaluate the guide's impact.

#### **Priority and Timing**

Medium

## Profile: Perth Federation of Agriculture (PFA)

Perth County, situated in South-western Ontario, is in the #1 farm belt in the province. Stratford is a growing city in Perth County and is well known for the Stratford Shakespeare Festival. With more than a half million annual visitors coming to the Stratford Festival, adding agri-tourism as an extra tourist attraction seemed to make sense. It was felt that Perth County's rural culture and environment would be an attraction for local and external markets.

In a 1993 economic development study, agriculture was identified as major industrial sector in Perth County and the Stratford Festival was identified as a major strength among Perth County economic resources. Community meetings were held in Monkton and St. Marys to identify ways to strengthen a partnership between the agriculture and tourism sectors. Pilot projects were undertaken in these areas to determine the support from the community for undertaking this initiative. The success of these projects determined that there was sufficient community commitment to proceed.

Members were divided as to the main objective for agri-tourism. Some felt the education of the urban public was the major objective while others thought the economic impact/benefit should be the major objective.

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) in conjunction with Perth Federation of Agriculture (PFA) held a meeting of farmers to determine their interest in Agri-Tourism and entertainment farming. An Agri-Tourism sub-committee of PCCDC was formed and proceeded to launch a Perth County Agri-Tourism Pilot project. Its objective was to act as a pilot model.

Activities in the project included finding six appropriate farm sites for motorcoach tours, working with the farm hosts, developing tour itineraries and promoting to tour bus operators, developing promotional material, organizing and co-ordinating a self-guided Harvest Day tour in October for approximately 1,500 people.

The project combined agriculture awareness objectives and economic diversification objectives. As a result of the success of the pilot and feedback from participants, the project has been expanded. The Get Out of Town Perth Agri-Tours project includes the following components:

1. Developing a business plan and economic impact model (important to the long term sustainability of the project).
2. Seeking potential partnerships including funding partnerships (Perth County Council, Municipal councils, Farmers' Market, small business and industry).
3. Expanding to include 8 - 10 new host farm tour sites.
4. Developing an Open House Farm Tour program for motorists on Dark Monday.
5. Developing a training program for step on tour guides to be used on tour buses and farm sites.
6. Developing promotional material.

The \$5 per person fee for the tours is split between the farmer and the agri-tourism program. Estimates are that each day a motor coach filled with tourists stays in the area, \$3,000 to \$5,000 is generated for that community  
*Source: Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs*

### 3.3.7 **Stage SuperHost and FoodSafe workshops specifically for direct farm marketers in the study area.**

#### **Rationale**

Direct farm marketers are producers, first, and marketers, second. It is rare that a producer has a business background when stepping into the agri-food sector. An important part of marketing is selling and customer relations. Some persons have a natural affinity for both by virtue of possessing a sunny personality and well-rounded inter-personal skills. For others, one-to-one selling and customer relations is a difficult chore and/or unfamiliar.

The SuperHost programs are a province-wide initiative to provide basic training in these areas. Longstanding in BC since their inception for Expo

86, they are delivered by UCC's Continuing Education division.

Direct farm marketers may think their selling and customer relations interactions are so sporadic that there is no need for training. This type of thinking is a problem on two levels. One is that each farmers market participant is dependent to some degree on the quality of fellow participants. A poor experience with one vendor can sour a consumer on the overall experience. The second is that direct farm marketers have relatively few customers so it is important to provide good service to each in order to convert them to a repeat customer and generate positive word-of-mouth promotion.

FoodSafe training is important because of the health and product quality negatives of selling tainted food items. Food has great potential for causing some health problems and vendors have to fully understand how to avoid any problems and help secure the health of their customers. There are few accolades to be earned from safe food handling practises because they are largely hidden from the consumer but there are huge business problems that can be avoided by engaging in them. And it is not only an individual problem as direct marketers who sell together, in a farmers market, for example, would be tainted by problems with a fellow vendor's poor food handling practises.

***Responsibility***

New development organization and Kamloops farmers market society

***Actions***

- ✓ Discuss the potential of running SuperHost and FoodSafe programs for direct farm marketers with UCC's Continuing Education division in each of the study area's major communities.
- ✓ Make participation at SuperHost and FoodSafe workshops a mandatory requirement prior to setting up a stall at area farmers markets

***Priority and Timing***

Medium

**3.3.8 Stage a continuing education course on marketing agri-food products in the main communities of the study area.**

***Rationale***

This project's mail survey showed that small- and medium-scale producers in the region were concerned about their knowledge and skills in marketing, more so for processed items.

There are many agricultural training courses throughout BC. The BC Agricultural Policy Board maintains a web site that lists them, predominantly production or financial ones. UCC's Continuing Education division runs some production-oriented agriculture courses, including horticulture ones. As well, it offers general business courses, including ones on marketing. The business faculty of UCC and the Horticulture division have teamed up to offer a second year course for the one-year horticulture students. They acquire a business diploma after two years of study.

The UCC horticulture continuing education courses are largely used by persons interested in ornamental propagation. An agricultural organization has not established a relationship with UCC's Continuing Education division to provide advice and promote their programs among its members.

It would be worthwhile for the new development organization to forge a relationship with UCC's Continuing Education division and its Business Faculty to create an agri-food marketing course that can be delivered in Kamloops, Merritt, Ashcroft

and 100 Mile House. There are a tremendous amount of materials to draw upon but it will be important that an instructor with extensive agri-food marketing experience be brought on board to deliver the course. There are also excellent resources for guest speakers in the region, who have hands-on experience and that can be invited to share their knowledge and experiences.

