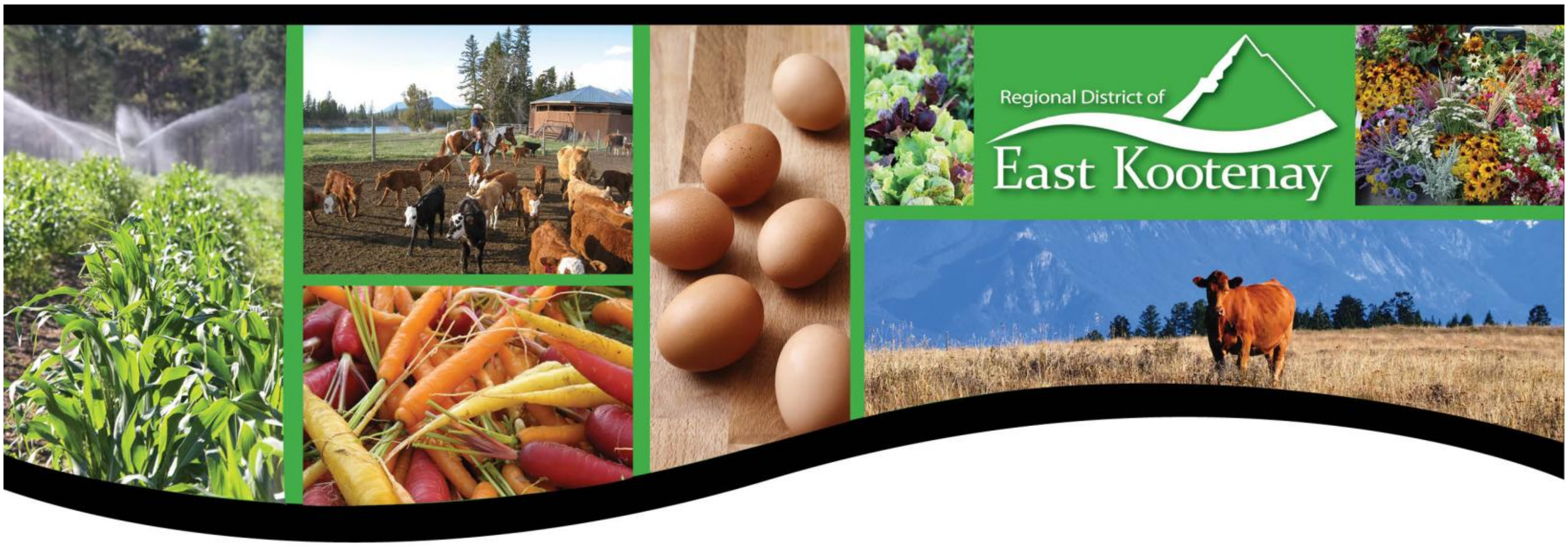

RDEK Agricultural Plan

October 2014

Submitted By:
VASTResource Solutions Inc.

DELIVERED BY

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The East Kootenay Agricultural Plan was developed as a collaborative process involving consultation with local residents, government agencies and local stakeholders. The Regional District of East Kootenay Agriculture Plan Steering Committee (APSC) comprised of residents of the agricultural community from various Electoral Areas in the region, worked in conjunction with the agricultural consultant to provide direction to the planning process. We wish to thank the following participants for their contribution and commitment, which has been instrumental to the development of this report.

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ACRONYMS

AAC	Agricultural Advisory Commission or Committee
AAFC-PARC	Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada - Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre
AITC	Agriculture in the Classroom
AKBLG	Association of Kootenay Boundary Local Governments
ALC	Agricultural Land Commission
ALO	Agricultural Liaison Officer
ALR	Agricultural Land Reserve
ALUI	Agricultural Land Use Inventory
APC	Advisory Planning Commission
APSC	Agricultural Plan Steering Committee
CBT	Columbia Basin Trust
CFAC	Cranbrook Food Action Committee
CFEK	Community Futures East Kootenay
CLI	Canada Land Inventory
COTR	College of the Rockies
CVFCA	Columbia Valley Food Corridor Association
ESI BC	Ecological Services Initiative BC
GCC	Grasslands Conservation Council
IAF BC	Investment Agriculture Foundation of British Columbia
KCP	Kootenay Conservation Program
KLA	Kootenay Livestock Association
KRIC	Kootenay Rockies Innovation Council
MAGR	Ministry of Agriculture
MFLNRO	Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations
MH/IHA	Ministry of Health/Interior Health Authority
RDEK	Regional District of East Kootenay
RMTS	Rocky Mountain Trench Society
UBCM	Union of British Columbia Municipalities
WDFI	Windermere District Farmers Institute
WSBA	Waldo Stockbreeders Association

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Agriculture has been an integral part of the East Kootenay way of life for more than 100 years and is important to the ecological, economic and social sustainability of the Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK) and its residents. As articulated in the Agricultural Plan vision statement endorsed by the Agricultural Plan Steering Committee (APSC), ***"Agriculture in the RDEK is a vital and viable industry, sustaining a society that values agricultural producers, locally grown food, rural land and natural systems",*** this plan contains strategies to foster, adapt and sustain the long term viability of farming in the region. It must be emphasized that this Agricultural Plan is a 'living' document, and must be reviewed and updated regularly based on implementation feedback and new information in order to remain relevant and effective.

Agriculture in the East Kootenay

Section 1 of the Agriculture Plan provides the context and rationale for the planning process and a snapshot of what agriculture looks like in the region. There are unique aspects to the East Kootenay region that have shaped and will continue to influence the agricultural industry. The mountainous physiography of the region has imparted soil, climatic and terrain characteristics that have, for the most part, constrained agriculture to the valley bottoms of the Columbia, Elk and Kootenay River drainages, and contributed to an agricultural industry focused primarily on extensive beef cattle production relying on access to Crown range grazing leases, versus smaller-scale, more intensive value-added operations.

Approximately 9.6% (265,910 ha) of the total RDEK land base, is considered agricultural land and is designated to the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). Approximately one-third of the ALR land is privately owned, while the remainder is Crown owned and managed for multiple uses (i.e. grazing, wildlife, forestry, mining, etc.) rather than exclusively for agriculture. Of the RDEK lands within the ALR, 24% are considered capable of sustained production of common cultivated field crops and the remaining 76% are of lower capability with topography, soil moisture deficit and/or stoniness limitations that restrict their use or require specialized management.

While the agricultural planning process identified considerable interest and enthusiasm for "micro-scale" agri-food enterprises such as market gardens and farmers' markets, the Plan must also address the issues and opportunities related to beef cattle production, which is the largest sector of our agricultural industry and the largest agricultural land use in the RDEK. It is from these unique characteristics that the RDEK Agricultural Plan provides an opportunity to identify future strategies, actions and partnerships that are essential to supporting a thriving and growing agricultural sector in the region.

Key Issues, Challenges and Opportunities

Section 2 of the Agriculture Plan describes the consultation and engagement process utilized to gather and record information and input from agricultural producers and residents across the region and identifies eight broad issue/opportunity themes:

- Economic viability of existing farms/ranches
- Agricultural extension, networking and support
- Producer/Consumer relationships
- Marketing and Branding
- Government policies and regulations
- Diversification and value-added opportunities
- Farm demographics and succession
- Land access, value and utilization

Strategic Goals and Key Actions

Section 3 of the Agriculture Plan identifies and describes five (5) key strategic goals focused on addressing the issues, challenges and opportunities identified throughout the consultation and engagement process. Recommendations for key actions needed to achieve each strategic goal are provided within Section 3.

1. *Enhance institutional support for East Kootenay agriculture.*

   The agricultural sector in the East Kootenay lacks the level of institutional, organizational or human infrastructure that is needed to address challenges and achieve many of the priorities identified by the agricultural community.

2. *Improve the economic viability of East Kootenay agriculture.*

   Agricultural Census data, supported by anecdotal information provided by producers during the development of the Agriculture Plan, indicates that many agricultural enterprises in the RDEK are facing ongoing profitability challenges. While diversification and value-added initiatives such as on-farm processing, direct farm marketing and agri-tourism are being successfully employed by some farmers, economic initiatives and regulatory efficiencies are required to improve overall sector viability.

3. *Encourage Agriculture on Agricultural Land.*

   Consistent land use policies and a decision making framework are needed to protect the agricultural land resource and foster the development of the agricultural industry. Initiatives are needed to support farm succession, enable and train new farmers, and improve linkages between those who own farmland and those who wish to farm.

4. *Increase Public Knowledge and Support of Agriculture*.

   Agriculture in the East Kootenay lacks a clear identity amongst the majority of its population and specifically, urban residents. People are not always aware of the contribution that agriculture makes to the economy, quality of life and environmental amenities that society enjoys and expects. Public support has become increasingly important to agricultural sector objectives, as the interests of community, farmland protection, local food and economic viability of farm operators have become more intertwined. Agriculture stands to gain from a closer relationship with the public as the importance to community well-being of economically sustainable local food and fibre production becomes more appreciated.

5. *An Agri-food Systems Strategy for the East Kootenay.*

   The development and implementation of a regional agri-food system strategy that encompasses the interests of all stakeholders is a critical step in ensuring a sustainable agricultural industry in the East Kootenay.

Implementing the Agriculture Plan will be complex; the goals are broad and involve many stakeholders, including producers, consumers, communities and governments. The collaboration and shared vision of all these individuals and groups will be required if the plan is to succeed. In the initial implementation phase, it is recommended that the RDEK focus on the key action items identified under Strategic Goal # 1 - *Enhance institutional support for East Kootenay agriculture,* namely:

- Recruit an Agricultural Liaison Officer (ALO) for a three-year “pilot” period with primary responsibility for implementation of the Agricultural Plan strategy and recommendations;
- Enhance the existing RDEK Agricultural Advisory Commission (AAC) to include producer representation from all six electoral areas, and develop appropriate terms of reference to guide and govern the committee’s function; and
- Facilitate an East Kootenay Agriculture Group/Association that broadly represents all agricultural interests and sectors within the region

The majority of the remaining recommendations in the Plan are largely contingent upon the successful implementation of these three initiatives.

Implementation Plan

Section 4 of the Agriculture Plan outlines the implementation plan for the range of specific actions recommended within each of the five strategic goals identified in Section 3. The implementation tables have been organized to identify a suggested timeline and priority ranking and provide direction and coordination for actions of the RDEK and other participating partners that have an interest in agriculture. Near term high priority items where the RDEK is the lead implementation agency have been highlighted for clarity and easy recognition.

1 INTRODUCTION

The development of an Agricultural Plan was seen as an important opportunity for the Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK) and the agricultural sector. Current and long range planning by the RDEK has attempted to mitigate the impact of development on the agricultural land base; however, the need for long range planning for agriculture is recognized. The Agricultural Plan process provided a unique opportunity to focus on agriculture and propose recommendations for actions, regulations, plans and policies to support agricultural producers and the land base on which agriculture occurs. Beyond the RDEK, the Agricultural Plan is an opportunity to identify partnerships, actions and regulations that are essential to supporting a thriving and growing agricultural sector in the region.

1.1 The Process

The Agricultural Plan was developed by the RDEK in partnership with the Agricultural Plan Steering Committee (APSC) and with funding support from the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC (IAF BC). The initial phase involved a comprehensive Agricultural Land Use Inventory (ALUI) of land use and land cover within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) utilizing the Ministry of Agriculture, Strengthening Farming Program protocol. The second phase included consultation and engagement activities, development of the RDEK Agricultural Plan Background Report (Appendix A), and creation of this Plan.

The development of the Agricultural Plan was directed by the Consultation Plan and Terms of Reference under the guidance of the APSC. The Terms of Reference, endorsed by the RDEK Board, established goals and objectives for the Agricultural Plan. Direct opportunities to engage those actively involved in or interested in agriculture in the region were utilized throughout the process. Opportunities for engagement included, newsletters, meetings, open houses and surveys. In recognition of the Agricultural Plan as a RDEK policy document, the objectives as identified within the Terms of Reference primarily focused on the RDEK; however the Plan and resulting recommendations have been informed by the sector consultation and address opportunities for implementation by the sector, the RDEK and third parties. The Agricultural Plan terms of reference[1] identified the following objectives for the agricultural plan process:

- Identify a clear vision for the future of agriculture within the East Kootenay region;
- Identify actions and short and long term indicators that can be undertaken by the RDEK and/or the agricultural sector to enhance, promote and protect agriculture;
- Provide recommendations to amend RDEK bylaws, plans, policies to reflect the goals of the Agricultural Plan;
- Provide recommendations to changes in Provincial legislation, regulations and policies to reflect the goals of the Agricultural Plan;
- Recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the agricultural resources in the region and focus on potentially viable, sustainable and diversified agricultural endeavours; and
- Provide a recommendation to the RDEK Board on the future composition and role of the RDEK Agricultural Advisory Commission (AAC).

[1] Agricultural Plan Terms of Reference (March 2012) http://ekag.ca/terms-of-reference

The Agricultural Plan explores the opportunities available to the RDEK and the agricultural community to foster, adapt and sustain agriculture within each of the three sub-regions of the RDEK (Figure 1).

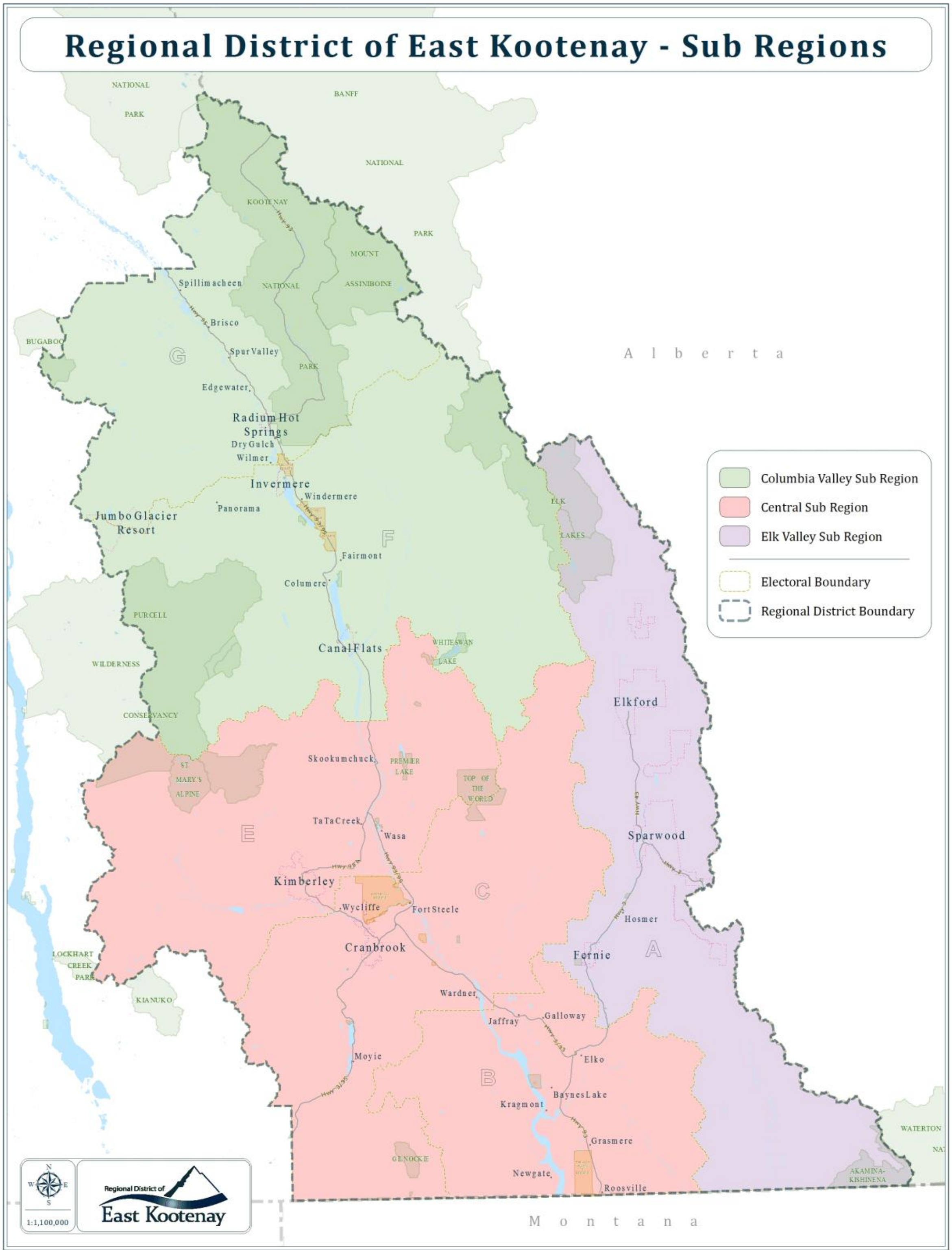

Figure 1. Regional District of East Kootenay Sub-regions and Communities

1.2 Vision

The future vision for agriculture, initially articulated by the APSC in 2011 and then refined throughout the planning and consultation process, is as follows:

> ***Agriculture in the RDEK is a vital and viable industry, sustaining a society that values agricultural producers, locally grown food, rural land and natural systems.***

1.3 Priority Issues

A range of issues drive the need to have an Agricultural Plan in the region. The need for planning through agricultural oriented policies and studies, such as agricultural area plans has been recognized in recent Official Community Plan (OCP) policies. However, the dedication of RDEK or provincial resources has not previously been available. Recognition of the importance of agriculture in the region as highlighted by the Windermere District Farmers Institute, and the availability of funding through the Investment Agriculture Foundation of British Columbia (IAF BC) resulted in the allocation of the necessary resources for the Agricultural Plan. The four priority issues below introduce the preliminary themes identified in the Agricultural Plan Terms of Reference and their regional context. The priority issues have informed the consultation and provided direction to the recommendations contained within the Agricultural Plan.

1.3.1 The People

A successful agricultural sector requires informed, educated and engaged producers and consumers. Successful producers are essential for agriculture to be maintained as a viable industry. In order for current and future producers to succeed, consumers need to have a greater awareness of agriculture and a broader understanding of the societal benefits associated with a viable and sustainable agricultural sector.

1.3.2 The Place

The geography and culture of the East Kootenay region has defined the agricultural sector. The protection and preservation of the land base is essential to sustaining agriculture in the region. Land under private and public ownership must be accessible and productive for future generations. The connectivity between resources, including recreation, water, and wildlife is a key component in maintaining an agricultural sector. The management of Crown resources must recognize the overarching impact of decisions on the viability of agriculture. Opportunities for utilization of land in a manner that recognizes the importance of integrated and inclusive resource management planning to ensure the maintenance of healthy and sustainable ecosystems is imperative.

1.3.3 The Pressures

The agricultural land and producers within the region are subject to a range of pressures. Lands that are most suitable for agriculture are also the most desired for development. The continuing demand for residential and non-residential uses, frequent ALR applications for non-farm use, subdivision and exclusion and rising land values are placing pressure on agricultural land resources. Seasonal populations provide a greater market for produce and value-added agricultural products; however, new residential development may remove arable land from the agricultural land base.

The economics of agriculture in the East Kootenay region is placing pressure on producers. Low commodity prices, high input and transportation costs, and a limited local independent market have resulted in marginal economic viability. When combined with changes in regulations over recent years the impact has been significant. The commercialization of meat processing and centralization of the food distribution system are two such examples of regulatory changes. The Agricultural Plan provides an opportunity to examine the pressures being experienced within the agricultural sector. Emphasis will be given to recommending changes that would facilitate the agricultural sector adapting and diversifying in a timely manner.

1.3.4 The Possibilities

The Agricultural Plan will proactively explore the possibilities that exist to enhance the economic viability of the agricultural sector in the East Kootenay region. The intent is to identify where the agricultural sector can capitalize on consumer awareness, market trends and opportunities. In order to be successful, there must be flexibility and adaptability in the regulations that govern the agricultural sector at the provincial and local government levels. The Plan is an opportunity to bridge the divide between producers and consumers, generations of producers and between producers within the region. The Agricultural Plan will also be an opportunity to foster dialogue and a shared understanding between the RDEK and the agricultural sector. Connectivity within the region must be cultivated in order to capitalize on opportunities to create a sense of agricultural identity in the East Kootenay through branding and marketing.

1.4 Legislation and Policies

The agricultural sector in the East Kootenay is regulated and influenced by regional, provincial and federal legislation and policies. A detailed overview of the legislation and policy that influences agriculture at each level of government is provided in the RDEK Agricultural Plan Background Report (Appendix 1). An awareness of the jurisdictional responsibilities is helpful in understanding the ability of local government to enhance agriculture in the region. The Agricultural Plan focuses on what the Regional District can do to assist in promoting and enhancing agriculture in the region.

The **primary role** of the Regional District, with respect to maintaining and enhancing the future of agriculture, relates to the **responsibility for land use planning**. The Regional District has authority to adopt zoning bylaw which regulate the use of the land and official community plans (OCP) that influence the current and future use of land. From an agricultural perspective, the regulations with respect to compatibility of land uses and restrictions on minimum parcel sizes through zoning have the greatest influence on maintaining the working landscape. The RDEK currently has an Agricultural Advisory Commission (AAC) in Electoral Areas B and C. The AAC is provided an opportunity to comment on development applications, such as Agricultural Land Reserve non-farm use, subdivision or exclusion applications; rezoning applications or OCP amendments.

Agricultural land use objectives and policies vary between the different OCPs within the Regional District as the documents are drafted in consideration of area specific land use issues and planning priorities. Within OCPs the Regional District has the ability to adopt three types of policies:

- *Direct control* - policies that are related to areas under the jurisdiction of the Regional District, i.e. Policies in support of zoning for agriculture;
- *No control, but influence* - policies that are not under the jurisdiction of the Regional District, but the Regional District can pass a resolution on the matter, i.e. Crown land referral for a commercial recreation tenure from the province; and
- *Public concern but no control* – policies that are neither under the jurisdiction of or for which the Regional District has the ability to directly influence decision making, i.e. Predation issues.

The inclusion of policies whether under Regional District jurisdiction or not is important for the **secondary role** that the Regional District can play to support agriculture, that of **advocacy**. The Regional District, through advocacy, has the ability to support and influence policy at higher levels of government, primarily provincial. The Regional District Board is involved at the regional level through the Association of Kootenay Boundary Local Governments (AKBLG) and provincially at the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM). Board advocacy can be applied through consideration of provincial referrals, participation on AKBLG or UBCM committees or direct correspondence to applicable Ministers and Ministries.

The **third role** which the Regional District is engaged in is the **decision making process for land within the ALR** under the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* and the Agricultural Land Reserve, Use, Subdivision and Procedure Regulation. Applications for non-farm use, subdivision, exclusion or inclusion of land within the ALR are considered by the Regional District prior to consideration by the Agricultural Land Commission. In areas that are covered by a zoning bylaw, applications that are not supported by the Regional District Board are not forwarded to the Agricultural Land Commission for decision. The majority of the Regional District is regulated through zoning bylaws, and this highlights the importance of the Regional District having clear policy to consider when reviewing applications for land that is within the Agricultural Land Reserve.

Under the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* the Regional District may also be granted the authority to make decisions under a Delegated Decision Making Agreement. These agreements are linked to Regional District planning documents and grant the Regional District the authority to make decisions on specific types of applications. **When considering applications under a Delegated Decision Making Agreement the Regional District takes on the role of the Agricultural Land Commission and its related legislation**. As of August 2014, the Regional District has one Delegated Decision Making Agreement in place for Electoral Area A. An agreement is up for renewal in Electoral Area E, however, the adoption of the Wasa and Area Official Community Plan and Electoral Area E Zoning Bylaw necessitates a new agreement.

1.5 Overview of East Kootenay Agriculture

Agriculture has been an integral part of the East Kootenay way of life for more than 100 years. During the first half of the 20th century the region supported predominantly small scale farm operations producing a diversity of agricultural products including tree and bush fruits, vegetables, potatoes, poultry, eggs, milk and other dairy products, cereal grains, hay and Christmas trees, as well as beef cattle and sheep. Small-scale market gardens are currently located throughout the region with on-farm and farmers market sales on a seasonal basis. Over the past 50 years, beef cattle ranching and forage production have become the predominant agricultural enterprise in the RDEK.

A detailed overview of agriculture in the region, including information from the three ALUI reports and information from the 2011 Census of Agriculture is contained within the RDEK Agricultural Plan Background Report. A summary of the current state of agriculture in the region is provided below.

1.5.1 Economic Performance and Viability

Agriculture in the East Kootenay generates approximately $14.5 million in gross farm receipts annually. According to census data, total gross farm receipts have remained relatively stagnant in the East Kootenay over the past 20 years, averaging about $36,000 per farm. Approximately 70% of all farms in the region report gross farm receipts less than $25,000, and total farm business operating expenses have exceeded gross farm receipts in the past four census years (1996 through 2011), suggesting that many operations are not at a scale where there is a reasonable expectation of annual profits (i.e. part-time or hobby operators with full-time off-farm jobs).

1.5.2 Land Use and Capability

Approximately 9.6% (265,910 ha) of the total RDEK land base, primarily along the valley bottoms of the Columbia, Kootenay, and Elk River drainages, is considered agricultural land and is designated to the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). Approximately one-third of the ALR land is privately owned, while the remainder is Crown owned and managed for multiple uses (i.e. grazing, wildlife, forestry, mining, etc.) rather than exclusively for agriculture.

The ALUI identified that approximately 8.8% (23,361 ha) of the ALR is private land associated with active farming and ranching operations, comprised of:

- 10,757 ha of cultivated land for field crop and tame forage production (4.05% of the ALR);
- 11,988 ha of grazing land for livestock production (4.51% of the ALR); and
- 798 ha of infrastructure (residences, farm buildings, roads, railways, etc.).

An additional 21.79% of Crown and private land in the ALR (57,940 ha) is available and has potential for agriculture but is not presently being used, while another 15,890 ha (5.98%) has limitations for cultivated use, but is potentially available for livestock grazing.

The predominant agricultural operations by use of the land base are beef cattle, forage production and equine-related activities. Forage and pasture for livestock production account for 95% of all cultivated land use, with grains and oilseeds accounting for 4% and vegetables, fruits, berries, ornamentals, shrubs, trees and greenhouse production making up the remainder.
The Canada Land Inventory (CLI) Agricultural Capability classification system provides guidelines for the consistent assessment of agricultural land for production of a range of crops. Of the RDEK lands within the ALR:

- 24% are in CLI Agricultural Capability Classes 2 through 4 and considered capable of sustained production of common cultivates field crops; and
- The remaining 76% are Class 5 or lower capability, with:
    - Class 5 lands, capable of use only for producing perennial forage crops or specially adapted crops, representing almost 43%;
    - Class 6 lands, capable of providing only sustained natural grazing for domestic livestock, comprising 26%; and
    - Class 7 lands, incapable of use for either arable culture or grazing, making up the remaining 7%.

Topography is the predominant limitation to agricultural capability, impacting more than 39% of lands within the ALR. Other key limitations include soil moisture deficiency and stoniness, which impact 20.2% and 11.4% of ALR land respectively. Approximately 61% of lands within the ALR also have secondary capability limitations; the most common (28%) being shallow depth of bedrock, followed by excess water, which affects 20.7% of the land.

1.5.3 Farms and Farm Size

While the total number of farms in the region has remained relatively static over the past decade at approximately 395 farm units, the number of cattle ranching operations has declined by 48%. During this same time period:

- “other crop farming” operations, which primarily represents commercial hay production, has more than doubled;
- hog and sheep production has declined;
- poultry and egg production has remained stable;
- other animal production, primarily horses for pleasure/recreational use, has increased almost 62%; and
- vegetable and greenhouse/nursery production has exhibited steady growth, but still represent only a very small percentage of the total agriculture in the region.

Farm size distribution has remained relatively unchanged over the past decade, with 50% of farms being 52 ha (129 acres) or less in size. Average farm size in in 2011 was 202 ha compared to 247 ha in 2006. The decline was primarily related to a reduction in the area of leased land.

1.5.4 Farmers and Ranchers

The number of farm operators in the East Kootenay totaled 605 in 2011, or an average of 1.5 per farm, based on 396 census farms. Agriculture generates employment for the farm operators and a hired labour force of 299 persons (full-time and seasonal). A total of $2.2 million in wages and salaries are paid annually to farm operators and workers.

Average farm operator age in the East Kootenay increased from 51.7 years in 2001 to 57.5 years in 2011. In comparison, the average age of farm operators in BC and Canada increased from 51.4 to 55.7 years and 49.9 to 54.0 years respectively during the same time period.

1.5.5 Agricultural Markets and Processing

The majority of agricultural products produced in the East Kootenay are processed and marketed outside the region. Limited access to slaughter facilities has hampered the ability of farm operators to process meat in the region. Currently, there is one Class B provincially licensed and inspected red meat slaughter facility and one mobile poultry slaughter facility in the region. The Windermere District Farmer's Institute has proposed a second Class B provincially licensed and inspected red meat slaughter facility in the Invermere area.

A small but increasing number of farms and ranches are marketing farm products directly to consumers from the farm gate, offering products ranging from breads and grains to herbs, spices, fruits, vegetables, preserves, honey, eggs and meat. Consumer access to locally grown products is primarily through small-scale retail outlets offering local and BC grown organic produce, and seasonal farmers' markets that operate in a number of communities in the East Kootenay. A small number of local restaurants feature and promote locally grown farm products. There is also one Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) initiative operating in the Columbia Valley and another being developed in the Jaffray area.

A number of local and regional organizations, including the Columbia Valley Food Corridor Association (CVFCA), Cranbrook Food Action Committee (CFAC), Farmers' Market associations, Groundswell and Wildsight are actively involved in promoting and developing a regional food economy that encourages agricultural diversification, provides jobs, supports farmers and ranchers, enhances food security and builds a market for agricultural and cultural tourism.

2 KEY ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

A public consultation process was utilized to gather input from farmers and ranchers, community groups, associations, businesses and individuals on the following strategic questions:

- What is the current state of agriculture in the RDEK?
- What are the preferred/favourable conditions for agriculture in the future (economic, social, and ecological)?
- What specific actions are needed to create/achieve these conditions?

The consultation process explored issues, concerns, opportunities and potential actions to be considered as part of the agricultural planning process, and identified eight broad themes. Each theme was researched and documented utilizing public input as well as information from the RDEK Agricultural Plan Background Report (Appendix A), Agricultural Land Use Inventory (ALUI) reports, Agricultural Census, surveys and other available resources including agricultural strategies prepared for other regions in British Columbia.

Many of the issues and options identified are similar to those faced by agriculture elsewhere in BC and Canada. The focus for the RDEK Agricultural Plan is primarily on issues that can be addressed or that require specific attention at the Regional District level, with some consideration and discussion of issues that are provincial and/or national in scope. Further discussion on specific recommendations to address the identified issues is provided in Section 3, Actions and Indicators.

This section of the agricultural plan provides an overview discussion of the main issues and challenges facing the agricultural industry in the RDEK, organized according to the main themes identified during the consultation process. A detailed tabular summary of the key issues and opportunities is provided in Appendix B.

2.1 Economic viability of existing farms and ranches

One of the key themes identified at all of the consultation sessions centered on the need for the RDEK Agricultural Plan recommendations to acknowledge and address the economic challenges of agriculture in the region, particularly in the beef cattle sector, which is the largest in terms of both the number of producers involved and the proportion of the land base utilized. Many East Kootenay farms and ranches indicated they are struggling financially due to high operating and investment costs, narrow profit margins, regulatory issues, lack of market opportunities and external factors. In order to have a viable and sustainable agricultural industry, producers need the opportunity to earn a reasonable living from their endeavours.

2.1.1 Declining Profitability

The single most important concern stated by East Kootenay agricultural producers is the declining profitability of agriculture in the region. Farm business operating expenses have exceeded gross farm receipts in the RDEK over the past four census years (1996 through 2011). During the same time period, gross farm receipts at the provincial level have experienced substantial growth (222%) and the provincial average gross receipts per farm are four times that of the East Kootenay region. Issues that were identified include:

- Market prices have not kept pace with the increasing costs of production associated with farm inputs, electricity for irrigation, and freight;
- Prohibitive land and equipment investment costs;
- Limited local processing and marketing options/opportunities, particularly for red meat;
- Loss of local marketing and distribution infrastructure, such as stockyards/auctions;
- The limited size of private land holdings and restrictions on improvements to Crown range limits scale of production for beef cattle operations;
- Government regulations regarding allowable land use and non-farm use in the ALR; and
- Loss of alternate revenue streams that traditionally supplemented farm/ranch income are less profitable and accessible due to regulatory, permitting and/or marketing requirements, e.g. farm-gate beef sales, Christmas trees, apple orchards.

2.1.2 Wildlife impacts

Agriculture – wildlife conflicts continue to impact the economic viability of East Kootenay farms and ranches. Livestock predation, especially by wolves, is reportedly resulting in significant cattle losses for some area ranches. Crop depredation by elk and deer continues to result in grazing losses on hay and pasture fields and increased fence maintenance costs. The potential designation of domestic “sheep- free” zones or areas that may require “separation” strategies to manage an elevated risk of disease transmission from domestic to wild animals in key bighorn sheep winter range (i.e. Bull River valley), could impact the economic livelihood of existing agricultural producers.

2.1.3 Investment costs and access to capital

Population trends and projections indicate an increasing demand for food production. The East Kootenay has the ability to produce protein (beef) as well as other crop and livestock products; however, many farms and ranches indicate they do not have the financial capacity to invest the capital needed to take advantage of the predicted growth. Between 2001 and 2011, the total value of farm capital in the East Kootenay increased 194%, from $351 million to more than $680 million, due primarily to increases in the value of land. While this may be viewed as beneficial for producers who are exiting the agricultural industry, it is a barrier to entry by new farmers and ranchers or expansion by existing operators, and creates challenges for the protection and conservation of agricultural land. Within the region non-agricultural development on or adjacent to agricultural land has resulted in real estate speculation and significant escalation of land prices, which now reflect recreational development values rather than agricultural capability. Applications for exclusions, subdivisions and certain non-farm uses of land in the ALR have exacerbated the problem.

2.2 Agriculture extension, networking and support

Agricultural extension plays a crucial role in promoting agricultural productivity, increasing food security, improving rural livelihoods, and promoting agriculture. However, as the number of farmers and ranchers continues to decline and a higher proportion of the population resides in urban and suburban communities, agriculture has become less politically relevant, creating challenges in sustaining public funding for agricultural research and extension.

2.2.1 Networking and Community

The frequency of face-to-face contact for information sharing and social networking between agricultural producers and with potential buyers, processors and consumers has diminished, resulting in the loss of a sense of agricultural "community". Recent years have seen a declining number of agricultural producers in the region. The decline in the number of producers combined with the loss of traditional agricultural infrastructure, such as stockyards and auction facilities and fewer farmer institutes and clubs, has resulted in a reduction in the exchange of information, socializing and networking. The issue has been further exacerbated by technological changes, such as Internet based communications and social media.

2.2.2 Extension and Information Services

Individualized extension services to assist farmers and ranchers with production, marketing, business and financial planning information are no longer provided by the BC Ministry of Agriculture. The Ministry's Regional Agrologists have shifted away from providing these services. There is a trend towards small acreage market garden/hobby farm operations involving younger people with little or no agricultural experience. These individuals have diverse information needs related to production, economics, research and marketing; however, there is only limited local or regional technical support available. Online information resources exist but are perceived as difficult to locate and navigate, and therefore, are underutilized, especially higher level business and financial planning tools. Additionally, many producers, especially those in older age brackets, are not well versed in the use of computer technology and may have inadequate hardware and/or internet resources for online access.

2.2.3 Agricultural Research and Development

Historically, a diverse range of agricultural products were tested for cultivation within the region. However, there is currently a lack of financial, technical and human resource support for basic agricultural research and development, innovation and on-farm testing. Current agri-business research partnerships only focus on high value crops such as hybrid canola production and do not fund initiatives for lower value crops or livestock enterprises. Producers are unfamiliar with potential research funding/granting sources and/or lack the time and resources required to develop programs and proposals.

2.3 Producer/Consumer relationships

There is a potential or perceived disconnect between producers and consumers. Surveys indicate public support for agriculture, farmland and local food production. However, many producers feel there is declining public support for agriculture and that consumers have lost their connection to the land and people that raise food. A recent study of consumer awareness of agriculture conducted for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada[2] stated *"despite the fact that the sector continues to modernize, diversify and innovate, recent surveys of the Canadian public have underscored a number of misperceptions about the agricultural sector and a relatively pessimistic public view with respect to its future outlook."*

[2] Modern Agriculture and Agricultural Awareness Focus Groups; The Strategic Counsel; http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/pwgsc-tpsgc/por-ef/agriculture_agri-food/2014/040-13/report.pdf

2.3.1 Public knowledge of agriculture

The agricultural industry is not well integrated with local and regional businesses and/or community organizations and interests. As a result, the broader values of agriculture (economic, aesthetic, ecological) to the economy, culture and communities in the region are not well understood by local residents (including agricultural producers) and policy/decision makers. Misconceptions and concerns regarding public land use for agriculture are prevalent. Key issues include lack of support for grazing on Crown range and perceived conflicts with other uses and values, such as recreation and wildlife habitat.

The transition of former agricultural lands to rural residential subdivisions and rural estates, particularly those that are directly adjacent to private or Crown grazing lands, creates potential conflicts between landowners regarding responsibilities for livestock fence construction and ongoing maintenance.

2.3.2 Connecting growers with consumers

Interest in sourcing local food and supporting local producers is developing, as evidenced by the current growth in the popularity of farmers' markets and the 'local food' movement. However, most consumers do not understand the agriculture industry or where food really comes from and how it is produced, either locally or globally. Consumers have no appreciation of the complex relationship between input costs and grocery store or farmers market prices. Most consumers are not well connected to producers nor are they aware of what agriculture and food products are being produced within the region. For example, secondary homeowners, primarily Albertans, who travel to the region on a seasonal basis, account for 39% of residents in the Columbia Valley; this group has limited knowledge of local producers and production. Seasonal visitors are a key market target for local producers.

2.3.3 Local food procurement

Despite the fact there appears to be increasing demand, locally grown produce and meat comprise only a small percentage of the total market due to the limited infrastructure, resources and knowledge needed to support value-added processing and marketing, and the impacts of Federal and Provincial regulations. The trend towards healthier, active lifestyles and interest in locally produced foods, as evidenced by the continued growth and expansion of farmers' markets, may create opportunities to expand the diversity of crops and livestock being grown in the region. A majority of the food items on store shelves are imported from other countries or other regions of Canada. Barriers to getting more locally produced foods on store shelves include the seasonality/consistency of supply; purchase decisions are often not made locally; perception of higher costs of local food; and regulatory issues.

2.4 Developing a regional agri-food economy

The implementation of effective marketing and branding strategies that create opportunities for producers to connect directly with consumers is viewed as a critical strategy by many individuals who participated in the public engagement process. The region needs a local / regional agri-food economy. In order to achieve this there is a need to create an "intentional" desire to purchase and consume locally and regionally grown products - the cultivation of a sense of loyalty to a place and its people.

2.4.1 *Local/Regional marketing and branding*

Opportunities for local/regional branding of East Kootenay agricultural products exist but need to be aligned with broader community marketing initiatives. Potential barriers for individual producers include: cost of marketing/branding campaigns; lack of marketing expertise; lack of variety, and seasonality, of local grown products; and the ability to provide a consistent supply of quality products. In order to be successful the quality has to be real and not just suggested by the branding. Participation in broader marketing initiatives must have the 'buy in' of local producers. Some producers may lack the interest, skill and/or knowledge to successfully participate. Farmers and ranchers are good at "producing"; but many lack the resources and support to effectively market their own products.

Agricultural producers who are interested in exploring marketing and branding opportunities do not have access to appropriate market research information to make informed decisions. In order to develop business plans producers require information regarding:

- the size and scope of local/regional markets
- how effectively local markets are currently served/supplied by local agricultural products;
- current and future capacity to provide locally grown food products; and
- potential economic returns and risks from investing in marketing/branding.

Producers also need a greater understanding of household purchasing trends in order to position their products and services in the market. For instance, most consumers no longer make bulk purchases of beef (i.e. sides or quarters) due to volume (lack of available freezer storage space), costs and lack of knowledge regarding handling and cooking of certain cuts of meat.

2.4.2 *Food Safety*

Food safety regulations between producers and the market, and then between the market and the consumer, are necessary and exist to ensure food safety protocols are being followed to avoid potentially severe health hazards. Requirements associated with food hygiene, traceability (origin of food), food labeling, inspection and certification systems are perceived as complex and a potential barrier to value-added processing and farm diversification.

There is a general lack of consumer knowledge, and considerable misinformation, regarding genetically modified (GM) crops and foods[3]. Most consumers are also not aware of how widespread the use of GM substances in food products is in our global food systems. Within the region there are concerns amongst both consumers and producers regarding the production of GM food crops and the potential implications on:

- contamination/harm to non-GM crops, plants and insects (i.e. bees) via pollen transfer;
- the continuing opportunity to market locally produced food as organic and/or non GM in an economy with growing concern and opposition to GM foods; and
- human health and ecological risks associated with long-term exposure to GM organisms.

[3] Genetically modified (GM) foods are foods derived from organisms whose genetic material (DNA) has been modified in a way that does not occur naturally, e.g. through the introduction of a gene from a different organism. World Health Organization; http://www.who.int/topics/food_genetically_modified/en/

Conversely, current GM crop production in the region, which is primarily associated with small scale seed increase plots, provides several landowners with an additional source of revenue to support their farm/ranch operations.

2.4.3 Food Security

The economic and development pressures that are negatively impacting farmers, farming and the agricultural land base in the RDEK create broader community concerns about food security and the ability of residents to acquire healthy and nutritious locally produced foods. The loss of agricultural land to residential and recreational development, increasing acreages of non- or under-utilized farm land due to the declining number of farmers and lack of “new” farm operators, and the limited types and volumes of agricultural food produced, were all identified as food security issues within the region.

From a social perspective the region should aspire to be a food secure community[4], in which:

- everyone has assured access to adequate, appropriate and personally acceptable food in a way that does not damage self-respect;
- people are able to earn a living wage by growing, producing, processing, handling, retailing and serving food;
- the quality of land, air and water are maintained/enhanced for future generations; and,
- food is celebrated as central to community and cultural integrity.

2.5 Government policies and regulations

Agriculture is influenced by a broad range of municipal, provincial and federal regulations and policies, some of which are viewed by agricultural producers as being too restrictive and acting as barriers to competitiveness, growth, investment and economic diversification. Farmers and ranchers do not have an effective voice with government due to the small and declining number of producers and their geographic location relative to general population demographics.

2.5.1 Meat inspection regulations

Changes to the meat inspection regulations in 2004 limited local beef cattle slaughter options available to small-scale producers. The change in regulations has resulted in the loss of farm-gate sales as a predictable revenue stream; a reduction in the number of licensed and inspected abattoir facilities in the region; and increasing trucking costs to ship animals to markets in Alberta. Currently, there is only one Class B provincially licensed and inspected red meat slaughter facility in the region, and one mobile poultry slaughter facility. A second Class B provincially licensed facility is being developed in the Columbia Valley. Based on input during the stakeholder engagement process, an additional mobile facility for red meat processing may be warranted to serve other areas within the region. Barriers to further licensed facilities in the region include the lack of financial incentives, docking station requirements and locations for water and waste disposal; and risks in getting products to consumer (i.e. access to refrigeration).

[4] BC Food Network; http://bcfsn.org/what-is-food-security/

Economies of scale and logistics, such as waste/offal handling and marketing are also barriers to further expansion of local meat slaughter and processing facilities. Larger slaughter plants are selling waste/offal[5] at a profit. Conversely, small-scale mobile operators without ready access to markets may incur added costs for their disposal, and have limited options for the approved disposal and composting of dead livestock, offal and specified risk materials (SRM)[6].

2.5.2 Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR)

There is disparity in opinions amongst East Kootenay agricultural producers about the role and merits of the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) and Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). While the RDEK Agricultural Plan process did not specifically focus on the ALR, a broad range of opinion was expressed during the open house sessions and in on-line survey responses. Some view preservation and/or enhancement of the ALR as critical to the long-term survival of the agricultural industry and food security objectives, while others believe the legislation and regulations are a barrier to agricultural innovation, diversification and farm succession. If there is an area of common ground, it is the acknowledgment that past decisions regarding ALR exclusion, subdivision and non-farm use applications have not been consistently based on a standardized set of evaluation/assessment parameters.

Notice to readers – the RDEK Agricultural Plan process was completed prior to the introduction and implementation of legislation governing the proposed changes to the Agricultural Land Commission Act and Agricultural Land Reserve Use, Subdivision and Procedure Regulation that were announced in March 2014.

2.5.3 RDEK Bylaws & Policy

The RDEK is not adequately protecting agricultural land or fostering agricultural development and diversification through its regulatory role of bylaw and policy development. The RDEK's former[7] Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) policies regarding preservation of natural landscapes are vague and did not provide clear direction to the RDEK Board when they are considering zoning or development applications. The ecological and economic importance of all farmland is not recognized in the RGS policies. Official Community Plan (OCP) policies are not comprehensive enough to provide for protection of agricultural lands or limiting non-compatible adjacent land uses.

A number of current zoning bylaws regulations are viewed as being too restrictive and therefore a barrier to agricultural development and diversification. Cited examples include: prohibitions on backyard animal production (rabbits, chickens, goats and sheep); restrictions on housing development and subdivision for farm family members; and limitations on types and sizes (square footage) of on-farm business developments.

[5] Offal, also called variety meats or organ meats, refers to the internal organs and entrails of a butchered animal.

[6] Specified risk material (SRM) is the term designated for tissues of ruminant animals that cannot be inspected and passed for human food because scientists have determined that BSE-causing prions concentrate there.

[7] The Regional Growth Strategy was replaced with the Regional Sustainability Strategy in October 2014.

Within the development approval process the current structure of the RDEK Agricultural Advisory Commission (AAC), which is limited to two electoral areas, has a limited mandate and has been relegated to a reactive role in the development, review and approval process pertaining to agricultural lands.

The RDEK has entered into Delegation Agreements with the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) for certain types of ALR non-farm uses and subdivisions in areas covered by the Wasa – Ta Ta Creek – Skookumchuck - Sheep Creek Land Use Bylaw and Elk Valley Zoning Bylaw. Unlike the standard ALR application process, under which the RDEK Board makes a recommendation and the final decision making authority rests with the ALC, applications considered under a Delegation Agreement are not forwarded to the ALC, unless otherwise required under the terms of the Delegation Agreement and the decision of the RDEK is final. The Elk Valley Delegation Agreement also makes provision for an exemption for the referral of specific non-farm use application to the RDEK Advisory Planning Commission (APC). When making decisions under a Delegation Agreement, the RDEK adopts the role of the ALC and must consider the impact of the proposed application on agriculture. The application must also be carefully considered against the applicable RDEK policy documents that have been endorsed by the ALC.

2.5.4 Farm Assessment and Taxation

Current BC Assessment Authority farm assessment and taxation rules and regulations are viewed as a disincentive or barrier to encouraging farming, especially for small-scale operators and those primarily focused on producing goods for their own consumption. Issues related to farm assessment and taxation include that farm status for assessment and taxation can be lost if a producer experiences low gross sales in successive years, resulting in increased taxes and the need to apply for re-assessment. Re-assessment is also required when land is sold as agricultural land automatically reverts to a higher level of taxation. Re-assessment can be time consuming and burdensome on the landowner. Incentives should be in place to encourage leasing of land for farming uses when the current landowner is not actively farming to ensure land is available for agriculture.

2.5.5 Forest Tenure system

Where Crown land is in the ALR, the structure of the forest tenure system needs to provide more balance between forestry and range (agricultural) uses. Timber licensees currently can exercise too much control over land use, access and management. Timber licensees are permitted to count smaller diameter wood and lower density stands (stems/ha) in their annual allowable cut (AAC) calculations, but typically do not harvest these areas. This restricts opportunities for ecological restoration of grasslands and other grazing enhancements, and has contributed to the forest ingrowth and wildfire risk issues in lower elevation areas within the region.

2.6 Diversification and value-added opportunities

Diversification is seen as a possible solution to many of the issues facing the agricultural sector. Over time climate change in the region may necessitate diversification and adaptation within the sector. The exploration of the integration of local value added opportunities for agricultural products is essential to retaining and expanding agricultural wealth within this region.

2.6.1 Adaptation and Production

Producers need access to a greater variety of crop and livestock choices, but there is a lack of financial, technical and human resources to support local and regional research into diversification and adaptation. Information needs to be collected and research conducted on:

- cash crop options;
- healthy/functional foods;
- nutraceuticals;
- “best use” of irrigated fields;
- wild (country) foods;
- non-timber forest products;
- aquaculture;
- agro-forestry, Christmas trees; and
- bee keeping/apiaries.

2.6.2 Value-added Processing and Marketing

Potential agricultural entrepreneurs need access to research and development funding and expertise for processing, packaging, product testing, promotion and marketing, and logistics. Extension services and networking will be essential for both experienced producers and new entrants to the sector.

2.6.3 Agri-tourism/Culinary tourism

Growth in regional tourism creates potential for agri-tourism[8] and culinary tourism[9], yet currently very little is being done to coordinate and promote this locally within the broader context of the tourism industry, so producers are not capitalizing on opportunities. Recent initiatives, such as the Columbia Valley Food Corridor Association’s food business incubator and commercial kitchen projects, are a positive step and will provide much needed business development support.

2.7 Farm demographics and succession

The aging farm population and lack of young people entering the industry creates succession issues for the future management of agricultural land and concerns about the loss of local knowledge and social networking that has been an important aspect of the rural/farm lifestyle. Agriculture is not emphasized as a viable employment/career opportunity in local post-secondary programs. Those that are interested have difficulty accessing land and equipment due to high investment costs.

[8] Agri-tourism is a form of niche tourism that encompasses any agriculturally based operation or activity that brings visitors to a farm or ranch; Agri-tourism Development in British Columbia

[9] Culinary or food tourism is defined by the World Food Travel Association (WFTA) as the pursuit of unique and memorable eating and drinking experiences, both near and far.

2.8 Land access, value and utilization

2.8.1 Land values

The large and growing disparity between land values for agriculture versus development/recreation uses and land values versus productive capability has created: a barrier to farm expansion and new entrants; disincentives to continue farming; and incentives to pursue subdivisions, ALR exclusions and non-farm use applications.

2.8.2 Private land availability

Large tracts of private land within the region are being removed from agricultural production, either by sitting idle or being purchased by non-agricultural interests. Land conservancies are purchasing land for the purpose of ecological restoration or protection and access for agriculture is often restricted or eliminated. Property is also being sold to non-farmers for rural estates and is no longer used for agriculture. As viable agricultural land is often within areas that are desirable for residential and recreational development, the speculative value of land often results in people interested in establishing small farm operations, such as market gardens, having difficulty finding land for food production. Similarly, elevated land values that do not reflect the agricultural capacity of the property are an impediment for existing farmers and ranchers who desire to expand their operations.

2.8.3 Crown land access and utilization

Access to Crown land for agriculture, the appropriate allocation and management of Crown range tenures, forest management practices, and the impacts of forest ingrowth on grassland productivity and beef cattle herd expansion were all identified as areas of concern. Additionally, concerns were expressed regarding the increasing competition for utilization of Crown and the perception that there is a reduction in public support for agriculture (i.e. grazing) on Crown range. The decrease in support is resulting in increased conflicts and concerns with other users (i.e. recreation) and a lack of respect for grazing leases (trespass and fence/gate issues).

3 STRATEGIC ACTIONS

The sustainability and future viability of agriculture in the Regional District of East Kootenay is a shared responsibility. The RDEK, through its Official Community Plans and various bylaws plays a strong role in some key areas related to the goals of the Agricultural Plan. In particular, through its OCPs, the RDEK can help protect the resource base upon which agriculture depends. It can also assist with facilitating a sustainable agriculture[10] culture that benefits the entire community by furthering economic development, creating employment, and enhancing the rural character and environmental attributes of the district.

While the RDEK plays an integral role in the sustainability of agriculture, there are numerous external factors over which it does not have control. These include pressures from regional population growth and projects, agricultural commodity markets, and policies of senior governments at both the provincial and federal level. Some issues that affect agriculture are a result of historical settlement patterns and land use – such as environmental reserves, First Nations land, small lots, ALR boundaries, water drainage and flood control patterns. In areas where the RDEK needs cooperation, it can act as a catalyst to initiate discussions, explore opportunities and work with other partners and interests in implementing the Agricultural Plan.

This Agricultural Plan is a 'living' document, and must be reviewed and updated regularly based on implementation feedback and new information in order to remain relevant and effective. The following recommendations are meant to provide direction to the RDEK in implementing the Agricultural Plan. In some instances, the RDEK will play a lead role, in others a supportive role. In either case, the collaboration and cooperation of all producer, industry and government partners is critical to achieving the vision and goals articulated in this plan.

3.1 Enhance institutional support for East Kootenay agriculture

Through the consultation and public input process used to gather information for the development of the Agricultural Plan it became evident that the agricultural sector in the East Kootenay does not currently have the level of institutional, organizational or human infrastructure that is needed to achieve many of the priorities identified by the agricultural community. There are a number of groups actively involved with specific aspects, commodities, products or services (e.g. livestock associations, farmers institute, farmers' markets, etc.); however, there is no overall coordination or communication linkage between these organizations. Further, the provincial government has changed the priorities for Regional Agrologists and no longer provides individualized extension services to assist farmers and ranchers with production, marketing, business and financial planning information. Government does provide funding for agricultural producers to undertake business planning, innovation and commercialization, but the onus is on the producer to make application to these funding sources.

[10] Sustainable agriculture is the efficient production of safe, high quality agricultural products, in a way that protects and improves the natural environment, the social and economic conditions of farmers, their employees and local communities, and safeguards the health and welfare of all farmed species.": Sustainable Agriculture Initiative Platform; http://www.saiplatform.org/sustainable-agriculture/definition

3.1.1 Agricultural Liaison Officer (ALO)

Implementing the RDEK Agricultural Plan is essential. All the effort and insight provided by the Agricultural Plan Steering Committee and those individuals who participated in the process need to know that this plan will be implemented. The plan needs a dedicated and focused leader who can begin working on implementing the many recommendations put forth by the RDEK residents.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS: *Subject to the availability of funding from sources other than taxation, the RDEK, in collaboration with existing agricultural organizations and government and quasi-government agencies within the region, should develop the terms of reference, work plan and performance standards for an Agricultural Liaison Officer (ALO) and recruit a qualified individual to fulfill this role. It is envisioned that the ALO could be either an employee or contractor, and that the position would initially be funded for a three-year "pilot" period with primary responsibility for implementation of the Agricultural Plan strategy and recommendations.*

In addition to playing the lead role in facilitating and coordinating the implementation of this Agricultural Plan, other potential responsibilities for the ALO could include:

- Liaising with existing agricultural groups and associations in the East Kootenay;
- Facilitating agricultural education/awareness programs for producers and the public;
- Assisting with farm business planning and feasibility studies;
- Assessing diversification, marketing/branding and value-added opportunities;
- Monitoring agricultural research activity relevant to East Kootenay producers;
- Liaising with academic, research and industry experts;
- Preparation of agricultural grant/program applications;
- Providing information and briefings to the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) and RDEK Board of Directors on matters pertaining to agriculture;
- Reviewing planning and development applications that potentially impact agriculture;
- Review existing RDEK planning documents (RGS, OCPs, Bylaws) to assess their support for agriculture provide recommendations to the RDEK Board on how to make the ag policies in those plans align with the RDEK Ag Plan; and
- coordinating agricultural issue identification and policy discussions with other regional districts through the Association of Kootenay & Boundary Local Governments (AKBLG) and the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM).

3.1.2 Agricultural Advisory Committee

Effective communication and inclusive decision making are critical to the successful implementation of the Agricultural Plan. Agricultural Advisory Committees (AAC) are a useful mechanism for ensuring the Regional District receives timely and relevant input from agricultural stakeholders. Currently, the RDEK has an Agricultural Advisory Commission in Electoral Areas B and C, which reviews and provides comment on development applications such as ALR applications or rezoning amendments prior to consideration by the RDEK Board.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS: *Enhance the existing RDEK Agricultural Advisory Commission to include producer representation from all six electoral areas, and develop appropriate terms of* *reference to guide and govern the committee's function.* Guidelines and a draft terms of reference for an AAC are provided in Appendix C.

3.1.3 East Kootenay Agriculture Group/Association

Agriculture in the East Kootenay would benefit from a collective, unified voice; an over-arching organization that broadly represents all agricultural interests and sectors within the region, and can speak to the issues, challenges and opportunities facing the agriculture industry as a whole.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS: *In collaboration with all agricultural organizations and interests within the region, facilitate an East Kootenay Agriculture Group/Association and develop foundation statements (vision, mission, goals, guiding principles) and terms of reference to guide and governs its function.*

Participation (membership) in the group could be open to all types of producers, retail and service businesses with an agricultural focus, processors and marketers, education and academic institutions, business associations and agricultural professionals. One of the key benefits of this approach is that it brings all the stakeholders together and creates opportunities for enhancing communication, networking and collaboration. The existing structure provided by the BC Farmers and Womens Institute Act and Regulations may provide an appropriate model. Key priorities for such an organization may include:

- Developing and maintaining effective communications with and between agricultural producers, suppliers and other industry stakeholders;
- Providing input/direction to the RDEK Agricultural Liaison Officer;
- Providing input to the AAC, RDEK and Provincial and Federal agencies/governments on regulations, policies and programs;
- Supporting viable farms, ranches and rural communities through lobbying for progressive agricultural policies;
- Creating new opportunities for East Kootenay producers;
- Actively promoting a positive image of agriculture;
- Supporting marketing and branding initiatives;
- Coordinating farmer buying groups for inputs (e.g. seed, fertilizer, fuel, etc.) and equipment sharing arrangements;
- Connecting landowners with individuals interested in leasing or purchasing land;
- Supporting sustainable agricultural practices, good land stewardship and the development and implementation of **Paid Ecosystem Services**[11] programs;
- Identifying and prioritizing research needs, and investigating funding and granting opportunities for establishing research and demonstration projects in the region;
- Collaborating with educational institutions to develop appropriate training programs and linking employers with potential employees; and
- Connecting and networking with other farm organizations.

[11] Paid Ecosystem Services refers to incentives offered to farmers or landowners in exchange for managing their land to provide some sort of ecological service or benefit that promotes the conservation of natural resources. http://www.bcesi.ca/

<u>Notice to Readers:</u> The recommendations in this section (3.1) constitute the key policy actions identified in the East Kootenay Agricultural Plan, namely the creation of an Agricultural Liaison Officer (ALO) position; establishment of an Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC); and the facilitation of a region wide agricultural association that is not commodity or sector specific. The majority of the remaining recommendations in the Plan are largely contingent upon the initial implementation of these three initiatives.

3.2 Improve the economic viability of East Kootenay agriculture

Agricultural Census data, supported by anecdotal information provided by producers during the development of the Agriculture Plan, indicates that many agricultural enterprises in the RDEK are facing profitability challenges. While diversification and value-added initiatives such as on-farm processing, direct farm marketing and agri-tourism are being successfully employed by some farmers, economic initiatives and regulatory efficiencies are required to improve sector viability.

3.2.1 Understand baseline economic performance

In order to fully address the issue of unprofitable farming operations and develop appropriate solutions, it is imperative to first gain a thorough understanding of the current economic performance of the major agricultural sectors in the region.

<u>RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:</u> *Partner with the BC Ministry of Agriculture to complete detailed baseline economic studies for each sector of the agricultural economy in the region to fully understand cost of production, revenues, profit margins, transportation and logistics, markets and related best management practices.*

These studies should also explore the following barriers to profitability and industry competitiveness:

- the financial impact on agriculture of reverting back to the GST/PST system; and
- disparate agriculture policies in BC and Alberta and their impacts on the competitiveness of BC beef producers – e.g. feedlot grain subsidies, Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA) tag rebates, predator loss compensation, etc.

3.2.2 Farm input costs and accessibility

Agriculture in the East Kootenay depends on inputs and services such as fuel, seeds and plants, feed grains, fertilizers, crop protection products, equipment/implement dealerships, fencing supplies, irrigation equipment and storage buildings. The cost of farm inputs, exacerbated by high land values and assessment/taxation costs, are a significant barrier to profitability. In addition, many of these inputs must come from non-local sources, which often creates logistical challenges and increased shipping/transportation costs.

<u>RECOMMENDED ACTIONS</u>:

- *Advocate for fair electricity costs for agricultural purposes.*
- *Advocate for lower water licensing costs for agricultural uses under the proposed <u>Water Sustainability Act</u>*[12]

[12] http://engage.gov.bc.ca/watersustainabilityact/

- *Advocate for lower tax assessment rates on agricultural buildings and improvements of bona fide farmers.*
- *Encourage farmer buying groups for crop inputs.*
- *Assist producers to source inputs locally by maintaining a directory of suppliers and available products and services.*
- *Enhance financial and technical support for weed and invasive plant control, monitoring and enforcement activities through East Kootenay Invasive Plant Council.*
- *Explore the feasibility of establishing a regional agricultural land trust to provide affordable long term leases to farmers.*

3.2.3 Enhance local processing and marketing opportunities

With the evolution of globally integrated agricultural food supply systems, farmers and ranchers have, for the most part, been relegated to the role of primary production. However, in order to maximize farm profits and achieve economic stability, agricultural producers need to be engaged in local value-added processing and the marketing of related benefits such as cultural experience, local healthy food, agricultural diversity, rural aesthetics, food safety, culinary tourism and the protection of farmland and related resources.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- *Support the development of local/regional agri-food processing facilities through effective zoning and bylaws.*
- *Investigate the feasibility of establishing permanent docking locations for one or more Class B mobile red meat slaughter facilities in the region.*
- *Advocate for additional meat inspectors in the region (currently only one inspector).*
- *Support and promote regional farmers' markets and the East Kootenay Local Food Guide;*
- *Facilitate the development of direct-to-consumer local food marketing initiatives similar to The Farmers' Table Sustainable Agriculture Initiative and SaskFoodFind.com - Find local food;*
- *Engage in economic development initiatives to explore and promote opportunities for agricultural processing, new crop opportunities, liaison with agricultural researchers and technology providers, attracting business, and identifying funding and programs.*
- *Investigate the feasibility of attracting processors for local agricultural products by providing financial incentives, revitalizing tax exemption bylaws and serviced locations.*
- *Lobby for the incorporation of on-farm value-added as eligible farm income for farm tax assessment purposes.*
- *Pursue funding and partners to pilot test community based business incubator and value-added initiatives.*

3.2.4 Foster innovation and diversification

Innovation and diversification enhance farm profitability and viability, but are reliant on the ability of farmers to assess market opportunities, develop entrepreneurial ideas, gain appropriate business management skills, and access capital. Emerging opportunities exist around the increasing demand for locally produced food, interest in alternative production systems, agri-tourism and culinary tourism.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- *Initiate a local food supply capacity feasibility study to determine what proportion of the total daily dietary requirements (according to the Canada Food Guide recommendations) of East Kootenay residents could realistically be produced and processed locally.*
- *Collaborate with existing groups and organizations to advocate and facilitate the development agricultural policy and programming for Paid Ecosystem Services initiatives.*
- *Support local food safety and food security initiatives by assessing the potential for alternative farming systems (e.g., organic, GM-free, permaculture) that respond to local niche markets.*
- *Collaborate with secondary and post-secondary education institutions, agricultural associations and government ministries to facilitate events and initiatives to provide farmers with training, mentoring, technical expertise, production knowledge, and access to agricultural programs that promote knowledge transfer and build capacity in farming.*
- *Encourage seminars and workshops on production, food safety practices, niche marketing, and business management skills.*
- *Explore and support farming models that develop stronger connections between the farming community and the local marketplace and encourage new types of agricultural enterprise, such as community supported agriculture (CSA), cooperatives, food alliances and community networks.*

3.2.5 Reasonable and effective regulations

Agriculture is governed by a broad array of federal, provincial, regional and municipal regulations found in various legislation, bylaws, zoning regulations and guidelines. Making the regulatory system more responsive to the needs of the agricultural sector, while still meeting regulatory objectives, would streamline processes and reduce costs to farmers.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- *Utilize the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) to proactively advise the RDEK on regulatory issues and constraints affecting local agriculture.*
- *Collaborate with other regional districts, municipal governments and producer organizations to communicate the need for a review of meat inspection regulations with respect to permitting farm gate sales.*
- *Amend the landfill operational certificate(s) to permit disposal of livestock carcasses and specified risk materials (SRM) at RDEK Regional District landfills.*
- *Advocate with BC Assessment for amendments to regulations that result in the loss of farm status and increased taxation if a producer incurs low gross sales in successive years.*
- *Advocate with BC Assessment for amendments to regulations that result in agricultural land automatically reverting to a higher level of taxation when it is sold.*
- *Advocate with the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations for restructuring of the forest tenure/AAC system to provide more opportunities for integrated land use, grazing enhancements, silvo-pasture treatments and ecosystem restoration on Crown lands in the ALR.*
- *Clarify landowner fencing requirements under the Livestock Act, particularly as they relate to private-Crown land interface boundaries.*

- *Advocate with the BC Government for continued funding of long-term highway and railway corridor livestock fencing programs.*

3.2.6 Resolve Agriculture – Wildlife Conflicts

Livestock predation and crop depredation losses continue to result in financial losses for agricultural producers on an annual basis. Conversely, domestic sheep production in key bighorn sheep winter range results in an elevated risk of disease transmission from domestic to wild animals. The potential designation of "sheep-free" zones or areas that may require separation strategies, could impact the economic livelihood of existing producers.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- *Ensure there is agricultural representation on agriculture-wildlife working groups and predator conflict committees to explore predation issues and develop a holistic, ecologically sound framework for implementing timely solutions. Encourage broad stakeholder involvement including ranchers, guide/outfitters, BC Wildlife Federation, Conservation Officers, government and industry biologists, hunters, trappers, First Nations and public interest groups.*
- *Work with the Provincial Agriculture Zone Wildlife Program (PAZWP) and Regional Agriculture Wildlife Committees (RAWC's) to explore options for reducing depredation losses on agricultural hay and pasture fields.*
- *Participate in the ongoing discussions regarding the BC Wild and Domestic Sheep Separation Program to ensure agricultural interests are represented.*
- *Support related research studies on wildlife mitigation strategies.*

3.2.7 Climate Change Adaptation

Climate change is anticipated to occur over the next century. A report prepared by the CBT outlines potential impacts to the Kootenay region, CBT Climate Change, Impacts and Adaptation in the Canadian Columbia Basin[13]. Crops and agricultural production will need to be resilient or targeted to the anticipated:

- Higher average annual temperature;
- Decrease in summer precipitation;
- Increase in winter precipitation;
- Increase in the frequency of extreme participation events;
- Increase in the variability of temperature and precipitation;
- Longer growing season; and
- Increase in growing-degree days

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- *Review and prioritize climate change adaptation strategies and develop an appropriate implementation plan including timelines and budgets.*

[13] https://www.cbt.org/uploads/pdf/DialoguetoAction_Final_lo-res.pdf

3.3 Encourage Agriculture on Agricultural Land

3.3.1 Maintaining farmland and the Agriculture Land Reserve

Land designated for agriculture is under continual pressure to be used for purposes other than farming, particularly in areas adjacent to existing urban and recreational developments. Both the RDEK and the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) have important roles in dealing with land management issues on Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) lands in the region. Ensuring a consistent land use policy and decision making framework that prioritizes the protection of the agricultural land resource and the development of the agricultural industry.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- *Establish a policy that all applications for any change in land use on ALR lands require an analysis that demonstrates a net benefit to agriculture.*
- *Require an agricultural impact assessment (AIA) prepared by a qualified professional at the applicant's cost for all applications for removal of land from the ALR; for any use not part of agriculture; or any applications for boundary adjustments. (A draft Terms of Reference for conducting an AIA is provided in Appendix D).*
- *Establish a policy that ALR applications submitted by non-farming applicants and/or for non-farming uses will receive lower priority for review than applications that support farming businesses.*
- *Adopt Smart Growth land use planning and development principles.*

3.3.2 Farmland needs farmers

Census of Agriculture statistics indicate that farmers who are expected to retire over the next 10 to 15 years currently operate more than one-third of all farms in Canada. Three quarters of these farms do not currently have an operator of a younger generation to take over the farm and run it as a business and less than 20% have a written succession plan[14]. The financial resources needed to enter farming have increased (particularly land investment costs), but the ability for farm income to support this level of investment has declined.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- *Facilitate succession planning workshops and one-on-one consulting services for existing producers who are anticipating selling and/or transferring their farms.*
- *Collaborate with government and industry partners to develop and promote succession planning resources, e.g. SmartFarm BC[15] and AMI Farm Succession Planning[16]*
- *Investigate alternate financing, leasing and land sharing arrangements to attract new farmers and assist with farm succession.*
- *Explore innovative alternatives for retiring landowners to stay on their property while facilitating transition of their farm to new operators.*

[14] "The imminent retirement of this aging cohort will mean the further disintegration of the social fabric of rural communities and of the long-term stewardship of our farmlands, unless there are young or new farmers to take its place." Source: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Doing Better Together – Alternative Federal Budget 2013; http://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2013/03/AFB2013_MainDocument_0.pdf

[15] http://www.smartfarmbc.ca/content/succession-planning

[16] http://www.takeanewapproach.ca/Farmers-Succession-Planning.htm

3.3.3 Enable new and/or expanding farmers to access farmland

Based on data collected during the Agricultural Land Use Inventory conducted in 2011, there is a substantial acreage of farmland in the region that has potential for agricultural use, but is currently under-utilized or sitting idle. Developing strategies to encourage agricultural use of this land would not only contribute to the overall vitality of the agricultural sector, but would help to discourage speculation and pressure for non-farm use or ALR exclusion applications. Leasing farmland from non-farming landowners is one of the more affordable ways to attract new farmers who may not be in a position to invest large amounts of capital in land assets.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- *Conduct interviews/surveys with landowners and Crown leaseholders of under-utilized ALR lands to fully understand why the land is not being used.*
- *Determine how much private land is presently used for farming under lease arrangements.*
- *Create a farmland registry for linking a database of potential tenants to potential landlords (or link to existing databases such as the Young Agrarians land access site[17]).*
- *Investigate incentives to promote active farmland use by improving access for aspiring and landless farmers and encouraging existing non-farming land owners to lease land.*
- *Make municipal and Crown land (and associated water for irrigation) available for farming under lease and/or lease to purchase agreements.*
- *Develop a clearing house of information on rental terms, leases, agreements and business arrangements, including cooperatives and farm equipment bank models.*
- *Explore relationships with existing land trusts (e.g., Ducks Unlimited, The Land Conservancy, Nature Trust, etc.), to increase access to farmland by farmers.*
- *Research the feasibility of cooperative land ownership models.*

3.3.4 Education and resources for new entrants to farming

New entrants are essential to the success and long-term sustainability of the RDEK agricultural industry. Ensuring that individuals have access to knowledge, training, mentoring and/or apprenticeship opportunities on how to operate a farm is critical to supporting their success.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- *Emphasize the need for farmer training in financial and business planning, budgeting, forecasting, risk management and marketing.*
- *Provide access to farm business management resources, e.g. SmartFarm BC[18].*
- *Collaborate with existing educational institutions such as the COTR Kootenay Farm School program, and agricultural associations to provide opportunities for basic farm training.*
- *Evaluate the feasibility of implementing training programs similar to the Green Certificate Farm Training Programs in Alberta[19] and Saskatchewan[20].*

[17] http://youngagrarians.org/tools/land/
[18] http://www.smartfarmbc.ca/
[19] http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/grc6643
[20] http://www.agriculture.gov.sk.ca/Default.aspx?DN=c04d1578-791b-44f6-8345-c8f6e5d1b4fc

- *Facilitate mentorship opportunities to encourage the transfer of skills and knowledge from existing farm/ranch operators.*
- *Encourage and promote local programs such as Groundswell's[21] Community Greenhouse and Community and School Gardens programs.*
- *Collaborate with existing organizations such as Young Agrarians[22], Farm Folk City Folk[23] and others to provide information and resources for aspiring farmers.*

3.3.5 Assessment and Taxation policy

Assessment and taxation rules need to be revised to encourage agricultural land use. The RDEK should become more involved in advocating for amendments to farm assessment procedures in order to address local conditions and encourage farming.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- *Encourage BC Assessment (through resolution to the Union of BC Municipalities) to value farm land based on agricultural capability, agricultural use and future land use designations, rather than values obtained when agricultural land is excluded from agricultural use.*
- *Land in the ALR that is actively used for farming should remain assessed as agriculture land regardless of gross farm receipts in order to encourage agricultural use.*
- *Use incentives in the form of a lower assessment and tax structure to preferentially encourage farm uses.*
- *Allow/encourage leasing for farm use if the current owner is not farming.*

3.4 Increase Public Knowledge and Support of Agriculture

As is the case in other regions of BC and Canada, agriculture in the East Kootenay lacks a clear identity amongst the majority of its population and specifically, urban residents. People are not always aware of the contribution that agriculture makes to the economy, quality of life and amenities and benefits (e.g. environmental conservation, biodiversity, etc.) that society enjoys. Public support has become increasingly important to agricultural sector objectives, as the interests of community, farmland protection, and economic viability of farm operators have become more intertwined. Agriculture stands to gain from a closer relationship with the public as the importance to community well-being of economically sustainable local food and fibre production becomes more appreciated. This engagement needs to take the form of:

- Communicating the rationale for agricultural support;
- Articulating ways the public and the agricultural sector can collaborate to pursue mutually beneficial agricultural objectives; and
- Identifying actions that stakeholders should take to assist the agricultural sector.