***Responsibility***

New development organization, UCC Continuing Education Division, CFDC-TC, CFDC-Nicola Valley and CFDC-Sun Country.

***Actions***

- ✓ Discuss the potential of establishing an agri-food marketing course with UCC's Continuing Education and its Business faculty in each of the study area's major communities.
- ✓ Identify potential guest speakers for the course.
- ✓ Develop a promotion program to ensure the courses are well-attended.

***Priority and Timing***

Medium

## 3.4 Financing

### **Background**

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Agriculture is one of the few remaining industry areas where governments provide financial assistance for businesses. For producers there are risk management programs, such as crop insurance, whole farm insurance and NISA, and lending programs, such as the several Farm Credit Corporation offerings. For organizations, there are infrastructure development assessment and capital contributions from Investment Agriculture, and the federal Canadian Rural Partnership program for smaller, community-based projects. Producers can obtain business counseling assistance for a nominal

\$100 fee from the Farm Counselling and Debt Mediation Program of Agriculture Canada. A complete listing with program descriptions appears in Report 5.

### **Recommendations**

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- **Promote the availability of government financial assistance programs.**
- **Establish a small-scale food processing loan program.**

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#### **3.4.1 Promote the availability of government financial assistance programs.**

##### **Rationale**

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The mail survey of regional producers indicated a very low level of awareness of well-established government financial assistance programs and low self-perceptions about the offerings of these programs.

There is some promotion by the individual organizations about their programs and, quite frankly, information is widely available about all of them, and it is up to individual producers to avail themselves of it. At the same time, the low level of awareness is an industry development issue and is likely a constraint.

The proposed communications initiatives presented earlier in this document provide good vehicles for passing through information about these programs to producers. Ultimately it is up to producers to further look into the ones of interest to them.

Having a comprehensive database of producers will be a tremendous advantage for undertaking targeted mailings. The new development organization may be able to offset some of their costs by undertaking joint mailings with some program providers.

##### **Responsibility**

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New development organization

##### **Actions**

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- ✓ Communicate information government financial assistance programs through the proposed web page, newspaper column and newsletter.
- ✓ Discuss joint mailings with government financial assistance providers.

##### **Priority and Timing**

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Medium



### 3.4.2 *Establish a small-sale food processing loan program.*

#### ***Rationale***

There is a dedicated program for small-scale food processors, entitled “Loans for Value-Added Processors”. Backstopped by Western Economic Diversification Canada, it is administered through an established lender, such as TD Bank, Royal Bank, CIBC and FCC. The main problems with the program are that it is not locally driven and does not include a formal program of follow-up counseling.

CFDC-TC has a good track record of success with marketing efforts to create a portfolio of forestry-based loans, which can be a template for creating a specific initiative aimed at value-added food processing.

The Community Futures organizations in the study area should examine the potential for becoming an approved lender under this Western Economic Diversification Canada program. It could then marry its ability to market loans within a local sector and counsel borrowers to WED’s financial backstop, thereby reducing the lending risk of the CFDCs. As well, since the program is established, the CFDCs gain the advantages of acquiring established administrative practices and promotional items.

WED may not want to set a precedent by establishing an arrangement with a Community Futures organization but the measure could be presented as a pilot program.

#### ***Responsibility***

CFDC-TC, CFDC-Nicola Valley and CFDC-Sun Country

#### ***Actions***

- ✓ Make informal inquiries at WED about this organization’s interest and willingness to entertain a proposal for delivery of its “Loans for Value-Added Processors”.
- ✓ Prepare a business plan for presentation to WED for delivering the “Loans for Value-Added Processors” program in the study area.

#### ***Priority and Timing***

Medium

## 3.5 Monitoring and Evaluation

### **Background**

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Monitoring the progress of the Development Strategy will allow for adjustment to changing conditions, reallocate resources in the event of changing priorities, and redraw strategies in response to unsatisfactory achievement of goals. Over a period of time, circumstances and priorities will change, goals will be met and some initiatives will prove unrealistic. To account for this, goals and strategies will require updating. It is necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan in order to be able to adjust and improve the plan on a timely basis.

### **Recommendations**

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#### **3.5.1 Monitor Plan Implementation and Evaluate Effectiveness of Projects.**

### **Responsibility**

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New development organization, executive director

### **Actions**

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1. Hold regular meetings.
  - ✓ Regular meetings with the Board should include a checkup of any portion of the action plan falling within the time period. Changes in resources, people, or information that will impact strategy should be noted and the strategy altered accordingly.
2. File regular monitoring reports.
  - ✓ The Executive Director should prepare a regular monitoring report showing progress on the action plan. This would essentially be a summary of the previous monthly meetings. Budgetary updates would also be required.

3. Conduct case studies on one or two major initiatives.
    - ✓ One or two important initiatives should be selected for formal evaluation. We suggest any advertising and promotion program be evaluated since they generally consume financial resources. Issues to assess include the following:
      - Rationale** - Was the rationale for the goal well conceived? Did it meet logical ends? Does the need still exist? Is there still support for the activity?
      - Efficiency** - Was the program administered efficiently? Did the resources go to the purposes intended? Were quality outputs produced in a timely manner?
      - Effectiveness** - Were goals achieved?
      - Impacts** - Were there desirable or undesirable impacts or spin-offs not directly associated with the project?
- At least one evaluation should be on an initiative in progress and one on a completed project.

### **Priority and Timing**

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High and ongoing.