3.4.1 Public Awareness of Local Agriculture

There is opportunity to enlist the support of non-farming residents to enhance the conditions necessary to support agricultural viability in the East Kootenay. This may be accomplished by taking steps to engage the public in connecting the overall well-being of their community with

[21] http://groundswellnetwork.ca/
[22] http://youngagrarians.org/
[23] http://www.farmfolkcityfolk.ca/

local agriculture and by making residents aware of how the agricultural sector can be supported to achieve desired community results.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- *Develop and build on existing farmer-supported agricultural awareness events and other opportunities for the public to experience local food and agriculture.*
- *Expand the East Kootenay Ag Plan[24] agriculture website with 'farmer of the month' features, fact sheets, seasonal local food recipes, seasonal updates and links to resources for residents who want to connect to local agriculture, such as the seasonal East Kootenay Local Food Guide.*
- *Increase information dissemination and communications with the public about mutually beneficial agriculture programs and initiatives, utilizing a broad spectrum of communications tools including social media.*
- *Develop a multi-partner communications plan to engage farm groups by creating contact lists of farmers and farmers organizations willing to educate the public, distributing speakers list to schools, community service clubs, Chambers of Commerce and other groups, encouraging presentations on agricultural issues and to engage the public, (e.g., agricultural awareness events, newspaper coverage, crop information, and farm field tours).*
- *Support and expand opportunities for community gardens and urban agriculture demonstrations to promote agricultural awareness.*
- *Utilize existing tools and resources, such Agriculture More Than Ever[25], to promote a positive image of agriculture and create opportunities for constructive dialogue between producers and consumers.*
- *Encourage reports and research that show what the returns to farmers are on agricultural products, where the food dollar goes in the food chain, and the cost of food in relation to other staples in the community.*
- *Support and promote farmers' markets and agricultural fair events (e.g. 4-H shows) featuring local agricultural products.*
- *Compile an inventory of public lands in the Regional District to identify suitable lands for community agriculture and the development of a community demonstration farm.*
- *Require the AAC, as part of its routine functions, to develop an annual "State of Agriculture in the RDEK" report based on the priorities in the Agricultural Plan;*
- *Initiate a study to determine the contribution of the agriculture industry to the regional economy, and the public amenity benefits and ecological goods and service values associated with agriculture.*

3.4.2 Youth Awareness and Education

It is critical to educate children and youth about agriculture and food systems, enabling them to make informed decisions about food choices, food safety, the importance of our own supply of local food and other agricultural products, and the protection of BC's agriculture resource base. Today's youth will be tomorrow's consumers, food producers and processors, agronomists, scientists, chefs, and policy-makers. Instilling a sense of the value that a healthy agricultural

[24] http://ekag.ca/
[25] http://www.agriculturemorethanever.ca/

sector contributes to society will help to promote agriculture as a viable and desirable career choice.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- *Advocate for and support educational initiatives such as including agriculture in school curriculum (e.g. Agriculture in the Classroom[26]), 4-H programs and agriculture forums that provide youth with information about agriculture.*
- *Evaluate the feasibility of developing agricultural educational programs and field tours for school aged children modeled after existing successful programs such as the Columbia Basin Environmental Education Network's (CBEEN) Wild Voices for Kids[27] and UBC Farm's FarmWonders[28] program.*
- *Collaborate with area schools, farmers, ranchers and agri-businesses to promote Canadian Agriculture Literacy Week[29] through activities such as career days, "meet a farmer" presentations, farm tours and agricultural forums.*
- *Create and fund an annual bursary or scholarship to support a student pursuing post-secondary agricultural studies.*

3.4.3 Agri-food Education

Changes in consumer food/produce purchasing and preparation trends and the lack of consumer knowledge about food and farming systems due to the ongoing demographic shift from agrarian to urban lifestyles are contributing factors to the economic challenges facing the agricultural industry.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- *Compile and distribute relevant research information on consumer and food trends to agricultural producers and processors.*
- *Collaborate with other groups and organizations, such as producer associations, farmer's markets, community food groups, retailers, food processors and the health industry to compile and distribute resources on food selection, preparation and dietary considerations. For example, the Beef Information Centre[30] provides comprehensive health and nutrition information, recipes, cooking instructions and resources on all beef-related products. Similar resources exist for many other agri-food products.*

3.4.4 Education and resources for non-farming rural residents

The transition of former agricultural lands to rural residential subdivisions and rural estates owned by non-farmers presents an opportunity for the agricultural industry to provide education and awareness of agriculture and rural lifestyles, in order to foster goodwill and develop positive relationships between farming and non-farming neighbours.

[26] http://aitc.ca/bc/

[27] http://www.cbeen.org/wvfk
[28] http://farmwonders.ca/
[29] http://www.aitc.ca/en/calw.html
[30] http://www.beefinfo.org/

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- *Compile and update existing information resources from the Ministry of Agriculture, Agricultural Land Commission and the RDEK regarding "living near agriculture", and make them available to rural non-farming residents.*
- *Update the current East Kootenay Guide[31] and implement a policy that the guide will be provided to all new residents of the RDEK.*
- *Facilitate information meetings and workshops to assist new landowners in understanding the concepts of rural living. Participants could be provided with information on relevant farm legislation and practices, an overview of adjacent farm and ranch operations, as well as ideas on soil conservation, plant identification, weed and invasive plant management, water management, livestock husbandry practices, fencing regulations, wildlife management and environmental protection.*

3.5 An Agri-food Systems Strategy for the East Kootenay

The development and implementation of a regional agri-food system strategy that encompasses the interests of all stakeholders is a critical step in ensuring a sustainable agricultural industry in the East Kootenay.

"We need to stop talking only about sectors, value chains and product lines and start thinking more about agri-food "systems". Future success hinges on taking a systems approach that better understands the connections among many diverse players. Every ingredient and food relies on a productive ecological system managed by ranchers or farmers. Getting the ingredient or food to the consumer's plate takes a value chain, including input providers, producers, distributors, processors and retailers. All levels of government are also part of this system, acting as policy makers, regulators, funders and facilitators. As well, scientists, researchers and entrepreneurs contribute ideas and new technologies. Adjacent sectors (e.g., in the health, transportation and environment sectors) intersect with the agri-food sector in multiple ways. This goes well beyond a linear view of the sector. All these stakeholders have a leading role to play in food systems." – Canada's Agri-Food Destination, Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute (CAPI), 2011[32].

[31] http://www.rdek.bc.ca/east_kootenay_guide.htm

[32] http://capi-icpa.ca/destinations/CAPI-Agri-Food_Destination_FULL.pdf

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- *Facilitate the development and implementation of an East Kootenay agri-food systems strategy through collaboration with food producers, processors, distributors, retailers, ancillary goods and services providers, and consumers. This system must contemplate the unique regional characteristics of the RDEK including the geography, climate, soils, economics, population demographics, culture, political boundaries, and existing agri-food infrastructure and relationships. Key elements of this system, as expressed elsewhere in this plan, must include:*
    - *Enhancing the financial (economic) viability of local farmers and ranchers;*
    - *Increasing the region's capacity to produce more local food;*
    - *Contributing to food safety and security by ensuring more equitable access to nutritious foods; and*
    - *Preserving and protecting land for agricultural production.*
- *Adopt the philosophy that every agricultural product that can be readily, responsibly and economically grown (produced) here in the RDEK should be grown here in quantities sufficient to meet local demand, and that imports should be concentrated in produce required for a healthy diet that cannot be practically grown here.*

4 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The recommendations contained within the Agricultural Plan articulate the need for a shift to recognize the importance of agriculture in the region and the need to dedicate resources to protect the land and support agricultural producers. Successful implementation of the recommendations within the Agricultural Plan will require a commitment to pursuing these actions from the RDEK, the agricultural sector, the public and partnering agencies with responsible jurisdiction.

4.1 Future Action by the RDEK

Within the Agricultural Plan the RDEK is recognized as an agency that has the potential to dedicate resources through the services it offers and administers to facilitate some of the recommendations within the Plan. The Agricultural Plan process has been adopted by resolution of the Board. The Agricultural Plan is considered a policy document and does not commit the RDEK to any future actions, but is intended to inform future policy and bylaw development by the RDEK. The potential role of the RDEK in working towards implementing the recommendations within the Agricultural Plan falls under three categories:

- *Advocacy* – actions performed by the RDEK Board, such as priority project setting and participation at AKBLG and UBCM;
- *Operational* – actions performed by RDEK Staff or Contractors, such as bylaw and plan development; and
- *Regulatory* – utilization of regulatory powers such as zoning bylaws and Official Community Plans.

Through implementation of specific recommendations within the Plan and consideration of the identified strategic priority areas, future policies and bylaws should facilitate the vision identified within the Plan. The Agricultural Plan should be a touchstone when considering annual priority project setting, future Official Community Plans and the implementation of zoning regulations. The resulting projects, policies and regulations should, where feasible, be assessed to determine whether or not they provide an opportunity to facilitate or support sustainable agriculture in the region. Opportunities to advance specific recommendations identified within the Plan through operational and strategic priorities should be encouraged. If it is determined that achieving sustainable agriculture could be impeded further consideration should be given prior to proceeding.

4.2 Future Action by Others

Implementing the Agriculture Plan is complex; the goals are broad and involve many stakeholders, including producers, consumers, communities and governments. The collaboration and shared vision of all these individuals and groups will be required if the plan is to succeed. The implementation plan identifies key partners and participating agencies for each specific recommendation and action item.

4.3 Monitoring and Reviewing Progress

An appropriate review process should be established for the Agricultural Plan so it may be updated to remain current and valid. The recommendation within this Plan is that the RDEK Agricultural Advisory Committee Terms of Reference be amended to include a role in implementing and reviewing the Agricultural Plan. Regular review of the Plan should be conducted by the AAC and applicable RDEK staff on an annual basis with a more detailed review of the plan after the fifth year of implementation. Identification of the actions being initiated or undertaken should be documented during the review. Upon completion, or at regular intervals for lengthy processes, anticipated outcomes should be assessed to determine the effectiveness of the proposed action. If the Agricultural Plan is being effective, selected indicators, monitored over a period of time, will provide data related to plan successes. Some of the indicators that may be monitored include:

- Changes in the number of farms and amount of land being farmed
- Activities and practices of existing farm businesses
- Changes in marketing agricultural products
- Observations related to diversification or processing on area farms
- Extent of agri-tourism or culinary tourism
- Number of applications for inclusion, exclusion and subdivision from the ALR
- Observations on beginning or new farmers
- Training and education opportunities for area farmers
- Media coverage of area farms

Which indicators are monitored should be determined in the first year following completion of the Agricultural Plan. Baseline information of the monitors should be gathered and stored for future reference. Much of the required information has been gathered through the preparation of this Plan; however the collection and accumulation of the data in a comprehensive manner for the identified indicators will assist in future assessments and analysis.

4.4 Recommended Actions Summary

The recommended actions will be initiated through a lead implementing agency and and/or participatory agencies/groups, with jurisdiction, responsibility or interest in the relevant area. The participation of these parties is anticipated to be required to successfully facilitate each recommendation. In recognition of the range of actions identified within this Plan they have been organized to identify a suggested timeline (near, medium and long term) and priority (high, medium, low) for implementation. The role that has been assigned is in consideration of the specific actions recommended within Section 3 of the Agricultural Plan and the issues identification table contained in Appendix B. Near term high priority items where the RDEK is the lead implementation agency have been highlighted for clarity and easy recognition.

Strategic Objective: **Enhance institutional support for East Kootenay agriculture**

Recommended Actions	**Lead/**Participating Partners*	Resources Needed	Timeline**	Priority
3.1.1. Agricultural Liaison Officer (ALO)				
The RDEK, in collaboration with existing agricultural organizations and government and quasi-government agencies within the region, develop the terms of reference, job description, work plan and performance standards for an Agricultural Liaison Officer position and recruit a qualified individual to fulfill this role.	**RDEK (Operational),** EK Ag groups, MAGR, CBT	Allocation of funding for wages, benefits & programs	Near	High
3.1.2. Agricultural Advisory Committee				
The RDEK enhance the existing Agricultural Advisory Commission to includes producer representation from all six electoral areas, and develop appropriate terms of reference to guide and govern the committee's function.	**RDEK (Regulatory),** EK Ag groups	Staff time	Near	High
3.1.3. East Kootenay Agriculture Group/Association				
The RDEK, in collaboration with existing agricultural organizations and interests within the region, facilitate the establishment of an East Kootenay Agriculture Group/Association and develop the foundation statements (vision, mission, goals and guiding principles) and terms of reference to guide and governs its function.	RDEK (Operational), **EK Ag groups**, MAGR	ALO Start-up costs	Medium	Medium

* Refer to List of Acronyms; ** Timeline for implementation refers to near term (within 1 to 2 years), medium term (3 to 5 years) and long term (5 to 10 years).

***Strategic Objective:* Improve the economic viability of East Kootenay agriculture**

Recommended Actions	**Lead/**Participating Partners*	Resources Needed	Timeline**	Priority
3.2.1. Understand baseline economic performance				
Partner with the BC Ministry of Agriculture to complete detailed baseline economic studies for each sector of the agricultural economy in the region to fully understand cost of production, revenues, profit margins, transportation and logistics, markets and related best management practices.	**MAGR,** RDEK ALO (Operational), EK Ag groups, , COTR	Staff time	Near	High
3.2.2. Farm input costs and accessibility				
Advocate for reduced electricity costs for irrigation water systems.	**RDEK (Advocacy)**	Staff time	Near	High
Advocate for lower tax assessment on agricultural buildings/improvements of bona fide farmers.	**RDEK (Advocacy),** AKBLG, UBCM	Staff time	Near	High
Encourage farmer buying groups for crop inputs.	EK Ag groups		Long	Low
Assist producers to source inputs locally by maintaining a directory of suppliers and available products and services.	**EK Ag groups,** RDEK (Operational)	Staff time	Near	Low
Enhance financial and technical support for weed and invasive plant control, monitoring and enforcement activities through East Kootenay Invasive Plant Council.	**RDEK (Advocacy/Operational),** MAGR, EK Ag groups	ALO	Long	Medium
Explore the feasibility of establishing a regional agricultural land trust to provide affordable long-term leases to farmers.	**RDEK ALO (Operational),** MAGR, EK Ag groups	ALO	Long	Medium
3.2.3. Enhance local processing and marketing opportunities				
Support the development of local/regional agri-food processing facilities through effective zoning and bylaws.	**RDEK (Regulatory)**	Staff time	Ongoing	High
Investigate the feasibility of establishing permanent docking locations for one or more Class B mobile red meat slaughter facilities throughout the region.	**RDEK (Regulatory),** MAGR, MH/IHA	Staff time	Near	High
Support and promote regional farmers' markets and the East Kootenay Local Food Guide;	**RDEK ALO (Operational)**	ALO	Ongoing	High
Facilitate the development of direct-to-consumer local food marketing initiatives similar to The Farmers' Table Sustainable Agriculture Initiative and SaskFoodFind.com - Find local food in Saskatchewan	**RDEK ALO Operational),** EK Ag groups, MAGR, CBT, CVFCA, CFAC, KRIC	ALO	Near	High
Engage in economic development initiatives to explore and promote opportunities for agricultural processing, new crop opportunities, liaison with agricultural researchers and technology providers, attracting business, and identifying funding and programs.	**RDEK ALO (Operational),** EK Ag groups, MAGR, CBT	ALO	Ongoing	High
Investigate the feasibility of attracting processors for local agricultural products by providing financial incentives, revitalization tax exemption bylaws and serviced locations.	**RDEK (Operational/Regulatory)**	Staff time	Medium	Medium
Lobby for the incorporation of on-farm value-added as eligible farm income for farm tax assessment purposes.	**RDEK (Advocacy),** EK Ag groups, AKBLG, UBCM	Staff time	Medium	Medium
Pursue funding and partners to pilot test community based business incubator and value-added initiatives.	**RDEK ALO Operational),** EK Ag groups, MAGR, CBT, CVFCA, CFAC, KRIC	ALO	Medium	High

* Refer to List of Acronyms; ** Timeline for implementation refers to near term (within 1 to 2 years), medium term (3 to 5 years) and long term (5 to 10 years).

Strategic Objective: Improve the economic viability of East Kootenay agriculture, continued

Recommended Actions	**Lead/**Participating Partners*	Resources Needed	Timeline**	Priority
3.2.4. Foster innovation and diversification				
Initiate a local food supply capacity feasibility study to determine what proportion of the total daily dietary requirements (according to the Canada Food Guide recommendations) of East Kootenay residents could realistically be produced and processed locally.	**RDEK ALO (Operational),** EK Ag groups, MAGR, CBT, CVFCA, CFAC, KRIC	ALO	Near	High
Collaborate with farmers, secondary and post-secondary education institutions, agricultural associations and government ministries to facilitate events and initiatives to provide farmers with training, mentoring, technical expertise, production knowledge, and access to agricultural programs that promote knowledge transfer and build capacity in farming.	**RDEK ALO (Operational),** EK Ag groups, MAGR, COTR	ALO	Ongoing	High
Encourage seminars and workshops on production, food safety practices, niche marketing, and business management skills.	**RDEK ALO Operational),** EK Ag groups, MAGR, COTR	ALO	Ongoing	High
Explore and support farming models that develop stronger connections between the farming community and the local marketplace and encourage new types of agricultural enterprise, such as community supported agriculture (CSA), cooperatives, food alliances and community networks.	**RDEK ALO (Operational),** EK Ag groups, MAGR, CBT, CVFCA, CFAC, KRIC	ALO	Ongoing	High
Collaborate with existing groups and organizations to advocate and facilitate the development agricultural policy and programming for Paid Ecosystem Services initiatives.	**RDEK (Advocacy), EK** Ag groups, MAGR, ESI BC	Staff time	Medium	Medium
3.2.5. Reasonable and effective regulations				
Utilize the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) to proactively advise the RDEK on regulatory issues and constraints affecting local agriculture.	**RDEK (Operational)**	Staff/Board	Ongoing	High
Collaborate with other regional districts, municipal governments and producer organizations to communicate the need for a review of meat inspection regulations with respect to permitting farm gate sales.	**RDEK (Operational),** AKBLG, UBCM, EK Ag groups	Staff/Board	Near	High
Amend the landfill operational certificate(s) to permit disposal of livestock carcasses and specified risk materials (SRM) at Regional District landfills.	**RDEK (Regulatory)**	Staff time	Near	High
Advocate with BC Assessment for amendments to regulations that result in the loss of farm status and increased taxation if a producer experiences low gross sales in successive years.	**RDEK (Advocacy),** AKBLG, UBCM, EK Ag groups	Staff time	Near	High
Advocate with BC Assessment for amendments to regulations that result in agricultural land automatically reverting to a higher level of taxation when it is sold.	**RDEK (Advocacy),** AKBLG, UBCM, EK Ag groups	Staff time	Near	High
Lobby the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations for restructuring of the forest tenure/AAC system to provide more opportunities for grazing enhancements and ecosystem restoration treatments, particularly on Crown lands in the ALR.	RDEK (Advocacy), EK Ag groups	Staff time	Medium	Medium
Clarify landowner fencing requirements under the Livestock Act, particularly as they relate to private-Crown land interface boundaries.	RDEK (Advocacy), EK Ag groups	Staff time	Medium	Medium
Advocate with the BC Government for continued funding of long-term highway and railway corridor livestock fencing programs.	**RDEK (Advocacy),** AKBLG, UBCM, EK Ag groups	Staff time	Long	Medium

* Refer to List of Acronyms; ** Timeline for implementation refers to near term (within 1 to 2 years), medium term (3 to 5 years) and long term (5 to 10 years).

Strategic Objective: Improve the economic viability of East Kootenay agriculture, continued

Recommended Actions	**Lead/**Participating Partners*	Resources Needed	Timeline**	Priority
3.2.6. Resolve Agriculture – Wildlife Conflicts				
Ensure there is agricultural representation on agriculture-wildlife working groups and predator conflict committees to explore predation issues and develop a holistic, ecologically sound framework for implementing timely solutions.	**EK Ag groups,** RDEK (Advocacy)	Staff time	Ongoing	High
Work with the Provincial Agriculture Zone Wildlife Program (PAZWP) and Regional Agriculture Wildlife Committees (RAWCs) to explore options for reducing depredation losses on agricultural hay and pasture fields.	**EK Ag groups,** RDEK (Advocacy)	Staff time	Ongoing	High
Participate in the ongoing discussions regarding the BC Wild and Domestic Sheep Separation Program to ensure agricultural interests are represented.	**EK Ag groups,** RDEK (Advocacy)	Staff time	Ongoing	High
Support related research studies on wildlife mitigation strategies.	**EK Ag groups,** RDEK ALO (Operational), CBT, MAGR, MFLNRO, KCP, RMTS	ALO	Ongoing	Medium
3.2.7. Climate Change Adaptation				
Review and prioritize climate change adaptation strategies and develop an appropriate implementation plan including timelines and budgets.	**RDEK ALO (Operational),** EK Ag groups, CBT, MAGR, MFLNRO, KCP, RMTS	ALO	Ongoing	Medium

* Refer to List of Acronyms; ** Timeline for implementation refers to near term (within 1 to 2 years), medium term (3 to 5 years) and long term (5 to 10 years)

***Strategic Objective:* Encourage Agriculture on Agricultural Land**

Recommended Actions	**Lead/**Participating Partners*	Resources Needed	Timeline**	Priority
3.3.1. Maintaining farmland and the Agriculture Land Reserve				
Establish a policy that all applications for any change in land use on ALR lands require an analysis that demonstrates a net benefit to agriculture.	**RDEK (Regulatory)**	Staff time	Near	High
Require an agricultural impact assessment (AIA) prepared by a qualified professional at the applicant's cost for all applications for removal of land from the ALR; for any use not part of agriculture; or any applications for boundary adjustments.	**RDEK (Regulatory)**	Staff time	Near	High
Establish a policy that ALR applications submitted by non-farming applicants and/or for non-farming uses will receive lower priority than applications that support farming businesses.	**RDEK (Regulatory)**	Staff time	Near	High
Adopt Smart Growth land use planning and development principles.	**RDEK (Regulatory)**	Staff time	Near	High
3.3.2. Farmland needs farmers				
Facilitate succession planning workshops and one-on-one consulting services for existing producers who are anticipating selling and/or transferring their farms.	**EK Ag groups,** RDEK ALO (Operational), CBT, COTR, MAGR	ALO	Ongoing	High
Collaborate with government and industry partners to develop and promote succession planning resources.	**RDEK ALO (Operational),** EK Ag groups, CBT, COTR, MAGR	ALO	Ongoing	High
Investigate alternate financing, leasing and land sharing arrangements to attract new farmers and assist with farm succession.	**RDEK ALO (Operational),** EK Ag groups, CBT, MAGR	ALO	Ongoing	High
Explore innovative alternatives for retiring landowners to stay on their property while facilitating transition of their farm to new operators.				
3.3.3. Enable new and/or expanding farmers to access farmland				
Conduct interviews/surveys with landowners and Crown leaseholders of under-utilized ALR lands to fully understand why the land is not being used.	RDEK ALO (Operational), **EK Ag groups**, MAGR, ALC	ALO	Medium	Medium
Determine how much privately owned land is presently used for farming under leasing arrangements.	RDEK ALO (Operational), EK Ag groups, **MAGR**	ALO	Medium	Medium
Create a website or farmland registry for linking a database of potential tenants to a database of potential landlords (or facilitate linkages to existing databases).	**RDEK ALO (Operational),** EK Ag groups	ALO	Medium	Medium
Investigate incentives to promote active farmland use by improving access for aspiring and landless farmers and encouraging existing non-farming farmland owners to lease their land.	**RDEK ALO (Operational),** EK Ag groups, MAGR	ALO	Medium	Medium
Make municipal and Crown land (and associated irrigation water) available for farming under lease and/or lease to purchase agreements.	**RDEK (Advocacy),** EK Ag groups, MAGR, MFLNRO, ALC, RMTS	Staff time	Near	High
Develop a clearing house of information on rental terms, leases, agreements and business arrangements, including cooperatives and farm equipment bank models	**RDEK ALO (Operational**), EK Ag groups, MAGR	ALO	Medium	Medium
Explore relationships with existing land trusts (e.g., Ducks Unlimited, The Land Conservancy, Nature Trust, etc.), to increase access to farmland by farmers.	**RDEK ALO Operational),** EK Ag groups	ALO	Medium	Medium
Research the feasibility of cooperative land ownership models.	**RDEK ALO (Operational),** EK Ag groups, MAGR	ALO	Medium	Medium

* Refer to List of Acronyms; ** Timeline for implementation refers to near term (within 1 to 2 years), medium term (3 to 5 years) and long term (5 to 10 years)

Strategic Objective: **Encourage Agriculture on Agricultural Land, continued**

Recommended Actions	**Lead/**Participating Partners*	Resources Needed	Timeline**	Priority
3.3.4. Education and resources for new entrants to farming				
Emphasize the need for farmer training in financial and business planning, budgeting, forecasting, risk management and marketing.	**RDEK ALO (Operational),** EK Ag groups, COTR, MAGR	ALO	Ongoing	High
Provide access to farm business management resources.	RDEK ALO (Operational), EK Ag groups, **MAGR**	ALO	Ongoing	High
Collaborate with existing educational institutions such as the COTR Kootenay Farm School program, and local/regional agricultural associations to provide opportunities for basic farm training.	**RDEK ALO (Operational),** EK Ag groups, COTR, MAGR	ALO	Ongoing	Medium
Evaluate the feasibility of implementing training programs similar to the Green Certificate Farm Training Programs in Alberta and Saskatchewan.	**RDEK ALO Operational),** EK Ag groups, COTR, MAGR	ALO	Medium	Low
Facilitate mentorship opportunities to encourage the transfer of skills and knowledge from existing farm/ranch operators.	**RDEK ALO (Operational),** EK Ag groups, MAGR	ALO	Ongoing	High
Encourage and promote local programs such as Groundswell's Community Greenhouse and Community and School Gardens programs.	**RDEK ALO (Operational),** EK Ag groups, MAGR	ALO	Ongoing	Medium
Collaborate with existing organizations such as Young Agrarians, Farm Folk City Folk and others to provide information and resources for aspiring farmers.	**RDEK ALO (Operational),** EK Ag groups, MAGR	ALO	Ongoing	Medium
3.3.5. Assessment and Taxation policy				
Encourage BC Assessment (through resolution to the Union of BC Municipalities) to value farm land based on agricultural capability, agricultural use and future land use designations, rather than values obtained when agricultural land is excluded from agricultural use.	**RDEK (Advocacy),** AKBLG, UBCM, MAGR, ALC	Staff time	Near	High
Land in the ALR that is actively used for farming should remain assessed as agriculture land regardless of gross farm receipts in order to encourage agricultural use.	**RDEK (Advocacy),** AKBLG, UBCM	Staff time	Near	High
Use incentives in the form of a lower assessment and tax structure to preferentially encourage farm uses.	**RDEK (Advocacy),** AKBLG, UBCM	Staff time	Near	High
Allow/encourage leasing for farm use if the current owner is not farming	**RDEK (Advocacy),** AKBLG, UBCM	Staff time	Ongoing	Medium

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Strategic Objective: **Increase Public Knowledge and Support of Agriculture**

Recommended Actions	**Lead/**Participating Partners*	Resources Needed	Timeline**	Priority
3.4.1. Public Awareness of Local Agriculture				
Develop and build on existing farmer-supported agricultural awareness events and other opportunities for the public to experience local food and agriculture.	**RDEK ALO (Operational),** EK Ag groups, MAGR, CFAC, CVFCA, CBT, AITC	ALO	Ongoing	High
Expand the www.ekag.ca agriculture website with 'farmer of the month' features, fact sheets, seasonal local food recipes, seasonal updates and links to resources for residents who want to connect to local agriculture, such as the seasonal East Kootenay Local Food Guide.	**RDEK ALO (Operational)**	ALO	Near	High
Increase information dissemination and communications with the public about mutually beneficial agriculture program and initiatives, utilizing a broad spectrum of communications tools including social media.	**RDEK ALO (Operational),** EK Ag groups, MAGR	ALO	Ongoing	High
Develop a multi-partner communications plan to engage farm groups by creating contact lists of farmers and farmers organizations willing to educate the public, distributing speakers list to schools, community service clubs, Chambers of Commerce and other groups, encouraging presentations on agricultural issues and to engage the public, (e.g., agricultural awareness events, newspaper coverage, crop information, and farm field tours).	**RDEK ALO Operational),** EK Ag groups, MAGR, Chambers of Commerce, service clubs	ALO	Ongoing	High
Support and expand opportunities for community gardens and urban agriculture demonstrations to promote agricultural awareness.	**RDEK ALO (Operational),** AITC, MAGR, local towns/cities	ALO	Ongoing	Low
Encourage reports and research that show what the returns to farmers are on agricultural products, where the food dollar goes in the food chain, and the cost of food in relation to other staples in the community.	**RDEK ALO Operational),** EK Ag groups, MAGR	ALO	Ongoing	High
Support and promote farmers' markets and agricultural fair events (e.g. 4-H shows) featuring local agricultural products.	**RDEK ALO (Operational),** EK Ag groups, MAGR	ALO	Ongoing	High
Compile an inventory of public lands in the Regional District to identify suitable lands for community agriculture and the development of a community demonstration farm.	**RDEK ALO (Operational)**	ALO	Medium	Medium
Require the AAC, as part of its routine functions, to develop an annual *"State of Agriculture in the RDEK"* report based on the priorities in the Agricultural Plan;	**RDEK ALO (Operational)**	ALO	Ongoing	Medium
Initiate a study to determine the contribution of the agriculture industry to the regional economy, and the public amenity benefits and ecological goods and service values associated with agriculture.	**RDEK ALO (Operational),** EK Ag groups, MAGR, CBT, KRIC	ALO	Near	High
Utilize existing tools and resources, such Agriculture More Than Ever, to promote a positive image of agriculture and create opportunities for constructive dialogue between producers and consumers.	**RDEK ALO (Operational),** EK Ag groups, MAGR, CFAC, CVFCA, CBT, AITC	ALO	Ongoing	High

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Strategic Objective: **Increase Public Knowledge and Support of Agriculture, continued**

Recommended Actions	**Lead/**Participating Partners*	Resources Needed	Timeline**	Priority
3.4.2. Youth Awareness and Education				
Advocate for and support educational initiatives such as including agriculture in school curriculum (e.g. Agriculture in the Classroom), 4-H programs and agriculture forums.	**RDEK (Advocacy/Operational),** EK Ag groups, MAGR, AITC	Staff/ALO	Near	High
Evaluate the feasibility of developing agricultural educational programs and field tours for school aged children.	**RDEK ALO (Operational),** EK Ag groups, MAGR, AITC	ALO	Ongoing	High
Collaborate with area schools, farmers, ranchers and agri-businesses to promote Canadian Agriculture Literacy Week.	**RDEK ALO (Operational),** EK Ag groups, MAGR, AITC, Schools, Agri-business	ALO	Annual	High
Create and fund an annual bursary or scholarship to support a student pursuing post-secondary agricultural studies.	**RDEK ALO (Operational),** EK Ag groups	ALO	Annual	Medium
3.4.3. Agri-food Education				
Compile and distribute relevant research information on consumer and food trends to agricultural producers and processors.	**RDEK ALO Operational),** EK Ag groups, MAGR, AITC, KRIC	ALO	Ongoing	Medium
Collaborate with other groups and organizations, such as producer associations, farmers markets, community food groups, retailers, food processors and the health industry to compile and distribute resources on food selection, preparation and dietary considerations.	**RDEK ALO (Operational),** EK Ag groups, MAGR, AITC, MH/IHA	ALO	Ongoing	Medium
3.4.4. Education and resources for non-farming rural residents				
Compile and update existing information resources from the Ministry of Agriculture, Agricultural Land Commission and the RDEK regarding "living near agriculture", and make them available to rural non-farming residents.	**RDEK ALO (Operational),** EK Ag groups, MAGR, ALC	ALO	Ongoing	Medium
Update the current East Kootenay Guide and implement a policy that the guide will be provided to all new residents of the RDEK.	**RDEK ALO (Operational),** EK Ag groups, MAGR, ALC	ALO	Ongoing	Medium
Facilitate information meetings and workshops to assist new landowners in understanding the concepts of rural living. Participants could be provided with information on relevant farm legislation and practices, an overview of adjacent farm and ranch operations, as well as ideas on soil conservation, plant identification, weed and invasive plant management, water management, livestock husbandry practices, fencing regulations, wildlife management and environmental protection.	**RDEK ALO (Operational),** EK Ag groups, MAGR, ALC	ALO	Ongoing	Medium

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Strategic Objective: **An Agri-food Systems Strategy for the East Kootenay**

Recommended Actions	**Lead/**Participating Partners*	Resources Needed	Timeline**	Priority
3.5. East Kootenay Agri-food Systems Strategy				
Facilitate the development and implementation of an East Kootenay Agri-food systems strategy through collaboration with food producers, processors, distributors, retailers, ancillary goods and services providers, and consumers.	**RDEK ALO (Operational**), EK Ag groups, MAGR, ALC, COTR, KRIC, CFAC, CVFCA, CBT, CFEK, COTR, KCP, MFLNRO, RMTS, Chambers of Commerce, Agri-businesses, MH/IHA, Community groups and associations, local government	ALO	Near	High
Adopt the philosophy that every agricultural product that can be readily and responsibly grown (produced) here in the RDEK should be grown here in quantities sufficient to meet local demand, and that imports should be concentrated in produce required for a healthy diet that cannot be practically grown here.	**RDEK (Advocacy/Operational),** all other agricultural interest groups and associations	Staff/Board	Ongoing	High

* Refer to List of Acronyms; ** Timeline for implementation refers to near term (within 1 to 2 years), medium term (3 to 5 years) and long term (5 to 10 years)

Appendix A

RDEK Agricultural Plan Background Report

RDEK Agricultural Plan

Background Report

August 2013

Submitted By:
VAST Resource Solutions Inc.

With Funding From:

Canada

Investment Agriculture Foundation of British Columbia

British Columbia

www.ekag.ca

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The East Kootenay Agricultural Plan is being developed as a collaborative process involving consultation with local residents, government agencies and local stakeholders. The East Kootenay Agriculture Plan Steering Committee (APSC), comprised of residents of the agricultural community from various Electoral Areas in the region, work in conjunction with the agricultural consultant to provide direction to the planning process. We wish to thank the following participants for their contribution and commitment, which has been instrumental to the development of this report.

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Sharon Mielnichuk, Fort Steele Farms - Fort Steele (Area E)
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Eric Rasmussen – Invermere (Area F)
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Disclaimer:
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the BC Ministry of Agriculture and the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC, are pleased to participate in the delivery of this project. We are committed to working with our industry partners to address issues of importance to the agriculture and agri-food industry in British Columbia. Opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Investment Agriculture Foundation, the BC Ministry of Agriculture or Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The East Kootenay Agricultural Plan Background Report is the initial deliverable in a collaborative process that will result in an Agricultural Plan for the Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK). This report presents the results of the agricultural land use inventory (ALUI) and census data research, community consultation and issue identification stages of the planning process. The Background Report provides the context for the development of policy initiatives and actions that can be undertaken by the RDEK to enhance, promote and sustain a viable agricultural sector in the region.

Agriculture has been an integral part of the East Kootenay way of life since initial settlement of the region more than 100 years ago. During the first half of the 20th century the region supported predominantly small scale farm operations producing a diversity of agricultural products including tree and bush fruits, vegetables, potatoes, poultry, eggs, milk and other dairy products, cereal grains, hay and Christmas trees, as well as beef cattle and sheep. Over the past 50 years, beef cattle ranching and forage production have become the dominant agricultural enterprise in the region.

Approximately 9.6% (265,910 ha) of the total RDEK land base, primarily along the valley bottoms of the Columbia, Kootenay, and Elk River drainages, is considered agricultural land and designated to the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). Approximately one-third of the ALR land is privately owned, while the remainder is Crown owned and managed for multiple uses (i.e. grazing, wildlife, forestry, mining, etc.) rather than exclusively for agriculture. In terms of land use, approximately 8.8% (23,361 ha) of the ALR is associated with farming activity, with cultivated lands for field crop and tame forage production (10,757 ha) and livestock grazing on land with soil and/or topography limitations (11,823 ha) representing the major land uses. An additional 21.79% of the ALR (57,940 ha) is available and has potential for agriculture but is not presently being used, while another 15,890 ha (5.98%) with limitations for cultivated use is potentially available for livestock grazing. A large portion (157,008 ha) of the ALR was not inventoried due to access issues and other land uses. A majority of this land is Crown owned; most of this is likely associated with grazing leases.

While the total number of farms in the region has remained relatively static at approximately 395 farm units, the number of cattle ranching operations declined by 48% between 2001 and 2011. During this same time “other crop farming” operations, which primarily represents commercial hay production, has more than doubled. These changes reflect the impact of the 2003 Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) crisis on cattle prices, the resulting changes to the red meat inspection system and the general economic instability of the beef cattle sector during this period. Hog and sheep production has declined since 2001, while poultry and egg production has remained stable. Other animal production, primarily horses for pleasure/recreational use, has increased almost 62%. The vegetable and greenhouse/nursery sectors exhibited steady growth between 2001 and 2011, but still represent only a very small percentage of the total agriculture in the region.

According to census data, total gross farm receipts have remained relatively stagnant in the RDEK over the past 20 years, averaging approximately $14,624,000. During the same time period, gross farm receipts at the provincial level have experienced substantial growth (222%) and the provincial average gross receipts per farm is four times that of the East Kootenay region. Total farm business operating expenses in the RDEK have exceeded gross farm receipts in the past four census years (1996 through 2011), while the average ratio of operating expenses to farm receipts is 0.90 provincially, indicating overall industry profitability. The disparity between the RDEK and provincial performance reflects the soil and climatic limitations of the East Kootenay region. Almost 70% of the ALR in the region is comprised of agricultural capability class 5 and 6 lands, which are only suitable for perennial forage or natural grazing. This has resulted in an agricultural industry focused primarily on range beef cattle production with very limited crop or livestock diversification or value-added processing and marketing.

The consultation and engagement process utilized to gather and record information and input from agricultural producers and residents across the region identified eight broad themes:

- Agricultural extension, networking and support
- Producer/Consumer relationships
- Economic viability
- Marketing/Branding (developing a local/regional agri-food economy)
- Government policies and regulations
- Diversification and value-added opportunities
- Farm demographics and succession
- Land access, value and utilization

These themes will form the basis of the agricultural plan.

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ACRONYMS

AAC	Agricultural Advisory Commission
ALC	Agricultural Land Commission
ALR	Agricultural Land Reserve
ALUI	Agricultural Land Use Inventory
APC	Advisory Planning Commission
APSC	Agricultural Plan Steering Committee
CLI	Canada Land Inventory
RDEK	Regional District of East Kootenay

DEFINITIONS

Animal Unit Equivalent - A standard measurement used to compare forage consumption of different livestock types. One animal unit is approximately equal to one adult beef cow with or without an unweaned calf.

Crown owned – Crown owned includes parcels which are owned by municipal, provincial or federal governments.

Farmed – Land cover directly contributing to agricultural production (both actively farmed and inactively farmed). Includes land in cultivated field crops, farm infrastructure and crop cover structures (e.g. greenhouses). Does not include natural pasture or rangeland.

Inactively farmed. Land cover considered “Farmed” but is currently inactive. Includes unused /unmaintained forage and pasture, unmaintained field crops, and unmaintained greenhouses. Does not include natural pasture or rangeland.

Potential for farming – Land without significant topographical, physical or operational constraints to farming such as steep terrain, land under water, or built structures. For example, land with little slope, sufficient soils and exhibiting a natural treed land cover would be considered as having potential for farming.

Available for farming – Parcels that can be used for agricultural purposes without displacing a current use. Includes all parcels that do not meet the “Unavailable for farming” criteria.

Not used for farming but available – Parcels that do not meet the “Used for farming” criteria but can be used for agricultural purposes without displacing a current use.

Unavailable for farming – “Not used for farming” parcels where future agricultural development is improbable because of a conflicting land use that utilizes the majority of the parcel area. For example, most residential parcels are considered not available for farming if the parcel size is less than 0.4 hectares (approximately 1 acre) since most of the parcel is covered by built structures, pavement and landscaping.

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of an Agricultural Plan is an important opportunity for the Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK) and the agricultural sector. Current and long range planning by the RDEK has worked to mitigate the impact of development on the agricultural land base; however, the need for long range planning for agriculture is recognized. The Agricultural Plan process will provide a unique opportunity to propose recommendations for regulations, plans and policies to support agricultural producers and the land base on which agriculture occurs.

The East Kootenay Agricultural Plan was initiated in the spring of 2011. The planning process is being led by the RDEK and an Agricultural Plan Steering Committee (APSC) comprised of members of the farm community, including local ranchers, producers, farmers and business owners. The steering committee provides technical advice and input to the planning process in addition to liaising with the agricultural community. An outline of the process is provided in Figure 1. The Background Report presents the results of the agricultural land use inventory (ALUI) and census data research, community consultation and issue identification stages. A final report, the Agricultural Plan, will provide policy strategies and recommendations to address relevant issues and opportunities.

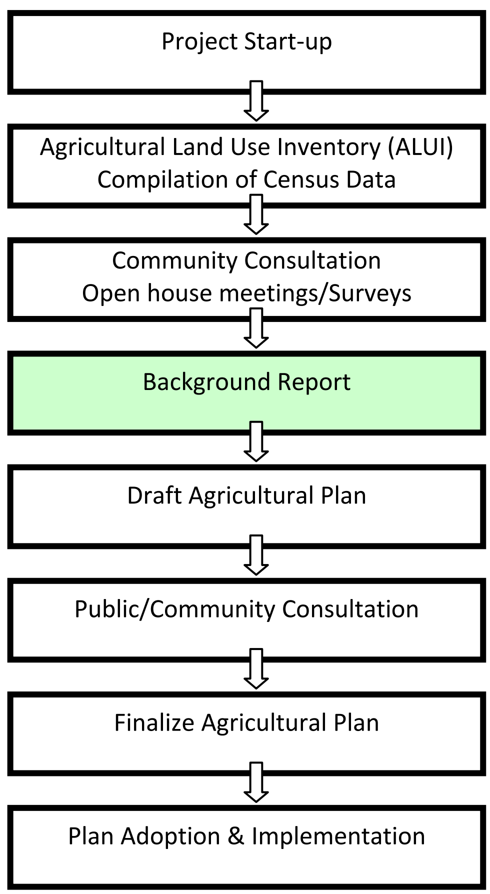

Figure 1. East Kootenay Agricultural Plan development process

1.1 Purpose

The Agricultural Plan will explore the opportunities available to the RDEK and the agricultural community to foster, adapt and sustain agriculture within each of the three sub-regions of the RDEK (Figure 2).

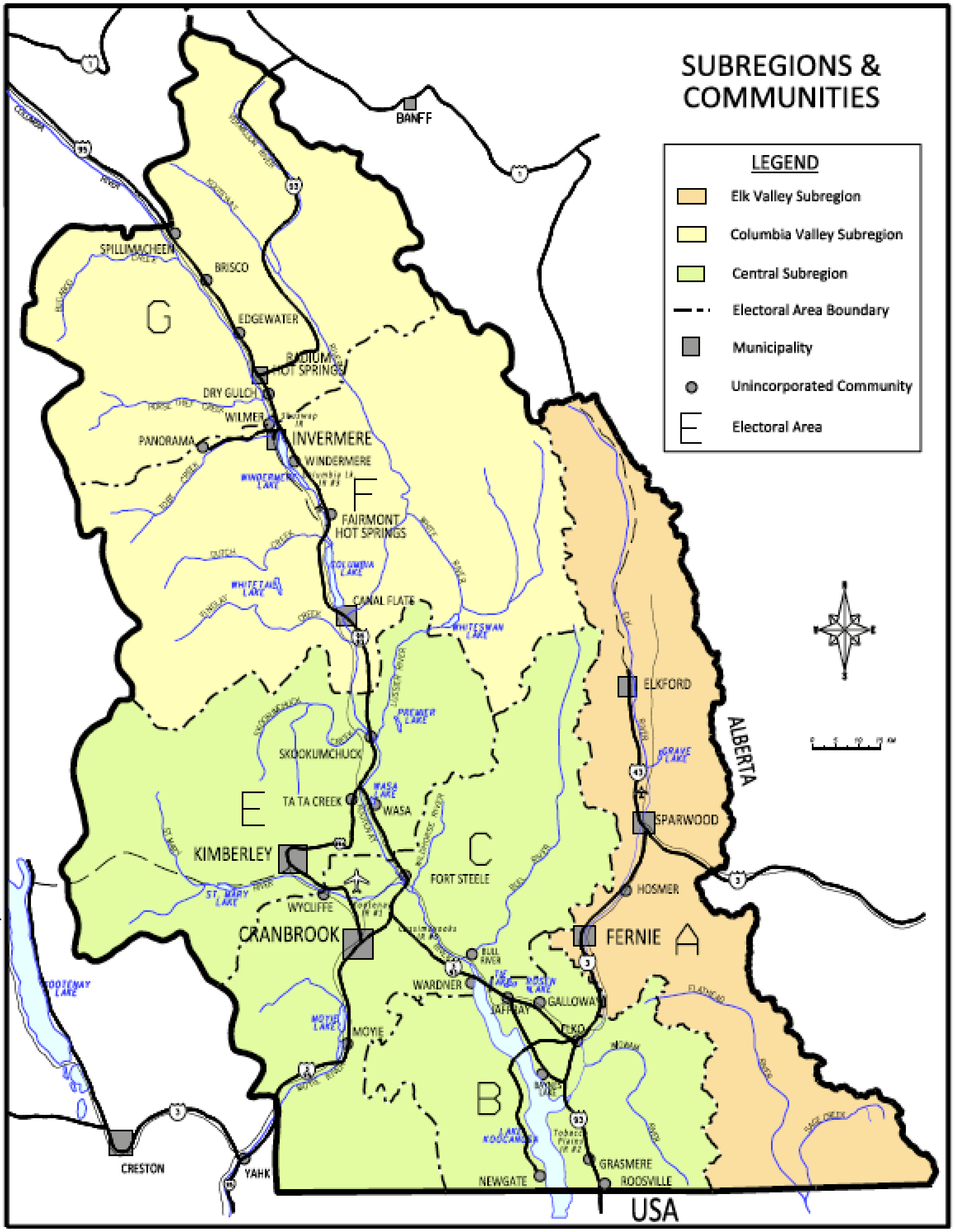

Figure 2. Regional District of East Kootenay Sub-regions and Communities

1.2 Goals and Objectives

The specific objectives for the Agricultural Plan as outlined in the Terms of Reference for the project are as follows:

- Identify a clear vision for the future of agriculture within the East Kootenay region;
- Identify actions and short and long term indicators that can be undertaken by the RDEK and/or the agricultural sector to enhance, promote and protect agriculture;
- Provide recommendations to amend RDEK bylaws, plans, policies to reflect the goals of the Agricultural Plan;
- Provide recommendations to changes in Provincial legislation, regulations and policies to reflect the goals of the Agricultural Plan;
- Recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the agricultural resources in the region and focus on potentially viable, sustainable and diversified agricultural endeavours; and
- Provide a recommendation to the RDEK Board on the future composition and role of the RDEK Agricultural Advisory Commission (AAC).

1.3 Priorities

A range of issues drive the need to have an Agricultural Plan in the region. The four priority issues below introduce the preliminary themes identified by the APSC, and their context.

The People

A successful agricultural sector requires informed, educated and engaged producers and consumers. Successful producers are essential for agriculture to be maintained as a viable industry. In order for current and future producers to succeed, consumers need to have a greater awareness of agriculture and a broader understanding of the societal benefits associated with a viable and sustainable agricultural sector.

The Place

The geography and culture of the East Kootenay region has defined the agricultural sector. The protection and preservation of the land base is essential to sustaining agriculture in the region. Land under private and public ownership must be accessible and productive for future generations. A balance must be sought between the use of land for agriculture and other resource values that influence the viability of agriculture activities. The connectivity between resources, including recreation, water, and wildlife is a key component in maintaining an agricultural sector. The management of Crown resources must recognize the overarching impact of decisions on the viability of agriculture. For example, the potential for the disruption of the natural forest cycle through forest management practices and the resulting change in ground cover and water resources. Opportunities for utilization of land in a manner that recognizes the importance of integrated and inclusive resource management planning to ensure the maintenance of healthy and sustainable ecosystems is imperative.

The Pressures

The agricultural land and producers within the region are subject to a range of pressures. Lands that are most suitable for agriculture are also the most desired for development. The continuing demand for residential and non-residential uses, frequent ALR applications for non-farm use, subdivision and exclusion and rising land values are placing pressure on agricultural land resources. Seasonal populations provide a greater market for produce and value-added agricultural products; however, new residential development may remove arable land from the agricultural land base.

The economics of agriculture in the East Kootenay region is placing pressure on producers. Low commodity prices, high input and transportation costs, and a limited local independent market have resulted in marginal economic viability. When combined with changes in regulations over recent years the impact has been significant. The commercialization of meat processing and centralization of the food distribution system are two such examples of regulatory changes. The Agricultural Plan provides an opportunity to examine the pressures being experienced within the agricultural sector. Emphasis will be given to recommending changes that would facilitate the agricultural sector adapting and diversifying in a timely manner.

The Possibilities

The Agricultural Plan will proactively explore the possibilities that exist to enhance the economic viability of the agricultural sector in the East Kootenay region. The intent is to identify where the agricultural sector can capitalize on consumer awareness, market trends and opportunities. In order to be successful, there must be flexibility and adaptability in the regulations that govern the agricultural sector at the provincial and local government levels. The Plan is an opportunity to bridge the divide between producers and consumers, generations of producers and between producers within the region. The Agricultural Plan will also be an opportunity to foster dialogue and a shared understanding between the RDEK and the agricultural sector. Connectivity within the region must be cultivated in order to capitalize on opportunities to create a sense of agricultural identity in the East Kootenay through branding and marketing.

2. AGRICULTURE IN THE EAST KOOTENAY

Agriculture is an integral part of the East Kootenay way of life. Prior to European settlement, local First Nations people utilized the land. In the late 1800s land was marketed to the original European settlers as agricultural property under the Pre-emption Act and they undertook subsistence farming activities. Over time, cultivated agriculture expanded to include mixed production and utilization of Crown range land to meet local needs for agricultural goods. During the first half of the 20th century the region supported predominantly small scale farm operations producing a diversity of agricultural products including tree and bush fruits, vegetables, potatoes, poultry, eggs, milk and other dairy products, cereal grains, hay and Christmas trees, as well as beef cattle and sheep. Over the past 50 years, beef cattle ranching and forage production have become the dominant agricultural enterprise in the region.

Agriculture throughout the RDEK has adapted to the topography in recognition of the constraints of soil capability and climate. Agricultural land is primarily along the bottom of the Rocky Mountain Trench. Mountains rise sharply on either side in the Columbia and Elk valleys and development and agricultural activities are restricted to a ribbon of land along the length of the valleys. The Trench is much broader in the central region extending south to the United States border, facilitating wider spread agricultural activity.

Agriculture is an important economic activity throughout the RDEK. Recent trends have focused on the importance of locally grown or produced food. However, the impact of wildlife on crops and livestock, current economic trends, development pressure on agricultural land, the emergence of global vertically integrated commercial food distribution system, consumer habits and government regulations continue to challenge the local agricultural sector.

2.1 History

Historical accounts of agriculture in the East Kootenay are documented in the various community history books that have been published throughout the region. A few highlights are summarized below:

Brisco and Spillimacheen

- As early as 1893, potato yields of 20,000 pounds per acre, wheat yields of 40 bushels per acre and timothy hay yields of two to three tons per acre were reported.
- In 1902 the Fortress Ranch sold 300 dozen eggs between January 1 and September 5, using 70 dozen more on the ranch.
- Water rights for agricultural irrigation were initially registered on Brisco Creek in 1892.
- A Farmer's Institute, the Brisco Branch of the United Farmers Association of BC, was formed in April, 1919 with 12 members.
- Most farmers kept some dairy cattle and regular shipments of cream were made to the Invermere Creamery (built in 1920) and the Golden Creamery (built in 1915).
- Beef, eggs, dairy products, vegetables and fruits were sold to the construction camps of the Big Bend Highway project in the 1930s.

Windermere Valley

- Small mixed farms were established by miners, prospectors, storekeepers and blacksmiths in the late 1800s and early 1900s, primarily to meet their own food needs.
- The Columbia Valley Irrigated Fruitlands Limited (CVI) was established in 1908, and by 1911, 15,000 acres of the area were irrigated for crop and orchard production via a flume system, some of which is still operational.
- A Dominion of Canada Experimental Farm, one of only three in BC, operated in the Windermere valley from 1911 until the late 1930s. By 1915, 73 apple varieties, eight pears, 14 plums, 24 varieties of white, red and black currants, 40 varieties of potatoes and numerous other fruits and vegetables were planted at the experimental farm. The farm was also home to various breeds of chickens, turkeys and geese.
- The Windermere District Farmers' Institute was established in July of 1914 and is still in operation today.

Marysville

- Marysville Dairy, established in 1911 with the purchase of two dairy cow calves, gradually built up a milking herd and in 1925 was purchased by the Consolidated Mining and Smelting Company (Cominco). The company expanded the business, importing Ayrshire cattle and building barns, a silo, a dairy plant, a residence for their manager and a bunk house and cook house for employees. In 1943, when the government insisted that all milk be pasteurized, City Milk Distributors was built in Kimberley and all milk from the surrounding area, including the Marysville Dairy, Mountain View Dairy, Cherry Creek Dairy and Houle's Dairy was processed at this plant. By 1951, Marysville Dairy included 125 cows. In August, 1957, the complete operation was destroyed by fire. City Milk Distributors eventually sold to a firm in Creston, BC, bringing an end to an industry that operated in the area for 45 consecutive years.

Cranbrook and District

- *From the Herald Press, 1907*
  - Hay, oats, barley, rye, wheat, corn, potatoes, carrots, turnips, beets, cabbages, in fact all grain and roots flourish.
  - In the immediate vicinity of Cranbrook are bottom creek lands unsurpassed for market gardening and bush fruit culture and at a slightly lower altitude grapes have come to maturity.
  - Fruits of all kinds mature in the district, apples and plums in particular doing exceedingly well. Strawberries grow of a size and flavour not to be excelled.
  - Large areas of lightly timbered, park-like land, almost entirely free of underbrush, exist and are available for grazing of cattle, horses and sheep.

- The cutting of Christmas trees began in the region in 1932 when the BC Forest Service made annual permit lots of two to three thousand trees available to farmers. Between the 1930s and 1950s many local women found seasonal employment in Christmas tree yards, sorting, grading and baling trees. According to Agriculture Canada records, approximately

4,543,000 Christmas trees, valued at $1,492,880 were shipped from the East Kootenay region between 1946 and 1954. In 1955, 143 boxcars of trees were shipped from Cranbrook with each carload made up of approximately 1,000 bales of 24 trees graded according to size. Tree farms in the East Kootenay account for nearly ¾ of BC's annual production and have made the region a major export producer in Canada.

Jaffray, Galloway, Sand Creek

- Potatoes were a staple crop and yields of 20 tons per acre were reported in the early 1900s.
- Local dairies (Barr Dairy, Sand Creek Dairy) shipped cream to the Invermere Creamery.
- The Waldo Stockbreeders Livestock Association was formed in 1939 to address the issue of wild horses damaging Crown range. The association was instrumental in obtaining range tenure for ranchers in the area, developing a strong Christmas tree industry, bringing electric power to the local area, and the formation of the South Country 4-H club. Waldo Stockbreeders built the Elko cattle auction sales yard in 1942 and held sales until 1953. The association is still active today.

South Country

- The area was noted for prize-winning seed potato production.
- Newgate Farmers Institute, 1915 – 1949. Responsible for bringing phone service, improved roads, animal range control, irrigation control, veterinary assistance, improved mail service and a youth calf club to the South Country
- Christmas tree harvest played a major role in the agricultural economy. Starting in the 1930s and peaking in the 1960s, farmers and ranchers relied on this source of revenue to augment their income while building up their cattle herds and modernizing their equipment.

2.2 Agricultural Resources

2.2.1 Climate

Climate constitutes the basic limitation for agricultural land uses regardless of soil conditions. Thus, it forms the basis for agricultural capability ratings. The East Kootenay area, due to its mountainous terrain, includes a wide variety of climates, categorized into climate capability for agriculture classes on the basis of freeze free period, number of growing degree days above 5^{o}C, climatic moisture deficit (or surplus) and typical crop ranges. The classification system utilizes a numeric system with Class 1 having the highest climatic capability and Class 7 having the lowest (Table 1). Fairly extensive areas of Class 2 occur on the floor of both the Rocky Mountain Trench and the Elk Valley below Sparwood. Raspberries, strawberries and warm season vegetables such as lettuce, carrots, beets, radishes and turnips can be successfully grown in these areas. Class 3 climates also occur on valley floors, but further into the mountains and at slightly higher elevations. Typical crops that can be grown include cool season vegetables such as potatoes, lettuce, peas, spinach, cauliflower and cabbage. The shorter freeze free period of Class 4 permits only the cultivation of hardy varieties of cool season vegetables and forage crops. Only forage crops can be produced in a Class 5 climate. At higher elevations, only native forages suitable for grazing can be grown. Table 2 indicates the climatic capability for agriculture classes for selected atmospheric environment stations in the RDEK with long-term climatological data.

Table 1. Climatic Capability Classification System for BC.

Climatic Capability Class	FFP Freeze Free Period (days)	GDD Growing Degree Days above 5^{o}C	CMD Climatic Moisture Deficit (mm)	Range of Suitable Crops
1a	120 – 150	1505 – 1779		Apples, strawberries, raspberries, beans, asparagus, tomatoes, lettuce, potatoes, corn, carrots, beets, radish, peas, onions, leeks, spinach, cauliflower, cabbage, broccoli, turnips, Brussel sprouts, Swiss chard, cucumbers, kohlrabi, parsnips, pumpkin, rhubarb, squash, cereal grains and forage crops
1	90 – 119	1310 – 1504	< 40	Tree fruits, strawberries, raspberries, beans, asparagus, tomatoes, lettuce, potatoes, corn, carrots, beets, radish, peas, onions, leeks, spinach, cauliflower, cabbage, broccoli, turnips, Brussel sprouts, Swiss chard, bulbs, filberts, cucumbers, kohlrabi, parsnips, pumpkin, rhubarb, squash cereal grains and forage crops
2	75 – 89	1170 – 1309	40 - 115	strawberries, raspberries, asparagus, lettuce, potatoes, carrots, beets, radish, peas, leeks, spinach, cauliflower, cabbage, broccoli, turnips, Brussel sprouts, Swiss chard, cereal grains and forage crops
3	60 – 74	1030 – 1169	116 – 190	strawberries, raspberries, lettuce, potatoes, peas, spinach, cauliflower, cabbage, cereal grains, forage crops
4	50 – 59	1030 – 1169	191 – 265	Hardy varieties of cool season vegetables (lettuce, peas, spinach, cabbage), forage crops and periodic production of cereal crops
5	30 – 49	780 – 1029	266 – 340	Forage crops
6	< 30	670 – 779	341 – 415	Browse/grazing of native species
7	< 30	< 670	> 415	No potential for agricultural crops

Source: Climatic Capability Classification for Agriculture in British Columbia.

Table 2. Climatic parameters and capability classification for selected weather stations.

Weather Station Location	Climatic Parameters					Climatic capability classification	
	GDD **Growing Degree Days above 5°C**	***FFP*** **Freeze Free Period (days)**	***P*** **Growing Season Precipitation (mm)[1]**	***PE*** **Potential Evapo-transpiration (mm)[1]**	***CMD*** **Climatic Moisture Deficit (mm)[2]**	**Thermal Class**	**Moisture Class[3]**
Aberfeldie	1687	132	229	470	- 241	1aF	4A
Cranbrook	1550	91	179	532	- 353	1F	6A
Elko	1709	131	261	461	- 200	1aGF	4A
Fernie	1336	98	304	432	- 128	1GF	3A
Golden	1572	103	178	537	- 359	1F	6A
Kimberley	1530	92	163	540	- 377	2F	6A
Sparwood	1268		302	589	- 287	-	-

Source: Environment Canada - National Climate Data and Information Archive; Climatic Capability Classification for Agriculture in BC

[1] May 1 to September 30
[2] CMD = P – PE
[3] Refer to Section 2.1.2 for CLI Class/Subclass definitions

Capability class limitations:

A: Drought or aridity occurring between May 1 and Sept 30 results in moisture deficits that will limit plant growth
F: Minimum temperature near freezing will adversely affect plant growth during the growing season
G: Insufficient heat units (GDD) during the growing season
1a: FFP = 120 – 150 days; GDD = 1505 to 1779; full capability can only be achieved if supplemental water is applied

Climatic class ratings for various locations in each RDEK subregion are provided in Table 3. Both dryland and irrigated ratings are provided, as well as the major reason (limitation) for downgrading climatic capability. Irrigated ratings improve the overall climatic rating by one class where droughtiness is a component of the climatic limitation (e.g. Upper Columbia Valley below 1000 metres), but not in locations where a short frost-free period is the primary limiting factor (e.g. Moyie River Valley). Soil limitations, discussed in section 2.1.2, are applied in conjunction with the climate rating to determine the overall agricultural capability.

Table 3. Climatic capability classification ratings for selected locations in the RDEK.

Location	Dryland	Irrigated	Limitation
Elk Valley subregion			
▪ Hosmer south	1	1	
▪ Hosmer – Sparwood	2C	2C	short frost-free period
▪ Sparwood – Fording Mtn	3C	3C	short frost-free period
▪ Fording Mtn north	5C	5C	short frost-free period
▪ Flathead Valley – 1500 m	5C	5C	short frost-free period
Central subregion			
▪ Moyie River Valley	3C	3C	short frost-free period
▪ St. Mary River Valley			
- West to White/Dewar Creeks	3C	3C	short frost-free period
- East of St. Mary Lake	2C	1	droughtiness
- All other areas	5C	5C	short frost-free period
▪ Kootenay Valley – below 1000 m	2C	1	droughtiness
▪ Whiteswan Lake	3C	3C	short frost-free period
▪ Upper Kootenay – above 1200 m	5C	5C	short frost-free period
Columbia Valley subregion			
▪ Upper Columbia Valley – below 1000 m	2C	1	droughtiness
▪ Frances Creek Valley	3C	3C	short frost-free period
▪ Horsethief/Toby Creek – 1375 m	3C	3C	short frost-free period
▪ Spillimacheen Valley – 1375 m	3C	3C	short frost-free period
▪ Beaverfoot Valley	5C	5C	short frost-free period

Source: Lands of the East Kootenay, 1969.

2.2.2 Potential Effects of Climate Change

The majority of climate scientists consider that climate change is a real phenomenon occurring due to many factors, including the impacts of greenhouse gas emissions and human activity on the environment. An appropriate strategic response is critical for agriculture in the East Kootenay. There are significant opportunities for agriculture to assist in the mitigation of effects through changes in practices and adoption of technologies. The threat is that changes to climate may trigger more volatility in growing conditions and create constraints on agricultural resource availability in the future. Many East Kootenay farming operations are dependent on

stream flows or stored water from glacier and snow melt runoff delivered to crops via irrigation during summer when precipitation and stream flow is lowest.
A project commissioned by the Water Initiatives Program of the Columbia Basin Trust, with the assistance of the Pacific Climate Change Impact Consortium and a number of other scientific researchers, identified preliminary climate change impact and adaptation strategies for a variety of economic sectors including agriculture.

Relevant likely Environmental Changes and Possible Impacts on Agriculture	Potential Adaptations
▪ Warmer temperatures and less summer precipitation may reduce soil moisture and increase evaporation, increasing irrigation needs at the same time of year that stream flows are expected to decline. ▪ Warmer temperatures will increase the length of the growing season, potentially increasing crop moisture needs, and requirements for irrigation ▪ Warmer temperatures may improve the potential for high value crops, but this will be realized only if sufficient water is available ▪ Extreme events and more intense precipitation increases the potential for soil erosion and crop damage ▪ Smoke from wildfires may damage crops ▪ Warmer temperatures may favour weeds, insects and plant diseases.	▪ More efficient irrigation (e.g. drip, scheduling, leak repair) ▪ Construct additional water storage facilities ▪ Crop diversification ▪ Grow higher value crops with low water needs ▪ Update erosion control practices ▪ Enhanced monitoring and refined practices to minimize damage from weeds, insects and diseases

Source: Climate Change in the Canadian Columbia Basin - Starting the Dialogue

2.2.3 Soils and Agricultural Capability

The ability of any area to produce agricultural crops is based on limitations of the soil and climate. In many cases, soils can be improved by management inputs such as drainage, irrigation, and fertilization; however climate will ultimately limit the range of suitable crops for a geographic region. Land capability for agriculture ratings are determined by climatic capability for agriculture in combination with soil characteristics that limit the range of regionally suited crops. Distance to markets, available transportation infrastructure (roads, rail, etc), location, size of farms, characteristics of land ownership, cultural patterns and the skill or resources of individual farmers are not criteria for determining agricultural capability.

The Canada Land Inventory (CLI) classification system groups the general suitability of soils for agricultural use into seven classes based on their relative degree of limitation or hazard. The intensity of the limitations or hazards becomes progressively greater from Class 1 to Class 7 as does the need for management practices to overcome the limitations. The classes, which indicate the relative capability of the land for agricultural use, include:

Class 1	no or only very slight limitations that restrict use for the production of common agricultural crops;
Class 2	minor limitations that require good ongoing management practices and/or slightly restrict the range of crops;
Class 3	limitations that require moderately intensive management practices and/or moderately restrict the range of crops;
Class 4	limitations that require special management practices and/or severely restrict the range of crops;
Class 5	limitations that restrict its capability to producing perennial forage crops and/or other specially adapted crops;
Class 6	non-arable but is capable of producing native and/or uncultivated perennial forage crops; and
Class 7	no capability for arable agriculture or sustained natural grazing.

Capability subclasses are used to indicate lands with similar kinds but varying intensities of limitations and hazards. The BC Land Inventory system utilizes the following capability subclass limitations:

A	moisture deficiency (M in the CLI system)	P	stoniness
C	adverse climate	R	depth to consolidated bedrock
D	undesirable soil structure	S	combined limitations for A (or M), D, F and N
E	existing erosion damage	T	topography
F	low fertility	W	excess water
I	inundation by streams or lakes	X	cumulative minor adverse characteristics
N	salinity (soluble salts)	Z	permafrost

The generally mountainous topography of the East Kootenay region places a wide range of both climatic and soil limitations on the land capability for agriculture (Tables 4 and 5). Class 1 capability does not occur in the area, primarily because of marginal climate. Classes 2, 3 and 4 only occur on the floors of the Rocky Mountain trench and the Elk River Valley on stone-free, relatively fine to medium textured soils developed on fluvial fans, floodplains and glacio-lacustrine terraces with favourable topography. Class 5 soils occurs on the floors of larger valleys in the mountains (where climate is dominantly limiting), as well as in the Trench and Elk River Valley where soil limitations dominate. Class 6 and 7 soils occur throughout the mountainous areas, particularly on soils derived from colluvial deposits and on morainal materials (Lacelle, 1980; Wittneben, 1980). A sample CLI agricultural capability map for the Cranbrook – Kimberley – Fort Steele area is provided in Figure 3.

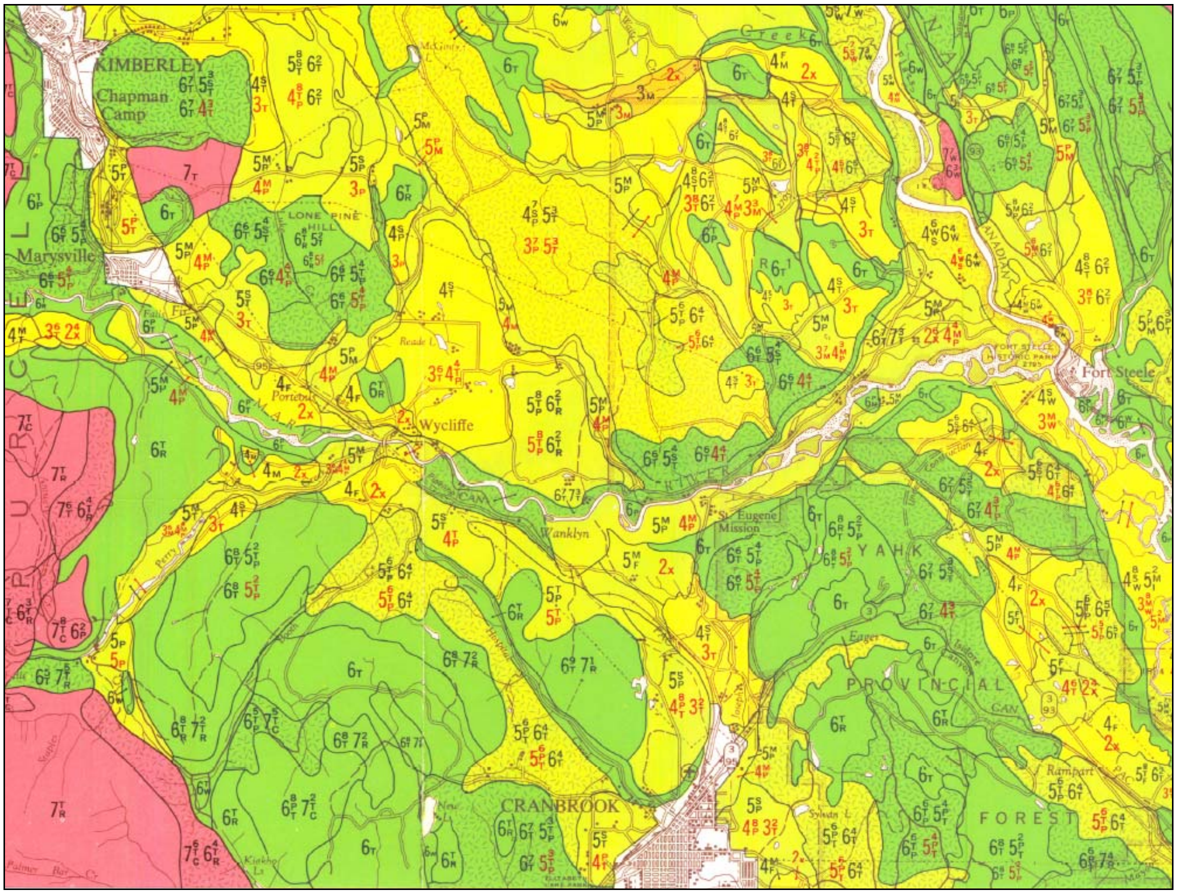

Figure 3. CLI map for the Cranbrook – Kimberley – Fort Steele area.

Table 4. Distribution of agricultural land capability classes (unimproved) in the RDEK.

	CLI Agricultural Capability Class (unimproved)							Water	Other	Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
RDEK[1] (ha)	0	798	8,623	68,787	221,051	554,091	1,808,774	17,665	135,974[3]	2,815,763
% of RDEK	0%	0.03%	0.31%	2.44%	7.85%	19.68%	64.24%	0.63%	4.83%	
ALR[2] (ha)	0	798	6,205	57,173	114,293	69,559	5,462		12,568[4]	266,058
% of ALR	0%	0.30%	2.33%	21.49%	42.96%	26.14%	2.05%		4.72%	

[1] *Source: Agricultural Land Capability in British Columbia, 1979.*
[2] *Source: BC Ministry of Agriculture, Canada Land Inventory 1:250,000 polygon mapping, 2011.*
[3] Other includes unclassified urban areas, national parks and unmapped portions of the district.
[4] Other includes unknown and/or unclassified areas.

Of the RDEK lands within the ALR, 24% are in CLI Classes 2 through 4 and considered capable of sustained production of common cultivates field crops. Class 5 lands, capable of use only for producing perennial forage crops or specially adapted crops, represent almost 43% of the land base in the ALR, while Class 6 lands capable of providing only sustained natural grazing for domestic livestock comprise 26% of the ALR. Class 7 lands, incapable of use for either arable culture or grazing, make up the remainder of ALR land in the RDEK.

Table 5. Area of agricultural land capability subclass limitations for ALR lands in the RDEK.

	CLI Agricultural Capability primary subclass limitation; ALR lands only*														
	A/M	**C**	**D**	**E**	**F**	**I**	**N**	**P**	**R**	**S**	**T**	**W**	**X**	**Other****	**Total**
ha	53,933	1,952	56		9,397	116	143	30,443	1,159	34,724	104,231	5,358	12,230	12,316	**266,058**
%	20.27%	0.73%	0.02%		3.53%	0.04%	0.05%	11.44%	0.44%	13.05%	39.18%	2.01%	4.60%	4.63%	
	Area with secondary subclass limitations*														
	A/M	**C**	**D**	**E**	**F**	**I**	**N**	**P**	**R**	**S**	**T**	**W**	**X**	**Other****	**Total**
ha		931		129	8,709	1,714	11,284	430	74,994	6,309	389	55,144	2,886		**162,918**
%		0.35%		0.05%	3.27%	0.64%	4.24%	0.16%	28.19%	2.37%	0.15%	20.73%	1.08%		**61.23%**

Source: .BC Ministry of Agriculture, Canada Land Inventory 1:250,000 polygon mapping, 2011.

* Subclass limitation definitions:

- A/M – moisture limitation (M is used in the CLI system)
- C - adverse climate
- D – undesirable soil structure
- E – erosion damage
- F - low fertility
- I - inundation by streams or lakes
- N – salinity (soluble salts)
- P - stoniness
- R – depth to consolidated bedrock
- S – soils with combined limitations for A (or M), D, F and N
- T - topography
- W - excess water
- X - cumulative minor adverse characteristics

** Other includes unknown and/or unclassified areas.

As summarized in Table 5, topography (T) is the predominant limitation to agricultural capability in the East Kootenay, impacting more than 39% of lands within the ALR. Other key limitations include soil moisture deficiency (A/M) and stoniness (P), which impact the capability of 20.2% and 11.4% of ALR land respectively. Approximately 61%, or 162,918 ha, of lands within the ALR also have secondary capability limitations; the most common (28%) being shallow depth of bedrock (R), followed by excess water (W), which affects 20.7% of the land.

2.2.4 Agricultural Land Base

A total of 272,510 ha of the RDEK were identified as "agriculture land" and designated to the ALR when the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) Act was introduced (Table 6). Between 1974 and March 31, 2011 a total of 7,737 ha were excluded from the ALR by government, private and BC Cabinet appeal applications, while an additional 346 ha were included, resulting in a total ALR area of 265,119 ha as of March 31, 2011. When adjusted for conditionally approved applications that expired prior to approval conditions being met, the total area of the ALR in the East Kootenay was estimated at 266,058 ha as of April 1, 2011. Based on this data, the net reduction in the area of the ALR in the RDEK between 1974 and 2011 was approximately 2.4%.

Ancedotal information compiled by the regional Ministry of Agriculture Resource Stewardship Agrologist indicates that since October 2006, a total of 285 applications for exclusion, subdivision, non-farm use, aggregate extraction or fill placement have been submitted to the RDEK and/or ALC. Of these, only 25 (9%) were from individuals recognized as local agricultural producers, while the remainder (91%) were from individuals and developers not directly involved in agriculture. Of the 25 "agricultural" applications, 15 requested subdivision, four related to non-farm use, two were for exclusion, one for aggregate extraction, and the application category for the remaining three is unknown.

Table 6. Area Included and Excluded from the ALR in the RDEK, in hectares

ALR Area at Designation	Inclusions	Exclusions	ALR Area* at March 31, 2011	GIS ALR Area* at April 1, 2011
272,510	346	7,737	265,119	266,058

Source: ALC Annual Report 2009/10 & 2010/11

** The discrepancy between ALR Area at March 31/11 and GIS ALR Area at April 01/11 reflects conditionally approved applications that expired due to approval conditions not being met.*

In 2011, an agricultural land use inventory (ALUI) was conducted within the RDEK. This involved a "windshield survey" of each property and observation of land use, land cover, and agriculture activity. Where visibility of the property was limited, data was interpreted from aerial photography in combination with local knowledge. For each property in the study area, data was collected on general land use and land cover. For properties with agriculture present, data was collected on agricultural practices, irrigation, crop production methods, livestock, agricultural support (storage, compost, waste), and activities which add value to raw agricultural products. In addition, the availability of non-farm use properties for future farming was assessed based on the amount of potential land for farming on the property and the compatibility of existing non-farm use with future farming activities.

According to ALUI data, the East Kootenay region has a total land and water area of 2,769,602 ha, of which 265,910 ha, approximately 9.6%, is Agricultural Land Reserve (Table 7). Approximately one-third of the ALR lands are privately owned, while the remaining 67% are Crown owned.

Table 7. Distribution of total land area and ALR area by RDEK subregion.

RDEK Subregion	Total Area (ha)*	ALR (ha)*	ALR as % of Total Area	% of ALR by Subregion
Central	1,180,919	178,066	15.08%	66.96%
Columbia Valley	1,091,639	73,083	6.69%	27.48%
Elk Valley	497,044	14,761	2.97%	5.56%
Total:	**2,769,602**	**265,910**	**9.60%**	**100%**

Source: BC Ministry of Agriculture. Land Use Inventory Reports 800.510-11.2013 (RDEK Columbia Valley), 800.510-12.2013 (RDEK Central Region), 800.510-77.2013 (RDEK Elk Valley).

** Total and ALR area discrepancies between this table and Tables 4, 5 and 6 are the result of minor RDEK and ALR boundary adjustments over time.*

Based on the ALUI data, the total actively farmed and available for farming area in the RDEK is about 107,672 ha, of which 97,190 ha (approximately 90%) is located within the ALR (Table 8). Approximately 8.8% (23,361 ha) of the ALR is associated with farming activity, with cultivated lands for field crop and tame forage production (10,757 ha) and livestock grazing on land with soil and/or topography limitations (11,823 ha) representing the major land uses. An additional 21.79% of the ALR (57,940 ha) is available and has potential for agriculture but is not presently being used, while another 15,890 ha (5.98%) with limitations for cultivated use is potentially available for livestock grazing. A large portion (157,008 ha) of the ALR was not inventoried due to access issues and other land uses. A majority of this land is Crown owned; the proportion that is currently utilized for livestock grazing under the Grazing Lease Program was not determined during the inventory.

Table 8. Agricultural Land Base of the Regional District of East Kootenay

Land Status for Agriculture	In ALR (ha)	% of Total ALR	Outside ALR (ha)	Total Area (ha)	% of Active and Available Area
A. Area actively farmed (not including pasture/rangeland)	**11,165**	**4.20%**	**469**	**11,634**	**10.80%**
Cultivated field crops (including tame forage)	10,757	4.05%	436	11,193	10.40%
Farm Infrastructure (barns, sheds, corrals, bins, etc.)	405	0.15%	32	437	0.41%
Greenhouses	3	0.00%	1	4	0.00%
B. Area supporting farming	**208**	**0.08%**	**7**	**215**	**0.20%**
Residential (main residence, yard, parking, driveways)	137	0.05%	4	141	0.13%
Transportation (roads, railways, etc.)	63	0.02%	3	67	0.06%
Other (built structures, artificial water bodies, etc.)	7	0.00%	< 1	8	0.00%
C. Area with limitations - actively used for grazing	**11,988**	**4.51%**	**2,169**	**14,157**	**13.15%**
Soils and/or topography	11,823	4.45%	2,033	13,857	12.87%
Flooding and/or drainage	133	0.05%	134	268	0.25%
Operational (size, shape, location, adjoining land use)	31	0.01%	1	33	0.03%
D. Total area actively used for agriculture (A+B+C):	**23,361**	**8.79%**	**2,645**	**26,006**	**24.15%**
E. Area available and with potential for farming	**57,940**	**21.79%**	**5,474**	**63,414**	**58.90%**
Managed vegetation (parks, golf courses, lawns, etc.)	255	0.10%	22	277	0.26%
Non Built, Bare, Wetlands, etc.	26	0.01%	4	30	0.02%
Natural & Semi-natural vegetation (forest/shrub cover)	20,894	7.86%	1,980	22,875	21.24%
Natural pasture or rangeland	36,327	13.66%	3,394	39,721	36.89%
Unmaintained field crops	111	0.04%	7	118	0.11%
Unused forage or pasture	326	0.12%	68	394	0.37%
F. Area available with limitations – grazing potential	**15,890**	**5.98%**	**2,363**	**18,252**	**16.95%**
Soils and/or topography	15,211	5.72%	2,278	17,489	16.24%
Flooding and/or drainage	246	0.09%	24	271	0.25%
Operational (size, shape, location, adjoining land use)	433	0.16%	60	493	0.46%
G. Total non-farmed area available (E+F):	**73,829**	**27.76%**	**7,837**	**81,666**	**75.85%**
H. Total Active and Available area (D+G):	**97,190**	**36.55%**	**10,482**	**107,672**	**100.00%**
I. Availability and potential for agriculture is unknown	**71**	**0.03%**	**45,067**	**45,138**	
J. Unavailable for agriculture - existing land use	**8,347**	**3.14%**	**2,301**	**10,578**	
K. Unavailable for agriculture - existing land cover	**3,364**	**1.27%**	**1,225**	**4,589**	
L. Total area unavailable for farming (J+K):	**11,711**	**4.40%**	**3,527**	**15,167**	
Total Area Inventoried (sum of A through L):	**108,973**	**40.98%**	**59,075**	**167,977**	
Total Area not Inventoried:	**157,008**	**59.05%**			
Indian reserves	15,584	5.86%			
Parcels - no access	134,526	50.59%			
Rights-of-way	2,810	1.06%			
Unsurveyed land	1,159	0.44%			
Water & foreshore	2,929	1.10%			
TOTAL Area of ALR:	**265,910**	**100.00%**			

Source: BC Ministry of Agriculture. Land Use Inventory Reports 800.510-11.2013 (RDEK Columbia Valley), 800.510-12.2013 (RDEK Central Region), 800.510-77.2013(RDEK Elk Valley).

2.2.5 Water Supply and Agricultural Irrigation

A majority of the East Kootenay region experiences a seasonal water deficit of 275 mm or more due to soil and climatic limitations (refer to Table 1). As a result, irrigation is necessary in order to optimize production of field crops. Farms and ranches rely primarily on surface water licenses for their irrigation needs (Table 9). A total of 1,045 water licenses are currently permitted for agricultural purposes with irrigation accounting for more than 99% of the total water volume on an annual basis. There are an additional 54 licenses in the RDEK for watering golf courses, parks and other landscaped areas, with a permitted volume of 6,393,715 m^3/year.

Table 9. Water licenses issued for agricultural purposes in the East Kootenay.

Purpose	# of licenses issued	Permitted volume	Units
Greenhouses	6	13.64	m^3/day
Irrigation	914	108,945,107	m^3/year
Stock Watering	125	807.38	m^3/day
Totals:	**1045**	**109,244,778**	**m^3/year**

Source: Province of BC Water Licenses Database

According to the RDEK Agricultural Land Use Inventory (ALUI) conducted in 2011, all the vegetables and plantation trees were irrigated as well as a majority of the cereal grains, oilseed crops, nursery stock, ornamentals and shrubs (Table 10). About half (52%) of the cultivated forage and pasture fields were irrigated. Approximately 79% of the irrigated cultivated land in the RDEK is in the Central subregion; the remaining 21% is in the Columbia Valley subregion. No irrigation of field crops was observed in the Elk Valley subregion during the inventory study.

Table 10. Cultivated field crop irrigation systems in use.

Field Crop	Sprinkler	Centre pivot	Giant gun	Landscape and Turf	Trickle	Total area irrigated (ha)	% of crop area irrigated	Total crop area (ha)
Forage, pasture	3,426	1,470	107	1	0	5,003	52.0%	9,628
Grains, oilseeds	212	157	66	0	0	435	91.3%	477
Nursery	6	0	11	0	1	18	87.4%	21
Cultivated land	2	12	0	0	0	13	33.3%	40
Vegetables	9	0	0	1	0	11	100.0%	11
Fallow land	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%	18
Berries	1	0	0	0	0	1	31.7%	4
Trees (plantation)	1	0	0	0	0	1	100.0%	1
Ornamentals/shrubs	6	0	11	0	0	18	84.5%	22
TOTAL AREA IRRIGATED	**3,663**	**1,639**	**195**	**2**	**1**	**5,501**	**53.9%**	**10,201**
Greenhouses	Mix of flood and trickle irrigation					4	100.0%	4

Source: BC Ministry of Agriculture. Land Use Inventory Reports 800.510-11.2013 (RDEK Columbia Valley), 800.510-12.2013 (RDEK Central Region), 800.510-77.2013(RDEK Elk Valley).

Hand-line and wheel-line sprinkler irrigation systems are the most widely used, occurring on 36% of the inventoried cultivated land in the region, followed by centre pivot systems at 16% and giant gun systems at 2% (Figure 4). Approximately 46% of the cultivated land in the RDEK is not currently irrigated.

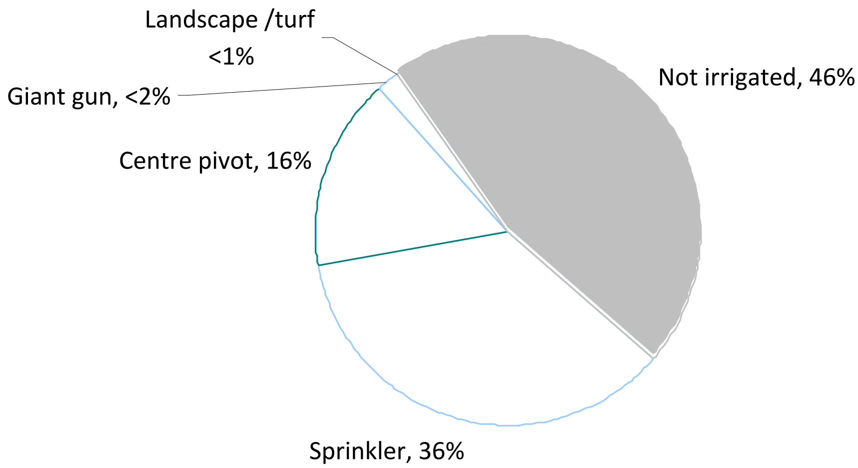

Figure 4. Irrigation systems in the RDEK by percent use on cultivated land.
Source: BC Ministry of Agriculture. Land Use Inventory Reports 800.510-11.2013 (RDEK Columbia Valley), 800.510-12.2013 (RDEK Central Region), 800.510-77.2013(RDEK Elk Valley).

2.3 Agricultural Industry Services

2.3.1 Infrastructure

In general, the East Kootenay region is well serviced by transportation infrastructure. Major highway corridors run east – west through the southern portion of the region (Hwy 3) and north-south through the Rocky Mountain Trench (Hwy 93/95), providing access to Alberta, the United States and the Interior and Coastal regions of BC. The Canadian Pacific Railway freight rail line services the Elk Valley, Central and Columbia Valley sub-regions. Air passenger, charter and freight services are available at the Canadian Rockies International Airport, and Columbia Valley and Invermere Airports.

There are no longer any local or regional stockyards or auction markets to facilitate local sales of livestock. As a result, most livestock are shipped to Alberta. Similarly, there is no infrastructure associated with grain (i.e. elevators, producer car load-out facilities), fruit, vegetable or forage production or processing.

2.3.2 Agricultural Input and Service Suppliers

The number of agricultural input suppliers located in the region has declined over time, with most of the farm inputs now being sourced in Alberta, the USA or on-line. Livestock feed, seed, fertilizer and petroleum and related products are available, as are custom seed/fertilizer application services. There are no commercial pesticide storage and distribution facilities or licensed custom application services for field crops.

One farm equipment sales, repair and parts business is located in the region. There are a number of general parts supply companies and repair shops that provide services to the agricultural sector. The livestock sector is generally well serviced by veterinarians located throughout the region.

2.3.3 Manufacturing and Processing

Food manufacturing is a very small sector with a focus on bakeries and small-scale food processors (e.g. honey, fruit and vegetable products).

The changes to the meat inspection regulations in 2004 have severely limited the slaughter options available to small scale producers (Figure 5). Currently, there is one Class B provincially licensed and inspected red meat slaughter facility and one mobile poultry slaughter facility in the region. A second Class B provincially licensed and inspected red meat slaughter facility was recently approved for development in the Columbia Valley sub-region. Class C licenses, issued as a temporary transitional measure to slaughter facilities that were upgrading to an A or B license, are being phased out and no Class C operations exist in the region. The remaining licenses, Class D and E, are issued directly to producers and are restricted to slaughter only; further processing such as cutting and wrapping is prohibited and meat produced under a Class D or E license can only be sold within the RDEK. At present, there are no Class D or E licenses in the RDEK. There are also a number of small custom butcher shops who process (cut and wrap) meat for producers who have slaughtered their own animal. These operations do not require a license. Refer to section 3.2.12 for further information on BC's meat inspection regulations.

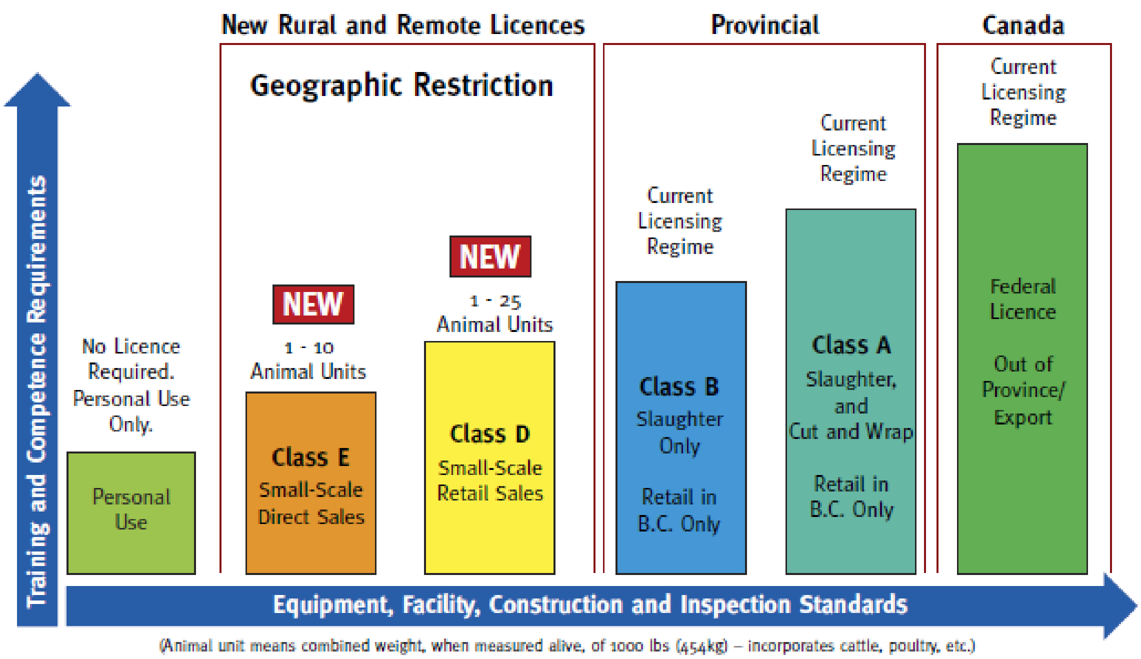

Figure 5. BC's Graduated Livestock Slaughter Licensing System.
Source: Producing Livestock for Meat in British Columbia – What Producers Need to Know.

2.3.4 Agricultural Associations

There are three agricultural producer associations in the East Kootenay, all having livestock and related issues as their primary focus:

- Kootenay Livestock Association (KLA)
- Waldo Stockbreeders Association
- Windermere District Farmer's Institute (WDFI)

2.3.5 Local Marketing and Distribution

Wholesale/Retail Markets

Five small-scale retail outlets offering locally and BC grown organic produce operate in Cranbrook, Kimberley and Invermere. There are also a small number of local restaurants that feature and promote locally grown farm products.

Direct to Consumer Markets

There are an increasing number of farms and ranches marketing farm products directly to the pubic from the farm gate, offering products ranging from breads and grains to herbs, spices, fruits, vegetables, preserves, honey, eggs and meat. The 2011 version of the East Kootenay Local Food Guide lists nine producers offering on-site sales in the Columbia Valley sub-region, 13 in the Central sub-region and six in the Elk Valley.

Community Supported Agriculture

There is one Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) initiative operating in the Columbia Valley. Community Supported Agriculture is an alternative, locally-based economic model of agriculture and food distribution. A CSA refers to a network or association of individuals who have pledged to support one or more local farms, with growers and consumers sharing the risks and benefits of food production. CSA members or subscribers pay at the onset of the growing season for a share of the anticipated harvest; once harvesting begins, they receive weekly shares of the produce. Many CSAs also include herbs, cut flowers, honey, eggs, dairy products and meat. Some CSAs provide for contributions of labor in lieu of a portion of the annual subscription costs.

Farmers' Markets

Seasonal farmers' markets offering local produce operate in a number of communities in the East Kootenay including Jaffray-Baynes Lake, Cranbrook, Edgewater, Fernie, and Invermere. Farmers' markets typically operate on weekends from mid-June to early September and feature seasonal agricultural produce as well as locally produced crafts and artwork.

3. FARM CHARACTERISTICS AND STATISTICS

Two primary sources of information have been used to characterize the agriculture industry and land use in the RDEK; Statistics Canada Agricultural Census data and the Agricultural Land Use Inventory data compiled in 2011.

3.1 Agricultural Land Use Inventory

An Agricultural Land Use Inventory (ALUI) was completed in 2011 for all three subregions within the RDEK. The inventory employs a "windshield" survey method designed to capture a snapshot in time of land use, land cover and agricultural activity. The primary focus of the ALUI is private and Crown lands within the ALR. A summary of key inventory data for each subregion is presented here. Detailed ALUI reports for each subregion are available on the East Kootenay Agricultural Plan website (www.rdek.bc.ca).

3.1.1 Central Subregion

The Central Subregion contains Electoral Areas B, C and E as well as the municipalities of Cranbrook and Kimberley, and has a population of 34,531; approximately 60% of the regional district's population. The region has a total area including land and water of 1,180,919 ha, with 178,066 ha in the ALR over 15% of the subregion is in the ALR.

Land cover and Farmed Area in the ALR

Only 4% (7,137 ha) of inventoried ALR land is used for the production of cultivated field crops, while 19% (34,071 ha) is native pasture or rangeland and an additional 12% (19,206 ha) is primarily forested cover. 113,095 ha (64%) of the area was excluded from the inventory due to air photo interpretation showing no signs of agriculture or other existing land uses such as Indian Reserves, water and foreshore areas and rights-of-way (Figure 6).

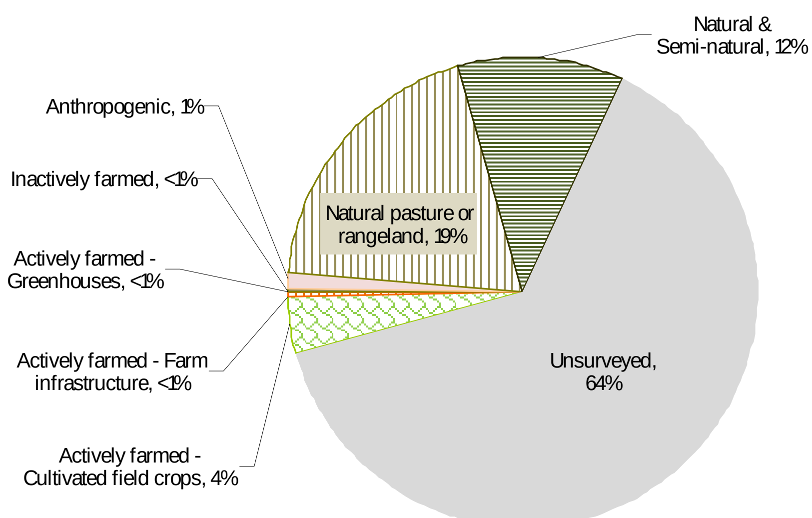

Figure 6. Land cover and farmed area in the ALR – Central subregion

Land Use and Farm Use

A total of 25% (44,863 ha) of ALR land (private and Crown) in the Central subregion is used for farming and grazing (Table 11). An additional 4,178 ha outside the ALR is also used for farming or grazing purposes. Many parcels "used for grazing" have other uses such as forest recreation sites, conservation areas, utilities, etc. Most Crown owned parcels that were not surveyed as part of this inventory, and much of the unsurveyed Crown land, is probably used for livestock grazing since Crown grazing leases cover much of the region.

Table 11. Land use and farming use, Private and Crown – Central subregion

Parcel land use		ALR			Outside ALR (ha)	Total area (ha)	% of area	% of inventory area in Crown ownership
		In ALR (ha)	% of ALR area	% of ALR in Crown ownership				
Used For Farming		16,150	9 %	<1 %	1,034	17,184	22 %	2 %
Used For Grazing		28,713	16 %	8 %	3,144	31,857	41 %	20 %
No Farming/Grazing		19,299	11 %	3 %	9,925	29,224	37 %	9 %
SUBTOTAL		**64,161**	**36 %**	**13 %**	**14,104**	**78,265**	**100 %**	**31 %**
Not surveyed	Parcels - no access	98,060	55 %					
	Indian reserves	11,831	7 %					
	Water & foreshore	1,928	1 %					
	Rights-of-way	1,622	<1 %					
	Unsurveyed land	464	<1 %					
	SUBTOTAL	113,905	64 %					
TOTAL		**178,066**	**100 %**					

Farming Activities

Forage and pasture is by far the most common type of cultivated field crop, accounting for 95% of all cultivated land and 4% of the ALR in the region. Cereals and oilseeds are a distant second, accounting for 4% of all cultivated land in the region (Table 12).

Table 12. Main field crop types by area – Central subregion

Field crop type	ALR			Outside ALR (ha)	Total area (ha)	% of cultivated land	% of cultivated land in Crown ownership
	In ALR (ha)	% of ALR	% of ALR in Crown ownership				
Forage, pasture	7,018	4%	< 1%	196	7,213	95%	10%
Grains, cereals, oilseeds	317	< 1%	< 1%	< 1	318	4%	< 1%
Cultivated land*	40	< 1%	< 1%	< 1	40	< 1%	< 1%
Nursery	21	< 1%	-	< 1	21	< 1%	-
Fallow land	17	< 1%	-	< 1	18	< 1%	-
Mixed vegetables	6	< 1%	-	< 1	6	< 1%	-
Berries	< 1	< 1%	-	-	< 1	< 1%	-
TOTAL	**7,419**	**4%**	**< 1%**	**197**	**7,617**	**100%**	**11%**

* Cultivated land refers to an area that has been prepared for planting but the crop is not yet visible

Natural pastures and rangelands are fenced areas with uncultivated (not sown) natural or semi-natural grasses, herbs or shrubs used for grazing domestic livestock such as cattle, sheep or equines. Natural pastures are smaller fenced areas usually occurring on private land while rangeland refers to larger blocks of land (extensive areas from hundreds to thousands of acres in size) with perimeter fencing that may encompass many parcels or district lots. Rangelands tend to be on provincial Crown land. Treed – closed (60% to 100% of crown cover is native trees) land cover is most commonly used for natural pasture and rangeland and represents the greatest proportion of natural cover in the inventoried areas (Table 13).

Table 13. Natural pasture and rangeland vegetation types – Central subregion

Natural pasture and rangeland		ALR			Outside ALR (ha)	Total area (ha)	% of surveyed area	% of inventory area in Crown ownership	% of natural pasture and rangeland
		In ALR (ha)	% of ALR	% of ALR in Crown ownership					
Rangeland (natural)	Treed - closed	18,029	10%	6%	1,637	19,666	25%	14%	54%
	Treed - open	3,920	2%	1%	35	3,955	5%	2%	11%
	Herbaceous	2,619	1%	< 1%	35	2,654	3%	< 1%	7%
	Shrubland	977	< 1%	< 1%	3	980	1%	< 1%	3%
	Grassland	112	< 1%	< 1%	< 1	112	< 1%	< 1%	< 1%
	Subtotal	**25,657**	**14%**	**7%**	**1,710**	**27,367**	**35%**	**18%**	**75%**
Pasture (natural)	Treed - closed	3,963	2%	< 1%	218	4,180	5%	< 1%	11%
	Herbaceous	2,579	1%	< 1%	105	2,684	3%	< 1%	7%
	Treed - open	1,062	< 1%	< 1%	145	1,207	2%	< 1%	3%
	Shrubland	755	< 1%	< 1%	120	875	1%	< 1%	2%
	Grassland	54	< 1%	-	-	54	< 1%	-	< 1%
	Subtotal	**8,413**	**5%**	**< 1%**	**588**	**9,001**	**12%**	**2%**	**25%**
	TOTAL	**34,071**	**19%**	**8%**	**2,298**	**36,368**	**46%**	**20%**	**100%**

Livestock activities are very difficult to measure using a windshield survey method. Livestock are often confined to structures or out on Crown range making it difficult for the surveyor to see the animals. Local knowledge, Crown grazing licenses, and other indicators such as animal confinement type (barn type), feeder system type, manure handling system type, and other visible elements may be used to infer the type of livestock and scale of activity that exist on a parcel. In addition, livestock are mobile and may utilize more than one land parcel or be out on the range. Livestock visible on a certain parcel one day may be visible on a different parcel the next day. This inventory does not attempt to identify animal movement between parcels that make up a farm unit but reports livestock at the parcel where the livestock home site is observed or identified through Crown range grazing plans.

Equine is the most common type of livestock activity in the Central subregion, accounting for 354 of 499 or 71% of all livestock activities. Beef cattle is the second most common with 92 activities or 18% of the total (Table 14).

Table 14. Livestock activities – Central subregion

Livestock group	Scale of activity				Total activities
	Very small scale	Small scale	Medium scale	Large scale	
Beef	-	41	25	26	92
Poultry	16	-	-	-	16
Swine	-	1	-	-	1
Sheep / lamb / goat	9	4	1	-	14
Llama / alpaca	3	9	-	-	12
Specialty livestock	1	1	1	-	3
Other livestock	1	-	-	-	1
Unknown livestock	-	3	2	-	5
Inactive operation	-	1	-	-	1
Equine	43	307	4	-	354
TOTAL	**73**	**367**	**33**	**26**	**499**

"Very small" scale represents 1 animal unit equivalent*
"Small" scale represents about 2-25 animal unit equivalents
"Medium" scale represents 25-100 animal unit equivalents
"Large" scale represents > 100 animal unit equivalents
*Animal Unit Equivalent is a standard measurement used to compare forage consumption by different livestock types; One animal unit is equal to one adult beef cow with or without an unweaned calf.

Parcel size and farming in the ALR

Of the 2,413 privately owned parcels in the ALR, 938 parcels (39%) are less than 2 ha in size, 40% are larger than 4 ha and only 18% are larger than 32 ha (Figure 7). There are 32,394 ha associated with parcels larger than 32 ha, which represents 50% of surveyed ALR area. Parcel size must be considered when determining the agricultural potential of a land parcel. Larger parcels usually allow farmers greater flexibility to expand or change their type of operation as the economy and markets change.

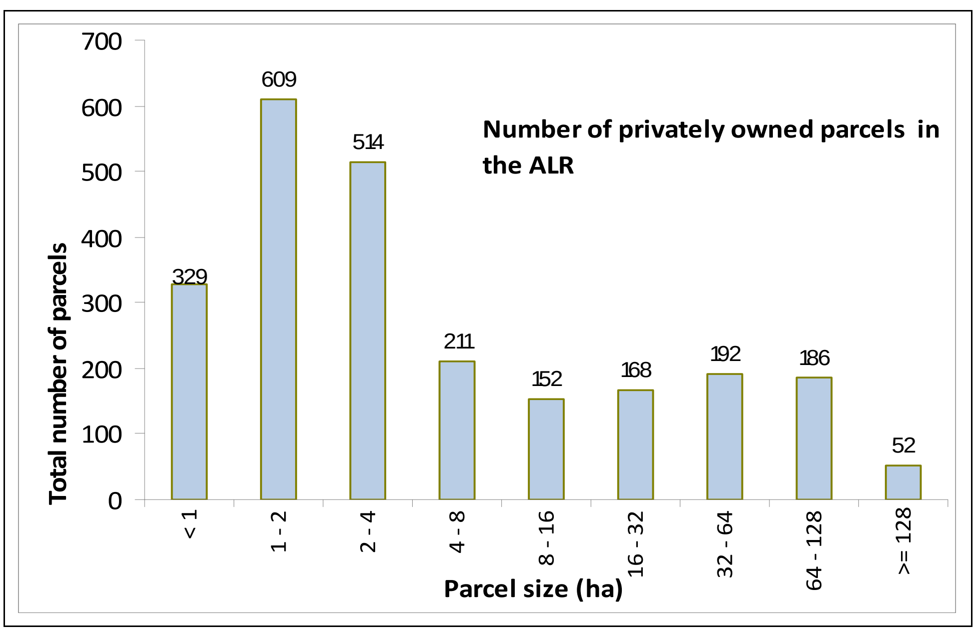

Figure 7. Privately owned parcels in the ALR by parcel size – Central subregion

3.1.2 Columbia Valley Subregion

The Columbia Valley subregion contains Electoral Areas F and G as well as the municipalities of Invermere, Radium Hot Springs, and Canal Flats, and has a population of 9,261.The valley has a total area including land and water of 1,091,639 ha. With 73,083 ha of ALR land, almost 7% of the Columbia Valley is in the ALR.

Land cover and Farmed Area in the ALR

Only 3% (2,295 ha) of inventoried ALR land is used for the production of cultivated field crops, while 21% (15,580 ha) is native pasture or rangeland and an additional 17% (12,237 ha) is primarily forested cover. 40,866 ha (56%) of the area was excluded from the inventory due to air photo interpretation showing no signs of agriculture or other existing land uses such as Indian Reserves, water and foreshore areas and rights-of-way (Figure 8).

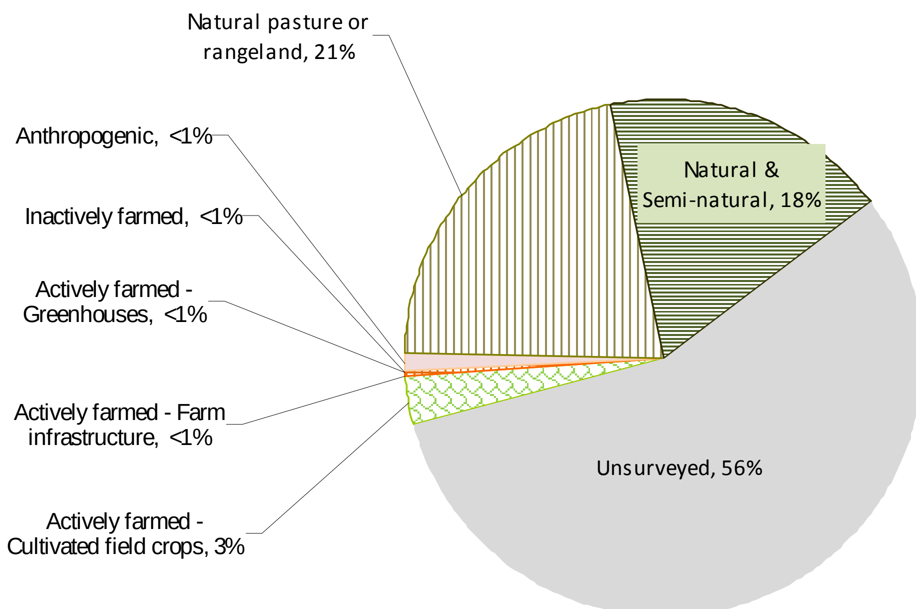

Figure 8. Land cover and farmed area in the ALR – Columbia Valley subregion

Land Use and Farm Use

A total of 27% (20,336 ha) of ALR land (private and Crown) in the Columbia Valley subregion is used for farming and grazing (Table 15). An additional 6,853 ha outside the ALR is also used for farming or grazing purposes. Many parcels "used for grazing" have other uses such as forest recreation sites, conservation areas, utilities, etc. Most Crown owned parcels that were not surveyed as part of this inventory, and much of the unsurveyed Crown land is probably used for livestock grazing since Crown grazing leases cover much of the region.

Table 15. Land use and farming use, Private and Crown – Columbia Valley subregion

Parcel land use		ALR			Outside ALR (ha)	Total area (ha)	% of inventory area	% of inventory area in Crown owner-ship
		In ALR (ha)	% of ALR area	% of ALR in Crown owner-ship				
	Used For Farming	5,445	7 %	<1 %	878	6,323	14 %	<1 %
	Used For Grazing	14,891	20 %	9 %	5,975	20,866	47 %	19 %
	No Farming/Grazing	11,881	16 %	4 %	5,040	16,921	38 %	11 %
	SUBTOTAL	**32,217**	**44 %**	**12 %**	**11,893**	**44,110**	**100 %**	**30 %**
Not surveyed	Parcels - no access	35,524	49 %					
	Indian reserves	3,753	5 %					
	Water & foreshore	643	<1 %					
	Rights-of-way	683	<1 %					
	Unsurveyed land	263	<1 %					
	SUBTOTAL	40,866	56 %					
	TOTAL	**73,083**	**100 %**					

Farming Activities

Forage and pasture is the most common type of cultivated field crop, accounting for 93% of cultivated land and 3% of the ALR in the region. Cereals and oilseeds account for 6% of all cultivated land in the region (Table 16).

Table 16. Main field crop types by area – Columbia Valley subregion

Type	ALR			Outside ALR (ha)	Total area (ha)	% of cultivated land	% of cultivated land in Crown ownership
	In ALR (ha)	% of ALR	% of ALR in Crown ownership				
Forage, pasture	2,228	3%	< 1%	187	2,415	93%	< 1%
Grains, cereals, oilseeds	154	< 1%	-	5	160	6%	-
Vegetables	3	< 1%	-	1	4	< 1%	-
Berries	3	< 1%	-	-	3	< 1%	-
Ornamentals and shrubs	< 1	< 1%	-	< 1	< 1	< 1%	-
Trees (plantation)	< 1	< 1%	-	-	< 1	< 1%	-
Fallow land	-	-	-	< 1	< 1	< 1%	-
TOTAL	**2,390**	**3%**	**< 1%**	**194**	**2,584**	**100%**	**< 1%**

Treed – closed (60% to 100% of crown cover is native trees) land cover is most commonly used for natural pasture and rangeland and represents the greatest proportion of natural cover in the inventoried areas (Table 17).

Table 17. Natural pasture and rangeland vegetation types – Columbia Valley subregion

Natural pasture and rangeland		ALR			Outside ALR (ha)	Total area (ha)	% of inventory area	% of inventory area in Crown ownership	% of natural pasture and rangeland
		In ALR (ha)	% of ALR	% of ALR in Crown ownership					
Rangeland (natural)	Treed - closed	11,937	16%	6%	2,807	14,744	33%	10%	78%
	Treed - open	1,301	2%	2%	131	1,432	3%	3%	8%
	Herbaceous	592	< 1%	< 1%	43	635	1%	< 1%	3%
	Shrubland	101	< 1%	< 1%	1	102	< 1%	< 1%	< 1%
Subtotal		**13,931**	**19%**	**8%**	**2,982**	**16,913**	**38%**	**14%**	**90%**
Pasture (natural)	Treed - closed	1,040	1%	< 1%	249	1,288	3%	< 1%	7%
	Herbaceous	440	< 1%	< 1%	24	464	1%	< 1%	2%
	Shrubland	90	< 1%	< 1%	6	96	< 1%	< 1%	< 1%
	Treed - open	80	< 1%	< 1%	2	81	< 1%	< 1%	< 1%
Subtotal		**1,648**	**2%**	**< 1%**	**281**	**1,929**	**4%**	**< 1%**	**10%**
Total		**15,580**	**21%**	**8%**	**3,263**	**18,843**	**43%**	**14%**	**100%**

Equine is the most common type of livestock activity in the Columbia Valley subregion, representing 73 of 103 or 71% of all livestock activities. Beef cattle is the second most common with 20 activities or 19% of the total (Table 18).

Table 18. Livestock activities – Columbia Valley subregion

Livestock group	Scale of activity				Total activities
	Very small scale	Small scale	Medium scale	Large scale	
Beef	-	9	5	6	20
Poultry	3	-	-	-	3
Sheep / lamb / goat	3	1	-	-	4
Llama / alpaca	1	1	-	-	2
Unknown livestock	1	-	-	-	1
Equine	4	69	-	-	73
TOTAL	**12**	**80**	**5**	**6**	**103**

"Very small" scale represents 1 animal unit equivalent
"Small" scale represents about 2-25 animal unit equivalents
"Medium" scale represents 25-100 animal unit equivalents
"Large" scale represents > 100 animal unit equivalents

Parcel size and farming in the ALR

Of the 823 privately owned parcels in the ALR, 280 parcels (34%) are less than 2 ha in size, 52% are larger than 4 ha and 22% are larger than 32 ha (Figure 9). There are 20,015 ha associated with parcels larger than 32 ha, which represents 62% of surveyed ALR area so a majority of the ALR area is in larger parcels, which usually allow farmers greater flexibility to expand or change their type of operation as the economy and markets change.

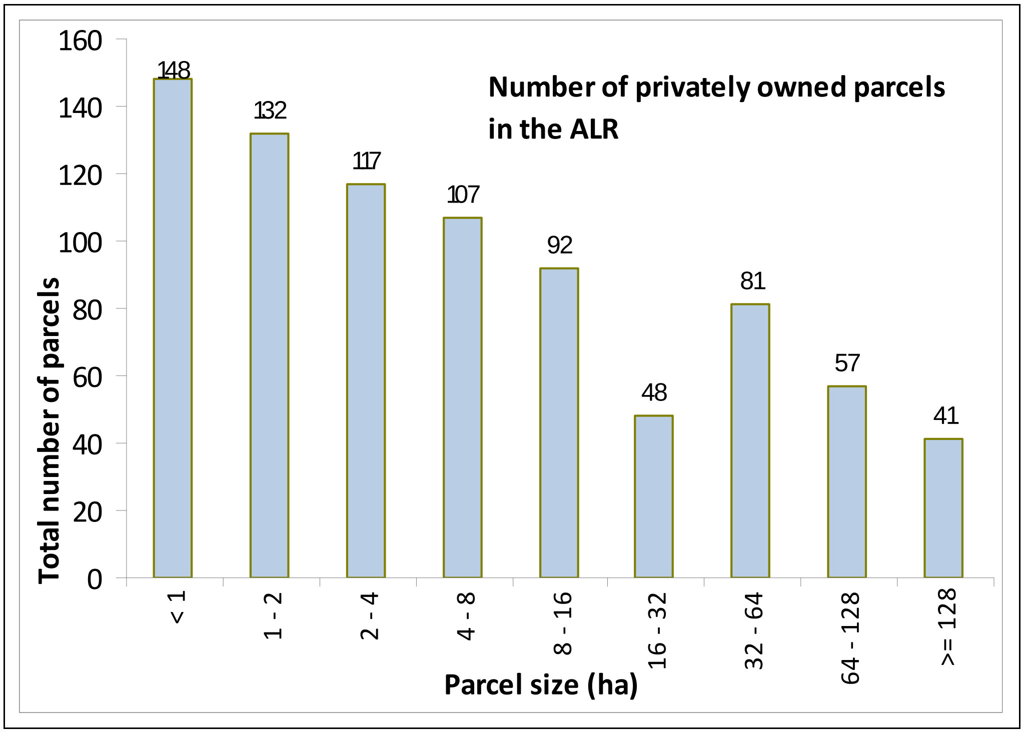

Figure 9. Privately owned parcels in the ALR by parcel size – Columbia Valley subregion

3.1.3 Elk Valley Subregion

The Elk Valley subregion contains Electoral Area A as well as the municipalities of Fernie, Sparwood and Elkford, and has a population of 12,171, approximately 22% of the regional district's population. The region has a total area including land and water of 497,044 ha. With 14,761 ha of ALR land, 3% of the Elk Valley is in the ALR.

Land cover and Farmed Area in the ALR

Nine percent (1,325 ha) of inventoried ALR land is used for the production of cultivated field crops, while only 2% (346 ha) is native pasture or rangeland and an additional 70% (10,395 ha) is primarily forested cover. 2,237 ha (15%) of the area was excluded from the inventory due to air photo interpretation showing no signs of agriculture or other existing land uses such as Indian Reserves, water and foreshore areas and rights-of-way (Figure 10).

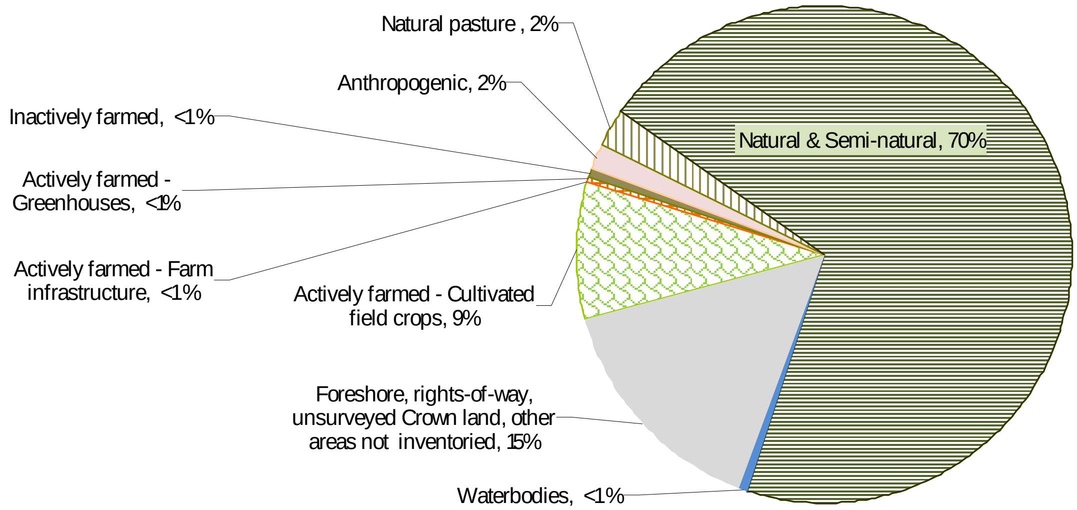

Figure 10. Land cover and farmed area in the ALR – Elk Valley subregion

Land Use and Farm Use

A total of 19% (2,665 ha) of ALR land (private and Crown) in the Elk Valley subregion is used for farming and grazing (Table 19). An additional 270 ha outside the ALR is also used for farming or grazing purposes. Many parcels "used for grazing" have other uses such as forest recreation sites, conservation areas, utilities, etc. Most Crown owned parcels that were not surveyed as part of this inventory, and much of the unsurveyed Crown land is probably used for livestock grazing since Crown grazing leases cover much of the region.

Table 19. Land use and farming use, Private and Crown – Elk Valley subregion

Parcel land use		ALR			Outside ALR (ha)	Total area (ha)	% of inventory area	% of inventory area in Crown ownership
		In ALR (ha)	% of ALR area	% of ALR in Crown ownership				
	Used For Farming	2,441	17 %	-	269	2,710	6 %	-
	Used For Grazing	224	2 %	-	< 1	224	<1 %	-
	No Farming/Grazing	9,860	67 %	11 %	32,807	42,666	94 %	5 %
	SUBTOTAL	**12,525**	**85 %**	**11 %**	**33,076**	**45,600**	**100 %**	**5 %**
Not inventoried	Parcels - no access	942	6 %					
Not inventoried	Indian reserves	-	-					
Not inventoried	Water & foreshore	358	2 %					
Not inventoried	Rights-of-way	505	3 %					
Not inventoried	Unsurveyed land	432	3 %					
Not inventoried	**SUBTOTAL**	2,237	15 %					
	TOTAL	**14,761**	**100 %**					

Farming Activities

Forage and pasture accounts for 99% of all cultivated land and 9% of the ALR in the subregion (Table 20).

Table 20. Main field crop types by area – Elk Valley subregion

Type	ALR			Outside ALR (ha)	Total area (ha)	% of cultivated land	% of cultivated land in Crown ownership
	In ALR (ha)	% of ALR	% of ALR in Crown ownership				
Forage, pasture	1,381	9%	< 1%	125	1,506	99%	< 1%
Oats	6	< 1%	-	-	6	< 1%	-
Trees (plantation)	2	< 1%	-	-	2	< 1%	-
Crop transition	< 1	< 1%	-	-	< 1	< 1%	-
TOTAL	**1,390**	**9%**	**< 1%**	**125**	**1,515**	**100%**	**< 1%**

Treed – open (10% to 60% of crown cover is native trees) and herbaceous land cover are most commonly used for natural pasture and rangeland and represents the greatest proportion (79%) of natural cover in the inventoried areas (Table 21). The remaining natural pasture and rangeland is Treed – closed.

Table 21. Natural pasture and rangeland vegetation types – Elk Valley Subregion

Natural pasture and rangeland		ALR			Outside ALR (ha)	Total area (ha)	% of surveyed area	% of inventory area in Crown ownership	% of natural pasture and rangeland
		In ALR (ha)	% of ALR	% of ALR in Crown ownership					
Pasture (natural)	Treed - open	141	< 1%	-	< 1	142	< 1%	-	41%
	Herbaceous	133	< 1%	-	< 1	134	< 1%	-	38%
	Treed - closed	71	< 1%	-	< 1	71	< 1%	-	21%
Total		346	2%	-	1	347	< 1%		100%

Equine is the most common type of livestock activity in the Elk Valley subregion, representing 49 of 75, or 65% of all livestock activities. Beef cattle are the second most common with 21 activities or 28% of the total (Table 22).

Table 22. Livestock activities – Elk Valley subregion

Livestock group	Scale of activity				Total activities
	Very small scale	Small scale	Medium scale	Large scale	
Beef	1	11	7	2	21
Poultry	1	-	-	-	1
Sheep / lamb / goat	-	1	-	-	1
Llama / alpaca	-	1	-	-	1
Unknown livestock	2	-	-	-	2
Equine	15	34	-	-	49
TOTAL	**19**	**47**	**7**	**2**	**75**

"Very small" scale represents 1 animal unit equivalent
"Small" scale represents about 2-25 animal unit equivalents
"Medium" scale represents 25-100 animal unit equivalents
"Large" scale represents > 100 animal unit equivalents

Parcel size and farming in the ALR

Of the 513 privately owned parcels in the ALR, 150 parcels (29%) are less than 2 ha in size, 40% are larger than 4 ha and 13% are larger than 32 ha (Figure 11). There are 8,556 ha associated with parcels larger than 32 ha, which represents 68% of surveyed ALR area so a majority of the ALR area is in larger parcels, which usually allow farmers greater flexibility to expand or change their type of operation as the economy and markets change.

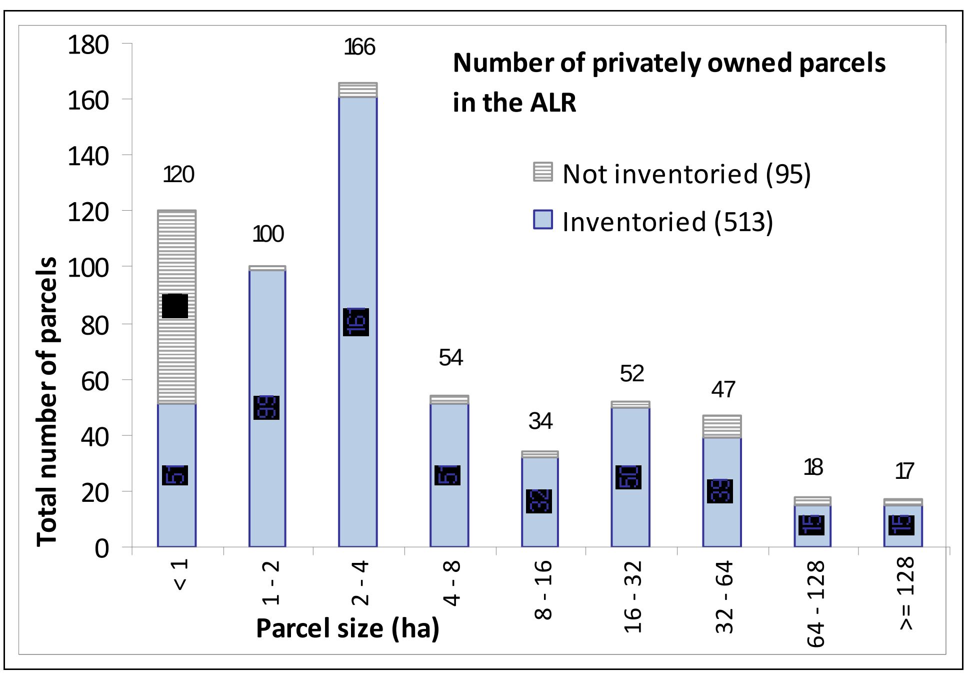

Figure 11. Privately owned parcels in the ALR by parcel size –Elk Valley subregion

3.2 Census of Agriculture

A Census of Agriculture was conducted by Statistics Canada in 2011, providing current information to complement the ALUI data.

Number of Farms and Farm Size

The total number of farms and farm size distribution remains relatively unchanged from 2006 (Table 23). Average farm size in the RDEK in 2011 was 202 ha compared to 247 ha in 2006. The decline is primarily related to a reduction in the area of leased land.

Table 23. Number of farms and farm size in the RDEK.

Farm Size	1991		1996		2001		2006		2011	
	Farms	%	Farms	%	Farms	%	Farms	%	Farms	%
<4 ha (10 acres)	35	9%	70	15%	58	14%	55	14%	61	15%
4 to 52 ha (10 to 129 acres)	152	39%	159	34%	145	35%	142	36%	142	36%
52 to 161 ha (130 to 399 acres)	99	25%	130	27%	111	27%	90	23%	95	24%
>161 ha (400 acres & greater)	105	27%	115	24%	104	25%	108	27%	98	25%
Total	**391**		**474**		**418**		**395**		**396**	

Farm Tenure

The area of owned farmland has been in decline since 1996, dropping another 4.5% between 2006 and 2011. The substantial change in leased farmland area between 2006 and 2011 includes a reduction of 8,120 ha in government leases and 7,849 ha in leases from other land owners (Table 24). The reduction can be attributed to the decline in beef cattle numbers, which had reduced the demand for grazing leases.

Table 24. Farm Tenure in the RDEK

Farm Tenure	1991		1996		2001		2006		2011	
	ha	% of Total	ha	% of Total	ha	% of Total	ha	% of Total	ha	% of Total
Farmland Owned	39,191	57%	40,737	51%	34,883	35%	33,927	34%	32,434	40%
Farmland Leased	29,146	43%	39,789	49%	64,351	65%	64,972	66%	47,638	60%
Total	**68,337**		**80,526**		**99,234**		**98,899**		**80,072**	

** includes leases, rentals, crop share, etc. from government and other land owners*

Farmland Use

Forage and range continue to be the dominant uses of farmland in the RDEK (Table 25). As stated earlier, the decline in unmanaged pasture use can be attributed to the decline in beef cattle numbers and the lower demand for grazing, particularly on Crown range.

Table 25. Farmland use in the RDEK

Farmland Use	Area (ha)			
	1996	2001	2006	2011
Field crops	10,223	10,789	10,118	9,817
Summerfallow	173	127	54	55
Pasture (managed)	6,700	8,787	5,887	5,415
Pasture (unmanaged)	45,231	63,227	64,286	48,831
Other*	18,199	16,303	17,316	15,954
Total	**80,526**	**99,233**	**97,661**	**80,072**

** Other includes unimproved land and woodland used primarily for livestock grazing.*

Main Types of Agriculture

The number of cattle ranching operations in the regional district has declined by 48% over the ten year period between 2001 and 2011 (Table 26). During the same time period the number of "other crop farming" operations, which primarily represents commercial hay production, has more than doubled. These changes reflect the impact of the 2003 BSE crisis on cattle prices, the resulting changes to the red meat inspection system and the general economic instability of the beef cattle sector during this period. Hog and sheep production has declined since 2001, while poultry and egg production has remained stable. Other animal production, primarily horses for pleasure/recreational use, has increased almost 62%.

The vegetable and greenhouse/nursery sectors exhibited steady growth between 2001 and 2011, while fruit and tree nut farming declined.

Table 26. Farms in the RDEK classified by industry group

Farm Type	2001	2006	2011
Cattle ranching and farming	151	138	78
Hog and pig farming	4	1	1
Poultry and egg production	9	10	9
Sheep and goat farming	10	8	5
Other animal production (i.e. horses)	81	124	131
Oilseed and grain farming		2	1
Vegetable and melon farming	3	7	9
Fruit and tree nut farming	10	8	4
Greenhouse, nursery and floriculture production	39	42	48
Other crop farming	51	55	110
Totals	**358**	**395**	**396**

Livestock on Farms

All major classes of livestock have exhibited decline in the number of farms reporting and the number of animals on farms (Table 27).

Table 27. Livestock on farms in the RDEK.

Livestock	2001		2006		2011	
	Farms Reporting	Number	Farms Reporting	Number	Farms Reporting	Number
Total cattle and calves	214	26,187	193	23360	148	17320
Total sheep and lambs	34	1,194	25	758	19	375
Total Pigs	36	553	13	77	14	54
Goats	22	426	14	92	15	187
Llamas and alpacas	21	103	19	105	14	75
Total hens and chickens	113	10,061	72	4600	65	3725

Gross Farm Receipts and Operating Expenses

Total gross farm receipts have remained relatively stagnant in the RDEK over the past 20 years, averaging approximately $14,624,000 (Table 28). During the same time period, gross farm receipts at the provincial level have experienced substantial growth (222%) and the provincial average gross receipts per farm is four times that of the East Kootenay region. Total farm business operating expenses in the RDEK have exceeded gross farm receipts in the past four census years, while the average ratio of operating expenses to farm receipts is 0.90 provincially, indicating overall industry profitability. The disparity between the RDEK and provincial performance reflects the soil and climatic limitations of the East Kootenay region, which have resulted in an agricultural industry focused primarily on range beef cattle production with very limited crop or livestock diversification or value-added processing and marketing.

Table 28. Gross Farm Receipts and Operating Expenses – RDEK and BC

Gross Farm Receipts	1991	1996	2001	2006	2011
Total gross farm receipts in current dollars (excluding forest products sold)					
Total (RDEK)	$14,153,780	$13,872,676	$14,899,563	$15,570,846	$14,504,239
Average/farm (RDEK)	$36,199	$29,267	$35,645	$39,420	$36,627
Total (BC)	$1,321,200,000	$1,839,217,000	$2,307,697,000	$2,651,963,000	$2,935,906,000
Average/farm (BC)	$68,723	$84,233	$113,736	$133,641	$148,586
Total farm business operating expenses in current dollars					
Total (RDEK)	$11,831,484	$14,576,830	$15,019,802	$15,623,467	$15,040,762
Average/farm (RDEK)	$30,259	$30,753	$35,933	$39,553	$37,982
Ratio of operating expenses to receipts	0.836	1.050	1.008	1.003	1.037

4. LEGISLATION AND POLICY INFLUENCING AGRICULTURE

The agricultural sector in the East Kootenay is regulated and influenced by a broad range of regional, provincial, and federal legislation and policies. Awareness of jurisdictional responsibilities can be helpful in determining the nature of efforts that can be made by local government in enhancing agricultural conditions.

4.1 Regional District of East Kootenay

Management of agriculture at the local government level is principally through regional growth strategies, official community plans, and land use and zoning bylaws.

4.1.1 Regional Growth Strategy

The Regional District has adopted a Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) policy. The RGS establishes principles for evaluating land use changes and developing community plans throughout the Regional District. The RGS contains two types of policy: those that apply to the whole Regional District and policies that reflect sub-regional planning objectives. The RGS identifies the protection of good farm land and recognition of the importance of the agriculture industry to the regional economy as region wide interests.

4.1.2 Official Community Plans

Each municipality in the RDEK has adopted an Official Community Plan (OCP). An OCP is a general statement of the broad objectives and policies of the local government with respect to the form and character of existing and proposed land use and servicing requirements.

In the unincorporated areas of the RDEK (areas outside municipal boundaries), land use is also regulated through official plans and zoning bylaws. Agricultural land use objectives and policies vary between the different OCP and bylaw documents based on area-specific land use issues and planning priorities. In general, the OCPs and bylaws reinforce the following planning strategies:

- Support for agricultural activity and the protection of agricultural land;
- Identification of areas for potential future development and the conditions under which development of lands in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) may be supported;
- Identification of permitting land uses, activities and development;
- Establishment of minimum parcel sizes; and
- Minimizing conflict between agriculture and other potentially incompatible land uses on adjacent land through buffering (fencing), zoning setbacks and other measures.

The RDEK has adopted OCPs for most of the populated areas. These include:

- Panorama Mountain Village (1999)
- Fairmont Hot Springs Area (2004)
- Steamboat - Jubilee Mountain (2006)
- Kimberley Rural (2008)
- Lake Windermere (2008)
- Island Lake (2009)
- Rockyview (2010)
- Baynes Lake (2011)
- Fernie Alpine Resort (2012)
- Lake Koocanusa (2013)

4.1.3 Land Use Strategies

The Regional District has three Land Use Strategies. These documents are similar to OCPs but are adopted as policy documents rather than bylaws. Areas covered by land use strategies include the Elk Valley (1986), Toby Benches (1998) and the Fernie area (2006).

4.1.4 Zoning Bylaws

Each municipality also has a zoning bylaw, which sets out regulations for the use of land and the siting of buildings. Zoning bylaws are also in place for most of the Regional District. The zoning bylaws are:

- Elk Valley, Area A (1990)
- Upper Columbia Valley, Areas F and G (1992)
- Cranbrook Rural (2001)
- Kimberley Rural (2005)
- Sweetwater (2009)
- Wycliffe (2010)
- South Country (2011)

4.1.5 Land Use Bylaws

Land Use Bylaws are in place in areas with small population and where there is not a great diversity of land uses. These bylaws combine land use policies with zoning bylaws. The Land Use Bylaws in the Regional District include:

- Jaffray, Tie Lake & Rosen Lake (1999)
- Wasa, Ta Ta Creek, Skookumchuck & Sheep Creek (2002)
- Fort Steele / Bull River (2005)
- Moyie and Area (2008)

4.1.6 Delegated Decision Making Authority in the ALR

The RDEK has entered into Delegation Agreements with the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) for certain types of ALR non-farm uses and subdivisions in areas covered by the Wasa – Ta Ta Creek – Skookumchuck - Sheep Creek Land Use Bylaw and Elk Valley Zoning Bylaw. Unlike the standard ALR application process, under which the RDEK Board makes a recommendation and the final decision making authority rests with the ALC, applications considered under a Delegation Agreement are not forwarded to the ALC, unless otherwise required under the terms of the Delegation Agreement and the decision of the RDEK is final. The Elk Valley Delegation Agreement also makes provision for an exemption for the referral of specific non-farm use application to the RDEK Advisory Planning Commission (APC). When making decisions under a Delegation Agreement the RDEK adopts the role of the ALC and must consider the impact of the proposed application on agriculture. The application must also be carefully considered against the applicable RDEK policy documents that have been endorsed by the ALC.

4.1.7 RDEK Advisory Commissions

The RDEK has two types of citizen based commissions that are provided an opportunity to review and comment on development applications being considered by the RDEK Board.

Agricultural Advisory Commission

An Agricultural Advisory Commission (AAC) has been established for Electoral Areas B and C. Prior to the RDEK entering into the Delegation Decision-Making Agreement with the ALC for the Elk Valley region, Electoral Area A was also represented by the AAC. The AAC is currently comprised of six members who have been appointed by the RDEK Board for a three year term. The two Electoral Area Directors and local Ministry of Agriculture Resource Stewardship Agrologist serve as ex-officio members on the AAC. The AAC reviews and provides comment on development applications such as ALR applications or rezoning amendments prior to consideration by the RDEK Board. The AAC is tasked with reviewing applications in consideration of the potential impact on agriculture.

Advisory Planning Commission

Each Electoral Area within the RDEK is represented by an Advisory Planning Commission (APC). The APCs are comprised of residents of the applicable Electoral Area who are appointed by the RDEK Board for a one year term. The Electoral Area Directors also serve as ex-officio members. The APC provides community perspective on development applications such as development variance permits, ALR applications and rezoning amendments prior to their consideration by the RDEK Board.

4.2 Provincial

4.2.1 Strategic Initiatives

In 2008, the BC Ministry of Agriculture released a new Agriculture Plan for the province entitled *Growing a Healthy Future for BC Families*. The plan outlined 23 strategies to sustain and facilitate the growth and diversification of the agriculture industry while increasing public awareness, understanding and support for the people who produce our food. The strategies were coordinated under five broad themes:

1. Producing local food in a changing world;
2. Meeting environmental and climate challenges;
3. Building innovative and profitable family farm businesses;
4. Building First Nations agricultural capacity; and
5. Bridging the urban/agriculture divide.

The BC Jobs Plan Agrifoods Strategy, introduced in 2012, builds on the initiatives undertaken through the BC Agriculture Plan by setting priorities and actions to guide the growth of the agrifood sector for the next five years in three key areas:

1. Focus on high-quality, high-value products;
2. Expand domestic and international markets; and
3. Enhance the agrifood sector's competitiveness.

In August 2012, the government of British Columbia announced a $2 million investment in a Buy Local program to help BC producers and processors promote local foods. The funding assists local businesses and organizations to launch or expand their marketing campaigns, and allows BC's diverse food industry to use customized promotions specific to their market needs.

4.2.2 Agricultural Land Commission Act

The Agricultural Land Commission Act, enacted in 1973 and amended in 2002, established the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) as an independent provincial agency with responsibility for administering the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), a provincial zone in which agriculture is the priority land use and non-agricultural uses are controlled. The purpose of the Commission is:

- to preserve agricultural land;
- to encourage farming in collaboration with other communities of interest; and
- to encourage local governments, First Nations, the government and its agents to enable and accommodate farm use of agricultural land and uses compatible with agriculture in their plans, bylaws and policies.

Revisions to the ALC Act in 2002 increased the types of permitted uses in the ALR in order to expand economic opportunities for farmers. The updated Act also allowed local governments to enter into delegation agreements to exercise some or all of the commission's power to decide applications for non-farm use or subdivision of lands in its jurisdiction. Local governments may also decide to refuse to refer applications for ALR exclusions or non-farm uses to the ALC. When an application is received by the ALC, it then makes the final decision on whether to permit the request based on accordance with the ALC Act.

The ALC Act takes precedence over, but does not replace, other legislation and bylaws that may apply to the land. Local and regional governments, as well as other provincial agencies, are expected to plan in accordance with the provincial policy of preserving agricultural land. Land in the ALR is subject to provincial regulation whether it is private or Crown.

4.2.3 Agricultural Land Reserve Use, Subdivision and Procedure Regulation

The Agricultural Land Reserve Use, Subdivision and Procedure Regulation, adopted in 2002, specifies permitted land uses within the ALR. This regulation identifies farm activities and other, non-farm uses permitted in the ALR (Appendix I), notification requirements for soil removal and placement of fill, procedures for submitting applications and identifies filing requirements.

4.2.4 Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act

The Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act applies to farmers who operate in the Agricultural Land Reserve or in other areas where farming is permitted by local zoning bylaws. When farmers operate using normal farm practices, defined as an activity *"…that is conducted by a farm business in a manner consistent with proper and accepted customs and standards as established and followed by similar farm businesses under similar circumstances.."*, the Act protects the farmer against nuisance actions, court injunctions, or specific nuisance bylaws related to the operation of the farm. To be eligible for protection, a farmer must be in compliance with the Health Act, Pesticide Control Act, Waste Management Act, the regulations under those Acts, and any land use regulation.

The Farm Practices Protection Act established the Farm Industry Review Board (FIRB) as the independent administrative tribunal that considers complaints from persons aggrieved by odour, noise, dust, or other disturbances resulting from farm operations, and encourages settlement of the complaints. The Board hears complaints and determines whether the disturbance in question results from normal farm practices.

4.2.5 Local Government Act

The Local Government Act provides the legislative framework for local governments to represent the interests and respond to the needs of their communities. Certain provisions address farming activities through community planning; zoning; nuisance regulations; removal and deposit of soil; weed and pest control; water use and drainage. Part 26 Division 8 - Regulation of Farm Businesses in Farming Areas provides for the creation of "farm bylaws" and allows for the establishing of agricultural standards for the guidance of local governments in the preparation of bylaws affecting agriculture.

4.2.6 Land Title Act

The Land Title Act gives Approving Officers the power to assess potential impacts of proposed subdivisions on farm land. Before subdivision approval is given, the Approving Officer may require adequate buffering of farmland from the subdivision or the removal of unnecessary roads directed to the Agricultural Land Reserve, to ensure no unreasonable interference with farm operations. Within the unincorporated (rural) portions of the RDEK, the Approving Officer is the Provincial Approving Officer (PAO) with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. Each incorporated area or municipality has their own Approving Officer who is responsible all subdivision application within the municipal boundaries.

4.2.7 BC Assessment Act

Section 23 of the Assessment Act and BC Reg 411/95, the *Classification of Land as a Farm Regulation* (the "Farm Class Regulation"), set out the requirements that must be met for land to be classified as "Farm" for assessment and tax purposes. Land classified as Farm must be used all or in part for primary agricultural production. All farm structures are classified as residential, including the farmer's dwelling. Farm class status results in a farm assessment that reduces property, school and hospital taxes.

The Farm Class Regulation requires a producing farm to meet minimum gross income requirements, which vary with the size of the farm operation:

- $10,000, if the total area of the farm operation is less than 0.8 ha (1.98 acres);
- $2,500 if the total area of the farm operation is between 0.8 ha (1.98 acres) and 4 ha (10 acres); or
- $2,500 plus 5% of the actual value of the area in excess of 4 ha (10 acres) if the total area of the farm operation is greater than 4 ha (10 acres).

Farm class is granted on an annual basis. Once land has been classified as farm, the minimum income requirements required for the farm operation must be met in one of two relevant reporting periods and a sale of a qualifying agricultural product must be made in every reporting period.

4.2.8 Water Act

The Water Act is the principal water management legislation in BC and plays a key role in the sustainability of BC's water supply. The Act provides for the licensing of activities including use, diversion, and storage of water. The Act also addresses the nature of permitted changes to stream courses under application. Related water legislation in the Water Protection Act (RSBC) Chap. 484, provides the regulatory basis for the removal or transfer of water within and between jurisdictions. As part of its Living Water Smart vision, the Province of BC is currently engaged in a process to modernize the Water Act.

A water license is required from the Ministry of Environment for use of any surface water under the BC Water Act. Water licenses are given for "beneficial use" of the water, such as domestic uses or irrigation for agricultural purposes. A water license protects rights to continued use of the water for the specified conditions and is attached to the land or "appurtenant" and not the owner of the land or license. If the land is sold the water license remains with the property. Part or all of the license may be moved ("transfer of appurtenancy") as long as the water can be accessed and used beneficially on the new land.

4.2.9 Wildlife Act

The British Columbia Wildlife Act establishes regulations and guidelines for the conservation and management of wildlife populations and habitats, the issuance of licenses and permits for fishing, game hunting, and trapping, guidelines for safe angling and trapping and outfitting policies. The Provincial Agriculture Zone Wildlife Program (PAZWP) was developed in 2009 by the BC government, to accommodate the special objectives in agricultural zones throughout BC and provide special opportunities for hunters. PAZWP helps coordinate crop damage prevention, mitigation and compensation strategies for damage done by certain species of wildlife. PAZWP has helped increase hunting opportunities in lower elevation agriculture and ungulate winter range zones, and promotes healthy landowner – hunter relationships.

4.2.10 Livestock Act

The Livestock Act defines Livestock Districts (areas where livestock may be at large) and Pound Districts (areas where livestock at large are subject to capture) and the conditions of capture, liability and trespass.

4.2.11 Forest and Range Practices Act and Range Act

The Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA)and its regulations govern the activities of forest and range licensees in BC. The statute sets the requirements for planning, road building, logging, reforestation, and grazing. The Range Act gives the right to use Crown land for grazing or hay cutting. However, it is the FRPA and its various regulations that give direction on how and when rangeland may be used. The Range Planning and Practices Regulation requires that those who use Crown lands for livestock grazing must submit either a Range Use Plan ("RUP") or Range Stewardship Plan ("RSP") for approval by the Ministry prior to using rangeland. The Minister must approve a plan if it meets all requirements set out in the Regulation.

4.2.12 Weed Control Act

The Weed Control Act and Weed Control Regulations address the duty and responsibilities for designated noxious weed control, and the provision for local governments to appoint Committees and Inspection personnel to administer the provisions of the Act.

4.2.13 Environmental Management Act

Under the Environmental Management Act, provisions are included to exempt the producer from obtaining permits if defined conditions are met. Nonetheless, two regulations are important for local farmers: the Agricultural Waste Control Regulation/Code of Practice (AWCR) and the Organic Matter Recycling Regulation (OMRR).

The AWCR prescribes the practices for using, storing and managing agricultural waste material in order to prevent pollution. The Regulation and the code of practice deal with waste storage and also with on-farm composting.

The OMRR prescribes how composting is conducted in commercial facilities, including feedstock allowed, size and technology, siting and procedures, and compost quality. While in most areas OMRR is within provincial jurisdiction, some municipalities and regional districts have taken over the administering of OMRR requirements.

4.2.14 BC Meat Inspection Regulations

The Meat Inspection Regulations (MIR) sets out the requirements for all provincially licensed slaughter facilities in British Columbia. The regulation came into force in 2004 in response to the discovery of BSE in Canada's cattle herd in 2003, and compliance became mandatory on September 30, 2007. The MIR ensures that animals are humanely handled and slaughtered; carcasses are processed hygienically; and that meat is stored and packaged in ways that reduce contamination risks. The MIR introduced a provincial outcome-based standard for the safety of meat processing in the province, with the following objectives:

- Ensure food safety;
- Strengthen the meat processing sector;
- Rebuild consumer and international confidence in BC; and
- Adopt an outcomes-based approach to regulation.

The new graduated licensing approach includes several levels of slaughter operation for provincially licensed facilities:

- Class A facilities include slaughter and 'cut and wrap' services;
- Class B facilities include slaughter only;
- Class C was temporarily introduced in 2007 to make it possible for many slaughter operators to become fully licensed. These licenses are now being phased out;
- Class D - Retail Sales – permits direct producer sales to local consumers and to retail establishments with geographic restrictions. Restricts production to between one and 25 animal units (approximately 11,350 kg live weight); and
- Class E - Direct Sales –permits direct producer sales to local consumers. Restricts production to between one and 10 animal units (approximately 4,540 kg live weight). Class E licenses are also limited to the designated geographic areas but may be available to other rural and remote areas of the province on a case-by-case basis.

Class A and B slaughter licenses became mandatory for all provincially licensed slaughter facilities under the Meat Inspection Regulations in 2004. Unlicensed slaughter for personal consumption has always existed in the province and will continue.

4.2.15 Natural Products Marketing Act (Commodity Marketing Boards)

The Natural Products Marketing Act provides for the promotion, control and regulation of the production, transportation, packing, storage and marketing of natural products in British Columbia. The Farm Industry Review Board (FIRB) is responsible for the general supervision of BC's agricultural commodity boards, acting as a signatory to some agreements (e.g. federal-provincial), and for hearing appeals from any person aggrieved or dissatisfied by an order, decision or determination of a marketing board or commission.

In BC, broiler hatching eggs, chicken, table eggs, cow milk, and turkey are regulated both provincially and federally under a system of supply management by the respective boards and commissions:

- BC Broiler Hatching Egg Commission
- BC Chicken Marketing Board
- BC Egg Marketing Board
- BC Milk Marketing Board
- BC Turkey Marketing Board

Cranberries, hogs and vegetables are regulated provincially by the respective commissions. These commodities are not subject to the same production, import and price controls as supply managed products.

- BC Cranberry Marketing Commission
- BC Hog Marketing Commission
- BC Vegetable Marketing Commission

In BC, boards and commissions, including those that are supply-managed, set exemptions for personal consumption, farm gate sales, and small-lot production.

4.2.16 BC Environmental Farm Plan Program

The Canada-BC Environmental Farm Plan Program is a voluntary program that assists farmers in developing an environmental action plan for their farm that enhances natural resources and reduces the possibility of accidental harm to soil, air, water and biodiversity values.

4.3 Federal

4.3.1 Strategic Initiatives

Growing Forward 2, the most recent national Agricultural Policy Framework agreement between the federal, provincial and territorial governments, is designed to help the agricultural industry position itself to respond to future opportunities and to realize its full potential as a significant contributor to the economy. *Growing Forward 2* will support BC's agrifood sector in three key areas:

- Innovation;
- Competitiveness and market development; and
- Adaptability and industry capacity.

In addition, Growing Forward 2 will continue to provide funding for a complete suite of Business Risk Management (BRM) programs to ensure farmers are protected against severe market volatility and disasters.

4.3.2 Canada Agricultural Products Act

The Canada Agricultural Products Act regulates the import, export and inter-provincial trade and marketing of agricultural products. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) administers many of the agricultural import and export activities. This Act standardizes agricultural grading and inspecting procedures across Canada.

4.3.3 Additional Federal Legislation Affecting Agriculture

Additional federal legislation that influences various aspects of the agriculture industry include:

- Canada Grain Act
- Canada Wildlife Act
- Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act
- Customs Act
- Excise Tax Act
- Excise and Import Permits Act
- Farm Debt Mediation Act
- Farm Income Protection Act
- Farm Products Agencies Act
- Feeds Act
- Fertilizers Act
- Fisheries Act
- Food and Drugs Act
- Health of Animals Act
- Migratory Birds Convention Act
- Pest Control Products Act
- Plant Protection Act
- Seeds Act
- Species at Risk Act
- Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act

5. COMMUNICATIONS, CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

5.1 Goals and Objectives

The specific goals associated with the consultation and engagement process include:

- To increase awareness about the Agricultural Plan by providing proactive, accurate and timely information about its development and implementation;
- To engage members of the agricultural community in an inclusive planning process where they are partners in the development of the Agricultural Plan;
- To gather and record information and input from residents across the region; and
- To enhance understanding of agriculture in the region and foster support for and ownership of the Agricultural Plan amongst residents.

5.2 Consultation Process and Outcomes

A variety of communications and consultation tools have been utilized to encourage participation and input into the agricultural planning process.

5.2.1 Agricultural Plan website

The Agricultural Plan website (www.ekag.ca) provides a convenient portal for people to find information on the planning process, review existing documents and reports, access other consultation tools such as the surveys, identify APSC contacts and provide input via email. The agricultural planning process was also promoted via the RDEK website and a link was provided to the East Kootenay Agricultural Plan website.

5.2.2 Newsletters

A total of four newsletters have been issued to date (March 2012, September 2012, October 2012 and February 2013), and a fifth issue is scheduled for July 2013. The newsletters are distributed by direct mail to all agricultural land and farm status property owners in the RDEK, as well as others who have expressed an interest in the Agricultural Plan. Each issue provided an update on the agricultural planning process, identified upcoming consultation opportunities such as open house events and surveys, summarized the next steps in the process and provided contact information for the APSC members and agricultural consultant.

5.2.3 Newsprint advertising, press releases and articles

The RDEK's Communication Manager, working in conjunction with the APSC, issued press releases to create awareness of the agricultural planning process. This resulted in a number of newspaper articles and one radio interview. Specific consultation events such as the open house meetings were advertised in local papers to encourage participation.

5.2.4 Agricultural association meetings

The Agricultural Plan consultant attended meetings with the Kootenay Livestock Association and Windermere District Farmers' Institute to gather input and ideas for the Agricultural Plan. A similar meeting with the Waldo Stockbreeders Association is pending.

5.2.5 Presentations

Summary presentations on the Agricultural Plan process and the preliminary findings of consultation activities were provided for the Cranbrook City Council and the annual conference of the British Columbia Institute of Agrologists (BCIA).

5.2.6 Open House meetings

A series of seven open house meetings were conducted throughout the region in October and November 2012, gathering input from farmers and ranchers, community groups, associations, businesses and individuals. A total of 140 people participated. These meetings involved facilitated discussions where participants responded to the following strategic questions:

- *What is the current state of agriculture in the RDEK?*
- *What are the preferred/favourable conditions for agriculture in the future (economic, social, and ecological)?*
- *What specific actions are needed to create/achieve these conditions?*

More than 50 individuals participated in two follow-up meetings, held in Cranbrook (February 2012) and Invermere (April 2012), that explored these themes further and started to develop potential solutions and actions that will form the basis of the Agricultural Plan. Summaries of the seven open house meetings and two follow-up meetings are available on the Agricultural Plan website (www.rdek.bc.ca); printed copies can be provided upon request.

The open house meetings explored many issues, opportunities and strategies that should be considered as part of the agricultural planning process, and identified eight broad themes for further discussion and research:

Agriculture extension, networking and support

- The declining number of agricultural producers and the loss of agricultural infrastructure such as stockyards and auction facilities have resulted in fewer networking, information sharing and social opportunities for farmers and ranchers.
- The Ministry of Agriculture has changed the priorities for regional Agrologists and no longer provides individualized extension services to assist farmers and ranchers with production, marketing, business and financial planning information

Producer/Consumer relationships

There is a potential disconnect between producers and consumers as a greater percentage of the population moves to urban centres. Consumer surveys indicate public support for agriculture, farmland and local food production. However, many producers feel there is declining public support for agriculture and that consumers have lost their connection to the land and people that raise food.

Economic viability

Many East Kootenay farms and ranches are struggling financially due to high operating and investment costs, narrow profit margins, regulatory issues, etc. A majority appear to rely on off-farm income to sustain their agricultural operations.

Marketing/Branding (developing a local/regional agri-food economy)

Developing marketing and branding strategies are seen as opportunities to connect with consumers and increase demand for local agriculture and food products.

Government policies and regulations

Agriculture is influenced by a broad range of municipal, provincial and federal regulations and policies, some of which are viewed as having detrimental impacts on East Kootenay farms and ranches. Examples include the red meat inspection regulations re: farm-gate sales, supply management re: poultry (broiler and egg production limits), zoning and land use bylaws re: housing and business operation on farm land, the structure of farm assessment and taxation policies, and ALR regulations pertaining to permitted uses and subdivision for family housing.

Diversification and value-added opportunities

Diversification is seen as a possible solution to many of the issues facing the agricultural sector in the East Kootenay. Possible examples include agro-forestry and non-timber forest products, harvesting/processing of wild foods, alternative crops and livestock, and agri-tourism/culinary tourism.

Farm demographics and succession

The aging farm population and lack of young people entering the industry creates succession issues for the future management of agricultural land and concerns about the loss of local knowledge and social networking that has been an important aspect of the rural/farm lifestyle.

Land access, value and utilization

Difficulty accessing Crown land for agricultural use, cost of land ownership in relation to agricultural capability/productivity and under-utilization of privately owned land are barriers to expanding and diversifying our agricultural industry.

5.2.7 Surveys

Three separate surveys (producer, consumer and retailer/supplier) were developed and promoted via the Agricultural Plan website, newsletter articles, open house consultation meetings, direct contact with agricultural associations and using email distribution lists of meeting participants and interested individuals. An on-line survey tool (Survey Monkey) was utilized to collect and analyze responses. Printed copies of the surveys were available from APSC members, the two RDEK offices and the Agricultural Plan website.

The surveys were accessible between February and April 2013. A total of 210 survey responses were received; 50 producers, 156 consumers and 4 retailers/suppliers. Summary reports of the survey responses are available on the Agricultural Plan website.

Producer Survey Highlights

- 60% of respondents are members of an agricultural or commodity association.
- 53% reported that their farm is a secondary or supplemental source of income; only 29% consider farming their primary means of generating income. Farming accounts for less than 25% of gross annual income for 58% of survey respondents.
- 78% of respondents indicated that one or more farm owners/operators work off-farm.
- Only 53% of producers felt that their farm operation is economically viable, while 90% felt their operations were environmentally sustainable.
- Beef cattle and forages (pasture, hay and silage) are the most commonly produced agricultural products.
- Less than 25% of respondents engage in any form of value-added processing.
- Approximately 44% of respondents indicated they intend to expand their farming operation over the next five years; 41% intend to maintain the same size of operation; and nearly 10% intend to transfer ownership to a family member or sell their farms. Land costs and access to Crown land are seen as the major constraints to farm expansion.
- 38% of respondents indicated that the agriculture industry in the East Kootenay region will experience moderate decline over the next five years; 50% predict rapid decline; less than 5% feel any positive growth will be achieved.
- The top three benefits associated with farmland in the East Kootenay were local food production (food security), rural lifestyle and cultural heritage (retaining a connection to the land).
- The top three strengths/advantages of the agricultural industry in the region were reported to be consumer interest in locally grown food, access to land and water, and predictable climate. The top three challenges or issues include government regulation and bureaucracy, the impact of residential/recreational development pressure on land values, and access to markets.
- Most producers do not feel supported by any level of government, although more (26%) felt that local government supports them in comparison to the provincial (2%) or federal (2%) government.

Consumer Survey Highlights

- Almost equal proportions of respondents live in towns/cities (53%) and rural areas (47%). Nearly 80% of them have their own vegetable/produce garden.
- 85% of the consumers responding to the survey indicated a preference for locally grown food. Almost 90% are willing to pay a price premium to support local food production. Seasonal availability and cost were the primary barriers to purchasing local food.
- A high percentage of respondents were familiar with local farmers' markets (89%) and the 100 mile diet (95%).
- 29% of respondents indicated that the agriculture industry in the East Kootenay region will experience moderate decline over the next five years; 12% predict rapid decline; 26% feel positive growth will be achieved. 31% of respondents indicated they did not know or had no opinion.
- The top three benefits consumers associated with farmland in the East Kootenay were local food production (food security), economic diversification and cultural heritage (retaining a connection to the land).
- The top strengths/advantages of the agricultural industry in the region were reported to be consumer interest in locally grown food, the availability of land and favourable climatic conditions. The top three challenges or issues include bureaucratic red tape (regulations), limited growing season and pressure from residential development.

Retailer-Supply Survey Highlights

- Availability (product choices and seasonality) was the greatest barrier to purchasing food inputs locally, followed by reliability/consistency of supply and price.
- Retailers are willing to pay a premium (10 to 20%) for local produce.

6. NEXT STEPS

The Agricultural Plan Background Report is intended to:

- provide an overview of agricultural conditions in the East Kootenay;
- summarize the results of consultation and research conducted for the Agricultural Plan;
- provide preliminary comments on issues and opportunities in the plan area;
- stimulate discussion on issues or opportunities for improving conditions for agriculture as part of the overall planning process; and
- provide future direction to support development of the East Kootenay Agricultural Plan.

The East Kootenay Agricultural Plan will evolve from this research and the subsequent public consultation and review processes that will be undertaken as part of its development.

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Appendix I - ALR Use, Subdivision & Procedure Regulation – Permitted Uses

PART 2 — PERMITTED USES

Activities designated as farm use

2 (1) For the purposes of subsection (2) (b), **"ancillary use"** means any of the following activities carried on at a British Columbia licensed winery or cidery:

(a) processing, storage and retail sales;

(b) tours;

(c) a food and beverage service lounge, if the area does not exceed 125 m^2 indoors and 125 m^2 outdoors,

(2) The following activities are designated as farm use for the purposes of the Act and may be regulated but must not be prohibited by any local government bylaw except a bylaw under section 917 of the *Local Government Act* or, if the activity is undertaken on treaty settlement lands, by a law of the applicable treaty first nation government:

Amended [2004-Jul-22 Order in Council 822/2004] History

(a) farm retail sales if

(i) all of the farm product offered for sale is produced on the farm on which the retail sales are taking place, or

(ii) at least 50% of the retail sales area is limited to the sale of farm products produced on the farm on which the retail sales are taking place and the total area, both indoors and outdoors, used for the retail sales of all products does not exceed 300 m^2;

(b) a British Columbia licensed winery or cidery, and an ancillary use, if the wine or cider produced and offered for sale is made from farm product and

(i) at least 50% of that farm product is grown on the farm on which the winery or cidery is located, or

(ii) the farm that grows the farm products used to produce wine or cider is more than 2 ha in area, and, unless otherwise authorized by the commission, at least 50% of the total farm product for processing is provided under a minimum 3 year contract from a farm in British Columbia;

(c) storage, packing, product preparation or processing of farm products, if at least 50% of the farm product being stored, packed, prepared or processed is produced on the farm or is feed required for farm production purposes on the farm;

(d) land development works including clearing, levelling, draining, berming, irrigating and construction of reservoirs and ancillary works if the works are required for farm use of that farm;

(e) agri-tourism activities, other than accommodation, on land that is classified as a farm under the *Assessment Act*, if the use is temporary and seasonal, and promotes or markets farm products grown, raised or processed on the farm;

(f) timber production, harvesting, silviculture and forest protection;

(g) agroforestry, including botanical forest products production;

(h) horse riding, training and boarding, including a facility for horse riding, training and boarding, if

(i) the stables do not have more than 40 permanent stalls, and

(ii) the facility does not include a racetrack licensed by the British Columbia Racing Commission;

(i) the storage and application of fertilizers, mulches and soil conditioners;

(j) the application of soil amendments collected, stored and handled in compliance with the Agricultural Waste Control Regulation, B.C. Reg. 131/92;

(k) the production, storage and application of compost from agricultural wastes produced on the farm for farm purposes in compliance with the Agricultural Waste Control Regulation, B.C. Reg. 131/92;

(l) the application of compost and biosolids produced and applied in compliance with the Organic Matter Recycling Regulation, B.C. Reg. 18/2002;

(m) the production, storage and application of Class A compost in compliance with the Organic Matter Recycling Regulation, B.C. Reg. 18/2002, if all the compost produced is used on the farm;

(n) soil sampling and testing of soil from the farm;

(o) the construction, maintenance and operation of farm buildings including, but not limited to, any of the following:

(i) a greenhouse;

(ii) a farm building or structure for use in an intensive livestock operation or for mushroom production;

(iii) an aquaculture facility.

(3) Any activity designated as farm use includes the construction, maintenance and operation of a building, structure, driveway, ancillary service or utility necessary for that farm use.

(4) Unless permitted under the *Water Act* or the *Environmental Management Act*, any use specified in subsection (2) includes soil removal or placement of fill necessary for that use as long as it does not

(a) cause danger on or to adjacent land, structures or rights of way, or

(b) foul, obstruct or impede the flow of any waterway.

Amended [2004-Jul-8 *Environmental Management Act*, S.B.C. 2003 c. 53 (B.C. Reg. 317/2004)] History

(5) The removal of soil or placement of fill as part of a use designated in subsection (2) must be considered to be a designated farm use and does not require notification except under section 4.

Permitted uses for land in an agricultural land reserve

3 (1) The following land uses are permitted in an agricultural land reserve unless otherwise prohibited by a local government bylaw or, for lands located in an agricultural land reserve that are treaty settlement lands, by a law of the applicable first nation government:

(a) accommodation for agri-tourism on a farm if

(i) all or part of the parcel on which the accommodation is located is classified as a farm under the *Assessment Act*,

(ii) the accommodation is limited to 10 sleeping units in total of seasonal campsites, seasonal cabins or short term use of bedrooms including bed and breakfast bedrooms under paragraph (d), and

(iii) the total developed area for buildings, landscaping and access for the accommodation is less than 5% of the parcel;

(b) for each parcel,

(i) one secondary suite within a single family dwelling, and

(ii) one manufactured home, up to 9 m in width, for use by a member of the owner's immediate family;

(c) a home occupation use, that is accessory to a dwelling, of not more than 100 m^2 or such other area as specified in a local government bylaw, or treaty first nation government law, applicable to the area in which the parcel is located;

(d) bed and breakfast use of not more than 4 bedrooms for short term tourist accommodation or such other number of bedrooms as specified in a local government bylaw, or treaty first nation government law, applicable to the area in which the parcel is located;

(e) operation of a temporary sawmill if at least 50% of the volume of timber is harvested from the farm or parcel on which the sawmill is located;

(f) biodiversity conservation, passive recreation, heritage, wildlife and scenery viewing purposes, as long as the area occupied by any associated buildings and structures does not exceed 100 m^2 for each parcel;

(g) use of an open land park established by a local government or treaty first nation government for any of the purposes specified in paragraph (f);

Amended [2004-Jul-22 Order in Council 822/2004] History

(h) breeding pets or operating a kennel or boarding facility;

(i) education and research except schools under the *School Act*, respecting any use permitted under the Act and this regulation as long as the area occupied by any buildings or structures necessary for the education or research does not exceed 100 m^2 for each parcel;

(j) production and development of biological products used in integrated pest management programs as long as the area occupied by any buildings or structures necessary for the production or development does not exceed 300 m^2 for each parcel;

(k) aggregate extraction if the total volume of materials removed from the parcel is less than 500 m^3, as long as the cultivatable surface layer of soil is salvaged, stored on the parcel and available to reclaim the disturbed area;

(l) force mains, trunk sewers, gas pipelines and water lines within an existing dedicated right of way;

(m) telecommunications equipment, buildings and installations as long as the area occupied by the equipment, buildings and installations does not exceed 100 m^2 for each parcel;

(n) construction and maintenance, for the purpose of drainage or irrigation or to combat the threat of flooding, of

(i) dikes and related pumphouses, and

(ii) ancillary works including access roads and facilities;

(o) unpaved airstrip or helipad for use of aircraft flying non-scheduled flights;

(p)

the production, storage and application of Class A compost in compliance with the Organic Matter Recycling Regulation, B.C. Reg. 18/2002, if at least 50% of the compost measured by volume is used on the farm.

(2) Nothing in subsection (1) (a) is to be interpreted as permitting the conversion of a building into strata lots by an owner.

(3) If a use is permitted under subsection (1) (k) it is a condition of the use that once the extraction of aggregate is complete, the disturbed area must be rehabilitated in accordance with good agricultural practice.

(4) The following land uses are permitted in an agricultural land reserve:

(a) any

(i) ecological reserve established under the *Ecological Reserve Act* or by the *Protected Areas of British Columbia Act*,

(ii) park established under the *Park Act* or by the *Protected Areas of British Columbia Act*,

(iii) protected area established under the *Environment and Land Use Act*,

(iv) wildlife management area established under the *Wildlife Act*, or

(v) recreation reserve established under the *Land Act*;

(b) dedication or upgrading of an existing road with vehicular access and use declared to be a public highway under section 42 of the *Transportation Act*;

Amended [2004-Dec-31 *Transportation Act*, SBC2004, c. 44, s. 114 (B.C. Reg. 547/2004).]
History

(c) road construction or upgrading within a dedicated right of way that has a constructed road bed for vehicular access and use;

(d) if the widening or works does not result in an overall right of way width of more than 24 m, widening of an existing constructed road right of way for

(i) safety or maintenance purposes, or

(ii) drainage or flood control works;

(d.1) widening an existing constructed road right of way to ease one curve;

Added [2004-Jul-22 Order in Council 822/2004]

(e) establishing as a forest service road

(i) an existing road under the *Forest Act*, or

(ii) a new road in a managed forest;

(f) increasing the right of way width of a forest service road by up to 4 m if the widening does not result in an overall right of way width of more than 24 m;

(g) railway construction, upgrading and operations on an existing railbed within a dedicated right of way, including widening of an existing railway right of way if the widening does not result in an overall right of way width of more than 30 m;

(h) surveying, exploring or prospecting for gravel or minerals if all cuts, trenches and similar alterations are restored to the natural ground level upon completion of the surveying, exploring or prospecting;

(i) surface water collection for farm use or domestic use, water well drillings, connection of water lines, access to water well sites and required rights of way or easements;

(j) soil research or testing as long as the soil removed or fill placed is only in an amount necessary for the research or testing.

(5) Any permitted use specified in subsection (1) or (4) includes the construction, maintenance and operation of buildings, structures, driveways, ancillary services and utilities necessary for that use.

(6) Unless permitted under the *Water Act* or the *Environmental Management Act*, any use specified in subsection (1) or (4) includes soil removal or placement of fill necessary for that use as long as the soil removal or placement of fill does not

(a) cause danger on or to adjacent land, structures or rights of way, or

(b) foul, obstruct or impede the flow of any waterway.

Amended [2004-Jul-8 *Environmental Management Act*, S.B.C. 2003 c. 53 (B.C. Reg. 317/2004)] History

Appendix B

Summary of Issues, Challenges and Opportunities from open house meetings

Agriculture extension, networking and support

Current Situation/Concerns	Possible Solutions/Actions
Agricultural extension is a critical service but current levels of support from the Ministry of Agriculture are insufficient. Trend is to small market garden/hobby farm operations involving younger people with little/no agricultural experience; these people have diverse information needs – production, economics, research, marketing. Lack of clarity regarding government's (Federal/Provincial) objectives and strategies regarding agriculture and food production?	Agriculture benefits the province therefore it is a provincial responsibility to provide and fund adequate resources. Lobby the provincial government to re-instate agricultural extension Alternative: if government does not want to fund extension directly, funding could be made available to existing agricultural groups (WDFI, KLA, etc.) to hire an ag extension person (similar model used by Creston Valley fruit growers) Dedicated regional position e.g. Agriculture Development/Resource Officer (potential role for RDEK with a dedicated staff member?) o Extension o Education courses for farmers on bookkeeping, production economics o economic development o diversification/marketing support Pursue funding opportunities (partially or self-funded position or via sales tax?) Role for COTR in ag extension, research, etc?
Online resources exist but are difficult to locate and therefore underutilized, especially higher level business planning tools.	Identify online resources for producers, evaluate them for quality/relevance and consolidate them in a single location (web portal) where farmers/ranchers can exchange ideas, information, list equipment for sale, etc.
There are poor linkages between agricultural producers and processors.	Develop and maintain a roster of producers and processors. Provide links to local agricultural organizations to facilitate networking.
There is a lack of support and funding for local research and development, innovation and test plots. Business partnerships only focus on high value crops and do not fund research for lower value crops designed for low productivity lands.	• Consult with local organizations such as KLA, WDFI and individual producers to develop and prioritize research needs. • Investigate funding/granting opportunities for establishing research trials
Loss of sense of agricultural community through loss of social hubs (stockyards, etc.) and busy lifestyles. Very few farmer institutes/clubs for social/networking/information exchange opportunities.	Explore the potential for developing an over-arching East Kootenay agricultural association that represents all interests (e.g. EK-AG East Kootenay Agricultural Growers)

Producer/Consumer relationships

Current Situation/Concerns	Possible Solutions/Actions
Consumer /Public awareness and education: • Public does not understand the agriculture industry, resulting in: o lack of knowledge re: where food really comes from; o no appreciation of the relationship between input costs and purchase price; and o lack of support for local agriculture and producers • Benefits of local food and supporting local agriculture	• Identify need for consumer education to local school boards. Utilize children's enthusiasm to teach and motivate parents • Utilize existing consumer/public awareness campaigns such as 10% shift, Agriculture in the Classroom • Consumer awareness/education campaigns focused at specific demographic groups: school children, young families, Albertans • Education programs should be considered as part of larger marketing initiatives.
Agriculture needs public support in order to compete with other interests re: land and resources ($, labour, etc.)	
Loss of direct connections/relationships between producers and consumers resulting from an increasingly urban population and changes to regulations (i.e. meat inspection)	• Facilitate direct consumer/producer relationships o Field trips, community meetings, newspaper facts o Dedicated EK agriculture website to connect producers and consumers (e.g. listings of locally grown commodities) o Farmer's markets provide a valuable venue for establishing relationships. Continue/enhance support for local farmer's markets • Maintain/enhance Local Food Guide • Utilize existing farm groups (WDFI, KLA, etc.), Chamber of Commerce and other community groups (Wildsight, Cranbrook Food Action Coalition, Groundswell,etc.) • Lobby for return of farm-gate beef sales (red meat inspection)
Value/role of agriculture (economic, aesthetic, ecological, etc.) in the region is not well understood by local residents (including agricultural producers) and decision makers.	Initiate ecological goods and services survey/study to understand consumer values (e.g.2007 Abbotsford study)
The agricultural industry is not well integrated with local/regional business and/or community interests	• Encourage/promote producer involvement in local business and community organizations. • Create an agricultural committee at the local Chamber of Commerce and invite producers to attend.
Lack of public support for grazing on Crown range; conflicts with other uses (i.e. wildlife, recreation, etc.)	Public awareness re value and benefits of range management

Economic Viability of Existing Farms and Ranches

<table>
<tr><th>Current Situation/Concerns</th><th>Possible Solutions/Actions</th></tr>
<tr><td>Beef cattle ranching is often considered the “best” use of the land based on limited agricultural capability, but ranches are currently not profitable:
Cost of production is increasing (feed, freight, land, etc.)
Electricity costs for irrigation
Cost of grain for finishing animals locally is prohibitive (Alberta producers receive feedlot grain subsidies; BC producers can’t compete)
Limited market options/opportunities
Loss of infrastructure - stockyards/auctions
Predation (wolves, etc.) and grazing losses (elk)
Trends/projections indicate an increasing demand for food production; EK has ability to produce protein (beef) but farms/ranches are not viable and may not survive long enough to take advantage of growth in demand. Industry needs support/subsidization in the interim.</td><td>Need to fully understand causes and determine if trends can be reversed/stabilized; conduct baseline economic studies for each sector of the agricultural economy in the region
Ag plan recommendations need to address economic realities of agriculture, especially when considering opportunities – people need to earn a reasonable living from their endeavours.
Evaluate opportunities for grass finished beef
Need to research implications/viability of ramping up beef cattle herd in response to projected consumer demand
Pay for health benefits, carbon offsets, etc. to support farmers
Direct provincial subsidies for producers CFIA tags cost $3/tag; AB rebates this to ranchers – could implement in BC
Ag Plan should consider:
Financial impact of BC’s carbon tax on farm/ranch operating costs relative to producers in Alberta;
Impact of reverting back to the GST/PST system;</td></tr>
<tr><td>Scale of production is a key limiting factor to economic viability; most producers must rely on off-farm income to supplement their agricultural operations.</td><td>Support on-farm businesses that allow farmers to supplement farm income using non-arable land, which does not reduce overall agricultural productivity. Blanket regulations are an impediment to economic viability.

Expand permitted non-farm uses of ALR without any need to change zoning.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Investment costs for land, buildings and equipment are a barrier to expansion by existing operators and to entry by new farmers/ranchers

Access to capital – most financial institutions are not interested in providing loans for “conventional” agricultural enterprises</td><td>Research opportunities for niche marketing of smaller scale ventures with lower land/investment requirements and higher commodity prices:
Vegetables, greenhouse products
Alternate crops – herbs, spices, nutraceuticals, etc.
Organic
Investigate Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) initiatives where consumers are linked directly with producers and share risks (i.e. operating costs) and benefits</td></tr>
</table>

• Loss of alternative revenue streams o Christmas tree production - Permitting issues - Sales/marketing challenges o Farm-gate beef sales - Meat inspection regulation changes	• Lobby for changes to legislation to facilitate re-establishment of these opportunities • Explore new opportunities for revenue streams associated with providing ecological goods and services • Transferrable tax credits, carbon credits, recreation credits, conservation easements, etc. •
• Wildlife predation issues, especially wolves, are resulting in significant financial losses for area ranchers. • Crop depredation by elk • Domestic sheep production in key bighorn sheep winter range (i.e. Bul River valley) – elevated risk of disease transmission from domestic to wild animals	• Establish a working group to explore predation issues and develop a framework for implementing solutions o Need to involve ranchers, guide/outfitters, BC Wildlife Federation, Conservation Officers, government and industry biologists, hunters/trappers o Caution is warranted in presenting information to the public and the media to avoid a situation where the issue becomes cattlemen vs. wildlife. • Work with Provincial Agriculture Zone Wildlife Program (PAZWP) and Regional Agriculture Wildlife Committees (RAWC's) to explore options for reducing depredation losses • BC Bighorn Sheep Separation Program
Lobby for Centers of Excellence to showcase successful farming initiatives. Creating a local Beef Cattle Centre of Excellence could facilitate the exchange of ideas and generate interest in local agriculture.	• Ag Plan should focus on what successful producers are doing o innovation o niche markets o value added o unconventional products - nutraceuticals - organics • Helping producers understand production economics • Cooperative sharing of expensive equipment o reduced/shared input costs o requires coordination

Marketing/Branding (Developing a local agri-food economy)

Current Situation/Concerns	Possible Solutions/Actions
EK agriculture brand	
Opportunities exist but need to be aligned with broader community marketing initiatives which involve a number of value added products produced from local raw goods. *Ex. Using locally grown meat to produce bratwurst at a local butcher shop which is prepared by a local restaurant and dressed with locally grown and manufactured mustard and served on local baked goods as part of a Bavarian community theme.* Barriers include cost of marketing/branding, lack of products and local producer's lack of interest or knowledge. Need to ensure consistent quality of products being promoted. Quality has to be real, not just suggested by the branding. Need to create an "intentional" desire to purchase and consume local products	Create regulations and support community initiatives conducive to the development of a local food economy but do not direct the outcome. Developing a local food economy should emerge as a grassroots movement rather than be directed. Role of the RDEK is to foster emerging trends in local eating rather than directing them. Create linkages between other regional and community events and locally raised and prepared products. Investigate successful local marketing initiatives to determine if there are synergisms that would allow co-marketing other local goods. (e.g. Kicking Horse coffee, Fernie Brewing company) Branding efforts should consider focusing on the geographical diversity, natural beauty and wilderness and linking these attributes to our products. *"We're not selling beef; we're selling the East Kootenay. Where does your food come from?"* Communicate success stories of local producers. Marketing and branding should begin small and be aimed at a community level. If acceptance and interest increases then production and marketing can be scaled up to provide goods to larger markets. Capitalize on the expansion of farmer's markets and the interest in locally grown food products
Market Research	
Need market studies to: ● understand the size and scope of local/regional markets ● determine our current and future capacity to provide locally grown food products ● assess the how effectively we are currently serving local markets ● understand the potential economic benefits to both individual producers and the region (e.g. What would be the economic impact in the region if consumers spent $10 more per person per week on locally grown food products?)	• Research the potential for marketing grass fed beef • Focus on Albertans/Calgarians that are using the East Kootenay for recreation/investment • Can market gardening address future agricultural potential in the region? • What niche markets will generate a meaningful level of income?

RDEK Agricultural Plan – Key Issues, Challenges and Opportunities

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Agri-tourism/Culinary tourism</td></tr>
<tr><td>Growth in regional tourism creates potential for agri-tourism and culinary tourism, yet very little is being done to promote this locally so the industry and producers are not capitalizing on opportunities.</td><td>Link with existing tourism network to explore opportunities
Funding programs to educate producers on agri-tourism marketing opportunities
Connect/partner with other industries to capitalize on agri-tourism potential
Incorporate agri-tourism and culinary tourism into existing regional tourism collateral (brochures, etc.)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Local food procurement</td></tr>
<tr><td>There is a lack of locally grown produce and meat available at retail stores, despite the fact there appears to be high demand (especially for beef products)
Seasonality/consistency of supply
Purchase decisions not made locally
Perceptions re higher costs of local food
Regulatory issues re inspection, labeling, etc</td><td>Focus on independent stores prior to investigating options for selling into large chain stores

Explore the potential for a cooperative grocery store featuring local produce (similar to Kootenay Co-op in Nelson)

Connect local retailers with producers so opportunities can be identified

Need to address seasonal production capacity for most commodities vs. importing from other regions/countries

Expand size and scope of farmers markets; is there an opportunity to operate certain markets on a year-round basis</td></tr>
<tr><td>Transportation/logistics cost of delivering locally grown produce to markets can be prohibitive</td><td>Coordination of distribution logistics between producers to improve cost efficiency and profitability</td></tr>
<tr><td>Consumer $ are being spent on processed/manufactured foods being brought in from the US and other countries. How do we build support for local food production and consumption?

Imports have replaced local foods – need strategies/support for marketing and branding initiatives to refocus on local food production and support for local agriculture.</td><td>Create direct market link between producers and consumers
Consumers pay at beginning of season; Community Supported Agriculture concept
Creating a Kootenay brand – “when in the Kootenays eat food from the Kootenays”
Need to address realities of the market, economies of scale e.g. dairy industry/milk production has centralized around fewer, larger operations rather than numerous small operations
Need to develop loyalty to a sense of place amongst producers and consumers.</td></tr>
</table>

RDEK Agricultural Plan – Key Issues, Challenges and Opportunities

Producer Knowledge/Expertise	
Producers are good at "producing" and many lack the time, skills, desire and resources to effectively market their own products	• Provide training to producers re effective marketing strategies • Investigate a co-op system to hire a marketing coordinator • Work with individual producers and groups to provide coordination of an overall marketing/branding program
Consumer Demand/Purchasing Trends	
• Trend towards healthier lifestyle and more interest in eating healthy, organic and GM free foods may create opportunities to expand production and range of crops. • Demand for beef is reportedly decreasing; however demand should increase in the future in response to global population growth	Need to create local demand before ramping up production; producers will respond if there is an economic opportunity
• Most consumers do not make bulk purchases of beef (i.e. sides or quarters) due to volume (lack of storage), costs and lack of knowledge re handling and cooking of certain cuts of meat	• Consumer education re beef cuts, what to do with "spare" parts o Utilize existing educational tools such as Beef Information Centre to promote o Educational partnership between producers and COTR culinary program; linkage to local restaurants and food services o Packaging
• Consumers are not even aware of what agricultural commodities are been produced locally • Secondary homeowners, primarily Albertans who travel to the region on a seasonal basis, account for 39% of residents in Columbia Valley; this group has limited knowledge of local producers	• RDEK should "champion" local producers and local foods and facilitate information sharing • Marketing/communications tools to connect producers and consumers o Dedicated website (www.ekag.ca?) o Local Food Guide – work with other groups to update, maintain, publish and distribute o Social media tools

RDEK Agricultural Plan – Key Issues, Challenges and Opportunities

Farm demographics and succession

Current Situation/Concerns	Possible Solutions/Actions
Aging farm/ranch population and a lack of young people entering the industry	• Succession planning workshops and support for existing producers • Outreach/mentoring programs to attract people to the industry
Agriculture is not emphasized as a viable employment/career opportunity in local post-secondary programs.	• Evaluate potential to offer farm training programs similar to those in other provinces (e.g. Olds College, Sask. Green Certificate Farm Training Program, etc.) • Apprenticeships/educational grants • Cooperative post-secondary programs • Small business hire-a-student programs for ag/food sector • Use school programs to instill an interest in the next generation' model after existing programs for other sectors: o Heavy Duty Rocks o Wild Voices for Kids
	•
Farms/ranches are generally inherited rather than purchased since land and equipment prices make it difficult for new farmers to enter the industry.	• Need to address financing and investment costs; transition/succession loans and lending tools • Investigate leasing or land sharing options to attract new farmers into the industry.
Loss of agriculture knowledge – as the farm/ranch population ages and retires there is limited opportunity to transfer knowledge and practical experience.	Facilitate mentorship opportunities to encourage the transfer of knowledge from "older" to "younger" farm/ranch operators

Government policies and regulations

Current Situation/Concerns	Possible Solutions/Actions
Regulations are too restrictive and are a barrier to growth, investment and diversification: ● ALR ● Zoning re residences and business ventures ● Meat inspection	*"Need to solve this problem first and most other items will take care of themselves* Provincial Strengthing Agriculture program is working to ensure policies do not restrict farming (right to farm)
Meat Inspection	
● Loss of farm-gate sales due to meat inspection regulations o Loss of local/regional abattoir facilities o Increasing trucking costs to ship animals to market in Alberta o Stockyards in Elko and Cranbrook are now closed so there is no local infrastructure to support re-development o No mobile facilities in region – why? ▪ Lack of financial incentives ▪ Docking requirements re water/waste ▪ Risks in getting products to consumer ▪ Economies of scale re waste/offal handling and marketing; larger plants making profits ● lack of access to local inspectors/processors/markets has resulted in more beef cattle being shipped to Alberta	● Provincial inspection staff moving from Department of Health to Agriculture ● Investigate feasibility of establishing permanent docking locations for mobile slaughter facilities throughout the region (e.g. transfer station sites) ● RDEK: o can support local abattoirs via zoning o communicate need for reinstatement of farm gate sales to government
● Carcass/SRM disposal – still not approved for composting; City/RDEK assured KLA they would accept SRMs at regional landfill back in 2004/05 following BSE and as part of abattoir discussions. Still has not happened.	RDEK: approve landfill composting re specified risk materials (SRM)
● Need to ensure local capacity for processing and inspection. ● Need enough local capacity to ensure economic viability ● Need support from local retailers	Local/municipal meat inspection for meat that will be processed and consumed locally.
Can local producers create safe food programs? Is there an advantage over large production units re risk management? E.g. blood testing for BSE	Crisis management strategy (e.g. BSE, E coli, etc.) ● Need to develop mitigation measures to respond to external factors beyond producers control ● Need to consider effects on small scale/low risk production such as local abattoirs; may be an opportunity to promote the value of low risk operations

RDEK Agricultural Plan – Key Issues, Challenges and Opportunities

Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR)	
Land regulations (ALR) are not conducive to succession. i.e. inability of families to subdivide parcels for family members.	Remain flexible to alternative land uses such as on-farm businesses or secondary housing on non-arable land. Avoid strict blanket regulations or allow exceptions where warranted. Regulations should allow more regional autonomy.
Other types of development affect agriculture (e.g. ALR exclusions, subdivisions, etc.) and create potential conflicts	Establish Ag advisory committees to support local decision making Interaction with ALC re ALR
Farming is seen as a "dead end" since land use is controlled externally (i.e. ALC).	
RDEK Zoning and Bylaws	
Present zoning impacts agriculture e.g. Columbia Valley abattoir proposal may require zoning amendment	RDEK should develop/support zoning that encourages agriculture
RDEK is not even following its own Regional Growth Strategy regarding preservation of natural landscapes (zoning, development applications)	
Zoning re backyard animal production	Explore zoning requirements for household production of rabbits, chickens, goats and sheep
Current zoning bylaws restrict housing development, subdivision and development of on-farm businesses	• Review RDEK legislation for housing on farm land • Look at creating opportunities for a second on-farm business.
Farm Assessment and Taxation	
• Farm assessment status can be lost if a producer experiences low gross sales in successive years; results in increased taxes and the need to apply to be re-assessed • Agricultural land automatically reverts to a higher level of taxation when sold; requires re-assessment application	• Lobby BC Assessment Authority to change these regulations • Land in the ALR should remain assessed as agriculture land regardless of gross farm receipts in order to encourage agricultural use • RDEK should become more involved in farm assessment process in order to address local conditions
Assessment and taxation rules need to be revised to encourage agricultural land use	• Use incentives or penalties in the form of a tax structure. • Allow/encourage leasing for farm use if current owner is not farming
Forest Tenure system	
Structure of forest tenure system needs to change – timber licensees can exercise too much control over land use/access/mgmt. In trench area they don't want to harvest the wood due to size and stem counts but they want to be able to count as part of their AAC. Restricts opportunities for grazing enhancements	

Different regions of the province seem to have different range use rules and regulations	
Water Licensing	
Lack of planning and coordination of water licensing at provincial level	
Irrigation and water licenses – improve controls/management of new water licenses and provide guarantees for existing licenses	Explore concept of irrigation districts
Supply Management	
Current supply management quota systems are a barrier to smaller scale poultry and egg production	
Lack of influence on government decision makers	
Producers do not have an effective voice with government due to small number of producers and geographic location relative to general population demographics	Regional districts should collaborate more effectively at the provincial level (through UBCM and other avenues) to influence agricultural policies and programs.
Food Safety and Security	
Concerns re genetically modified (GM) foods; some US counties have passed legislation banning the production and/or distribution of genetically modified organisms (GMO	Ag Plan survey should include questions about support for organic production, GMO issues
● Concerns re the potential health effects of genetically modified organisms (GMO) in existing food products grown worldwide and distributed within the region (i.e. consumers are not aware of how widespread the use of GM substances in food products is in our global food systems). Concerns re the production of GM crops in the region and the implications on: human health related to locally grown produce (i.e. contamination via cross-pollination); our ability to market locally produced foods in an economy with widespread opposition to GMO.	● Mandatory labeling of GM products ● Establish and maintain an annual database of fields where GM crops are being grown Ban the production of GM crops in the regional district?

Diversification and Value-Added

Current Situation/Concerns	Possible Solutions/Actions
Producers need access to a greater variety of crop and livestock choices Research cash crop choices to explore opportunities, especially on irrigated fields – best use may not be hay production.	Opportunity for research and extension activities need support from municipal, provincial and federal governments
Need to stimulate innovation in production practices, commodities, processing and marketing	RDEK can put pressure on the province to provide incentives for innovation
Research & Development There is a lack of funding to support local and regional research into agricultural production and diversification.	Agricultural tax (similar to conservation tax systems) to fund education, research
Hemp, native grasses, quinoa, amaranth Wild foods (mushrooms, wild game, fish) Beekeeping/Apiaries - is there census data re production? Xmas trees- Large chain stores will buy if production levels can be ensured: Requires more people/producers Difficult to acquire access to native stands Requires 5 yr investment before any cash flow MOF won't provide access to permits	• Need incentives and funding to support alternative agriculture • Create local agricultural investment initiatives to fund research and development re diversification • Evaluate consumption of local game vs. beef • Explore potential for non-timber forest products (cones, boughs, moss) RDEK: lobby for multiple use of community forests
• Need to conduct research and development to explore production and economic potential Suppliers and wholesalers require a consistent supply of a consistent quality at a competitive price	Utilize existing ag organizations (KLA, WDFI) to evaluate land use and diversification opportunities and present recommendations to RDEK; possibly link to AAC.
• Grain production and milling • Garlic production • Honey production • Wild foods – mushrooms, huckleberries • Aquaculture (trout farms, etc.) o Isolation could be our advantage – no disease issues o Intensive - difficult to find labour: need to match scale of operations to available labour • Agroforestry/Xmas tree production o Barriers: Difficulty obtaining permits o Too much over-story leads to disease (blight) problems o Need long term leases to ensure viability Agri-tourism?	• R & D to assist farmers with diversification • Producer-driven research for operational trials • Organization of producer associations to support sharing of knowledge Mapping to identify suitability of soils, topography and climate for specific crop types

● Cultured trees for new home construction/landscaping o Can we provide the ideal growing environment? o Requires several years to achieve marketable products o Producers need education and support re: ▪ Available resources ▪ Soil/growing conditions ▪ Production practices ▪ Varietal selection ● Producers need to step out of their comfort zones (traditional role as producer vs. need to market and diversify)	●

RDEK Agricultural Plan – Key Issues, Challenges and Opportunities

Land access and utilization

Current Situation/Concerns	Possible Solutions/Actions
Land values	
Land values for agriculture vs. development/recreation uses; there is large discrepancy between land values and productive capability ● Creates a barrier to farm expansion and new entrants ● Disincentive to continue farming/ranching ● Incentive to pursue subdivision and ALR exclusions	Consider land trust approach as a means to reducing land as a commodity
Private land	
Conservation programs purchase ag land and then adopt anti-agriculture policies that restrict/eliminate access	Could an agency be developed that creates conservation farms to ensure future access for agriculture?
Need initiatives to promote use of under utilized/dormant farm land for producing agriculture commodities	Increase the tax variation between dormant and active agricultural properties as an incentive to allowing leasing or land sharing. Make it easier for small parcels to participate in be included in larger agricultural enterprises. *E.g. If an adjacent active farm accesses a smaller dormant property for agriculture the farm status should extend to the second property.*
Property is being sold to non-farmers for other uses (recreational, rural estates, etc.); no longer used for agriculture	
People interested in establishing small farm operations such as market gardens, etc. have difficulty finding land	Develop and maintain a database of available private land and a system to connect land owners with potential renters
Crown land use	
Access to public ALR lands for agriculture vs. other uses; current focus of Crown ALR land is on timber and wildlife values, not farming	
There are numerous vacant Crown grazing permits due to reduction of beef cattle herd and fewer ranchers	Explore concept of community pastures vs. single lessee on Crown ranges
Current forest management practices and priorities are limiting the potential for herd expansion and grass fed beef	● More thinning/ecosystem restoration ● Range burns are over-regulated ● Relax venting index
Lack of public support for grazing on Crown range; conflicts with other uses (i.e. recreation, etc.)	Promote awareness re value and benefits of range management
Forest ingrowth is limiting water recharge	Study impacts of forest mgmt practices on watershed hydrology and agriculture
Interface fire management	● Involve ranchers and cattle in interface management ● pay for cows as a fire management tool instead of loggers

• lack of public respect for crown grazing leases
• coordination of fencing needs with timber licensees
• forest ingrowth
• ability of producers to improve land
    o potential for purchase
    o need to coordinate with regional/provincial government
	Stumpage rates on Crown ALR could be used to fund/support agricultural initiatives?

Other Themes/Priorities

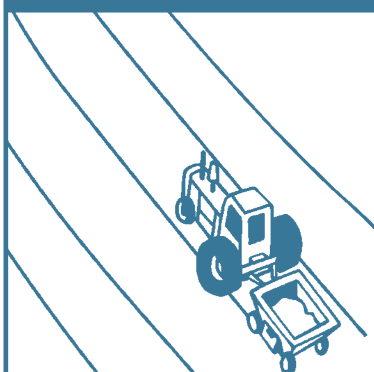
Climate change	Is anyone studying the potential impacts of climate change?

Protection of land and environmental resources	• Ag plan needs to address soil and water issues – conservation, quality, accessibility/priority for agricultural use Education? Enforcement?
"Growing the middle" • "micro-scale" agricultural enterprises such as market gardens, farmer's markets, etc. are becoming a more important part of EK agriculture but the Ag Plan needs to address the largest sector of our agricultural industry (and the largest agricultural land use), which is beef cattle production, in order to help sustain the local and regional economy.	•
Ag plan needs to emphasize unique aspects of EK region: - soil/ag/climatic capability dictates extensive vs. intensive operations that are larger scale; ranchers vs. small intensive operations as in lower mainland - RDEK needs to promote this uniqueness in policy discussions with province	•

Appendix C

Agricultural Advisory Committee Sample Terms of Reference

AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES



A link to your farm community

BRITISH COLUMBIA
Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries

MODEL TERMS OF REFERENCE

Role or Purpose

- The purpose of the Agricultural Advisory Committee is to advise the (regional district / municipality) on agricultural issues within the (region / community) including:

  (Choose and add other items as appropriate)

  - applications initiated under the Agricultural Land Commission Act (ALCA) and Soil Conservation Act (SCA)
  - applications to amend official community plans and bylaws
  - assisting with comprehensive reviews or development of:
    - bylaws;
    - official community plans;
    - agricultural area plans
    - farm 'edge' policies
    - park and recreation plans; and
    - transportation plans;
  - major development proposals with potential impact on agriculture;
  - irrigation, drainage and other water management issues; and
  - effectiveness of noxious insect and weed control regulations and programmes.

- In the review of ALCA and SCA applications and bylaw amendments, the Committee shall comment on the following:

  - the effect of the proposal on the agricultural potential of the subject property;
  - the effect of the proposal on adjacent ALR properties and surrounding agricultural production;
  - the effect of the proposal on water resources and transportation issues;
  - a rating of the priority or impact of the application on the maintenance of the ALR;
  - where appropriate, possible alternatives to the proposal; and
  - the identification of issues relating to the protection of the ALR lands specific to the application, including the use of appropriate buffering techniques aimed at enhancing land use compatibility.

  (Additional suggested roles of the Committee)

- The Agricultural Advisory Committee may also make recommendations on:

  - raising awareness of agriculture;
  - enhancing an understanding of agriculture's role in the local and /or regional economy;
  - addressing competition for the agricultural land base;
  - examining legislation to identify improvements to support agriculture;
  - improving opportunities for joint funding of drainage and irrigation works;
  - reporting on the impacts of park and recreation proposals on agriculture; and
  - identifying and effecting change regarding the impact of transportation and utility corridors on agriculture.

Membership

- The Committee shall consist of (   ) members appointed by the (*regional district / municipality*)* representing a diversity of commodity groups, the processing and distribution sectors and a member of (*council or the regional board*).

  * Committee members may be recommended by a Farmers' Institute or other local agricultural organizations.

- Appointments to the Committee will be for (   ) years.
- The Chair (and Deputy Chair or provision to appoint an Acting Chair in the Chair's absence) shall be elected from the Committee membership at the first meeting of each year. The Chair shall be entitled to vote at all meetings.

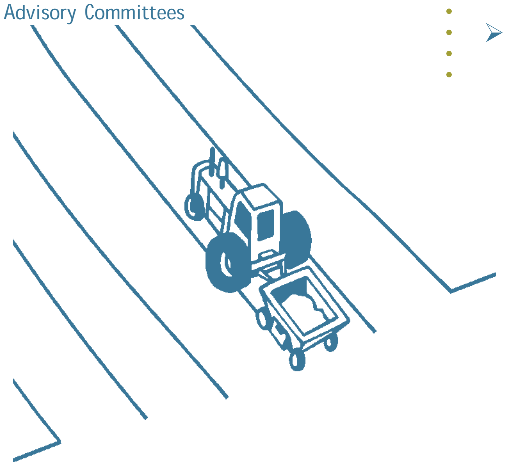
Meeting Procedures

- The Committee shall meet (. . . *frequency*)

  (Optional items may include whether or not meetings are open to the public and where they shall be held.)

- At all meetings (   ) members shall constitute a quorum.
- Executive and secretarial support for the Committee will be provided by ....
- An agenda for the Committee will be prepared by (*specify*) and mailed to Committee members one week in advance of their meeting.
- The Committee will report to (*specify*)
- Committee members having a priority interest in an application or who are personally affected by an application /applicant must step aside from the discussion and subsequent vote on that particular matter.

The Model Terms of Reference have been drawn from the Agricultural Land Commission Document: *Planning for Agriculture - Resource Materials* which developed the Model Terms of Reference from a review of existing Terms of Reference of several operating Agricultural Advisory Committees



Appendix D

Agricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) Sample Terms of Reference

Agricultural Impact Assessment
Terms of Reference (TOR)

1. Introduction

An Agricultural Impact Assessment (herein after referred to as the "Assessment") will be required to determine if a development proposal will adversely affect existing and future agricultural activities onsite and/or in the area surrounding the proposed development or change in land use. An Assessment is not a soils assessment. An Assessment is a comprehensive consideration of the potential for agricultural production in all of its forms; along with a prediction of likely outcomes (both positive and negative) as a result of the proposed development. An Assessment typically will include a soils analysis, however.

Assessments will normally accompany applications under the Agricultural Land Commission Act (i.e. exclusion, subdivision, or non-farm use) and further, applications to amend the City's Official Community Plan or Zoning Bylaw and where the land is presently zoned for agriculture.

Assessments may also be required when seeking development approval for residential uses (e.g. Additional Dwelling for Farm Employee or Temporary Farm Worker Housing) on land zoned for agriculture.

2. Selection of Personnel

Assessments are to be prepared and/or coordinated by one or more "Qualified Professionals (QPs)" as necessary. The number and qualifications of individuals involved will be site/context dependent. For this purpose, a "Qualified Professional" is typically a Professional Agrologist (P.Ag.) registered in British Columbia.

Assessments will be prepared, signed and sealed by the QP(s), unless otherwise approved by the Director of Land Use Management. Where information or expertise are required outside of an individuals professional competencies, additional QP(s) will be required. In these cases, the submission must be signed and sealed by each contributor.

Consistent with the BCIA Code of Ethics, QPs must only provide service in areas of their professional competence, and practice within the limits of their training, ability, and experience.

3. Consultation with City Staff

The information contained within these TOR is intended as a general guide only and is not a comprehensive list of requirements. Each Assessment will be site specific and is likely to be unique in the information required.

The QP is advised to work with staff to review and confirm a TOR on an individual basis. In some instances (i.e. smaller developments) it may only be necessary to assess some of the issues contained herein. In larger or more complex proposals, the applicant may be required to address issues not identified herein.

Every effort will be made to clarify the requirements in the early phases of each development application. It is the responsibility of the applicant to confirm the specific requirements prior to undertaking the Assessment.

4. Key Policy Considerations

In preparing an Assessment, the QP should consider how the proposal meets or does not meet City policy including, but not limited to the Official Community Plan as follows:

- **Protect Agricultural Land.** Retain the agricultural land base by supporting the ALR and by protecting agricultural lands from development, except as otherwise noted in the City of Kelowna Agricultural Plan. Ensure that the primary use of agricultural land is agriculture, regardless of parcel size.
- **ALR Exclusions.** The City of Kelowna will not forward ALR exclusion applications to the ALC except in extraordinary circumstances where such exclusions are otherwise consistent with the goals, objectives and other policies of this OCP. Soil capability alone should not be used as justification for exclusion.
- **Urban Uses.** Direct urban uses to lands within the urban portion of the Permanent Growth Boundary, in the interest of reducing development and speculative pressure on agricultural lands.
- **Agri-tourist Accommodation.** Agri-tourist accommodation will only be approved and operated in a manner that supports agricultural production and which limits the impact on agricultural land, City services and the surrounding community.
- **Non-farm Uses.** Support non-farm use applications on agricultural lands only where approved by the ALC and where the proposed uses:
    - are consistent with the Zoning Bylaw and OCP;
    - provide significant benefits to local agriculture;
    - can be accommodated using existing municipal infrastructure;
    - minimize impacts on productive agricultural lands;
    - will not preclude future use of the lands for agriculture;
    - will not harm adjacent farm operations.
- **Subdivision.** Maximize potential for the use of farmland by not allowing the subdivision of agricultural land into smaller parcels (with the exception of Homesite Severances approved by the ALC) except where significant positive benefits to agriculture can be demonstrated.
- **Housing in Agricultural Areas.** Discourage residential development (both expansions and new developments) in areas isolated within agricultural environments (both ALR and non-ALR).
- **Farm Help Housing.** Accommodation for farm help on the same agricultural parcel will be considered only where:
    - agriculture is the principal use on the parcel, and
    - the applicant demonstrates that the additional housing is necessary to accommodate farm employee(s) whose residence on the farm property is considered critical to the overall operation of the farm. The primary consideration is whether the scale of the farm operation is large enough that permanent help is deemed necessary.

  Temporary farm worker housing (e.g. bunkhouse accommodation on non-permanent foundations) is the preferred solution where the need for farm worker housing is justified.
- **Homeplating.** Locate buildings and structures, including farm help housing and farm retail sales area and structures, on agricultural parcels in close proximity to one another and where appropriate, near the existing road frontage. The goal should be to maximize use of existing infrastructure and reduce impacts on productive agricultural lands.
- **Public Use.** Discourage the use of agricultural lands for public or institutional uses such as schools, parks and churches except as identified in the OCP.
- **Service Corridors.** Minimize the impact of penetration of road and utility corridors through agricultural lands, utilizing only those lands necessary and to the maximum capacity prior to seeking new corridors. Provision should be made for farm traffic to cross major roads.

5. Professional Standards

5.1. One (1) original signed and sealed Assessment must be retained on file (a photocopy signature and seal will not be accepted). The person or corporation who prepared the Assessment must be identified along with the person or corporation who requested and funded the Assessment.

5.2. The Assessment must include the following information:

- All personnel working on the project and their contributions.
- A 1-page biography or C.V. of each professional and technical staff contributing to the results, interpretations and recommendations as an addendum.
- The level of effort in terms of personnel and time spent on site evaluations must be clearly stated including the time of year and length of site evaluations.

5.3. The Assessment must conform to all municipal bylaws and plans, provincial and federal legislation, regulations, standards and best practices.

5.4. Site conditions likely to be absent during the period of evaluation need to be documented and assessed by appropriate alternative methods.

5.5. The Assessment must reflect the site conditions prior to the proposed disturbance and the anticipated site conditions post-development.

5.6. The Assessment must acknowledge off-site developments (both existing and those permitted by current regulations) and the impact these developments may have on the subject property.

5.7. The Assessment should reflect an "Avoid – Mitigate – Compensate" approach to negative impacts. Mitigation should be considered where it has been determined that negative impacts cannot be avoided. Where impacts can neither be avoided or mitigated, QPs should identify appropriate compensation measures to ensure no negative net impacts and ideally a positive net impact.

5.8. The Assessment should account for "cumulative effects". Cumulative effects are changes that are caused by an action in combination with other past, present and future actions. Cumulative effects assessment considers the effects due to other projects and the thresholds where negative effects outweigh positive effects, or create a feedback loop.

5.9. Methods used in the Assessment must be repeatable and based on agency and/or scientific standards appropriate the landscape being assessed. All data and non-standard methods contributing to the results, interpretations and recommendations contained in the Assessment must be included as appendices.

5.10. Any past Assessments for the subject property or a portion thereof must be identified and their relevance/usefulness in completing this Assessment noted.

6. Basic Assessment Requirements

6.1. Briefly outline the history, type and extent of agricultural operations on the subject property (vegetative & crop cover, agricultural buildings, etc.), including recent changes.

6.2. Describe the soil types and agricultural capability of the land using best available secondary data (e.g. Canada Land Inventory, Terrestrial Ecosystem Modeling, etc.) for the subject property.

6.3. Describe adjacent land uses including the location and description of the type and intensity of surrounding agricultural and non-agricultural land uses.

6.4. Describe any non-agricultural land uses and indicate conflicts with existing and potential on-site agriculture. If agriculture is no longer taking place on the subject property and/or area, outline the limiting factor(s) and provide an estimate of barriers, if any, to re-establishing farming on the subject property and/or portion of the subject property under consideration. Current commodity prices and/or input costs should not be used as a barrier to production.

6.5. Describe the proposed use and its compatibility, or incompatibility within an agricultural area and potential to cause secondary impacts. A determination of the types and extents of potential impacts that may result from the proposed development should be identified.

6.6. Where the principal justification for the proposal is based on soil or land limitations, primary investigation of soils is required. In this case, the QP will ensure that the sample locations and number of pits/samples provides for a representative understanding of the subject property or area being considered.

6.7. Identify and describe site and soil improvements completed in the past (e.g. drainage, irrigation, contouring).

6.8. Identify and describe future site and soil improvements that are, or may be possible. Provide an estimate of the costs to undertake the improvements and a cost/benefit analysis of each.

6.9. Examine possible alternative sites for the intended use that would avoid or lessen agricultural impacts (i.e. urban areas/industrial areas). If no alternative sites can be identified, the Assessment should include a determination of mitigative actions that would be required if the proposal were to proceed (i.e. confining the development to areas with the least productive soils and/or terrain).

6.10. Estimate the value in the long term, of the loss of any agricultural production and mitigative measures to offset the loss.

6.11. Assess the flexibility of the site for different types of agricultural operations (alternatives). A feasibility & capacity assessment must consider each available opportunity for the following at a minimum:

- anticipated barriers or constraints;
- the area potentially affected;
- the estimated development (capital) costs; and
- the estimated annual return.

6.12. Assess the degree to which the proposal will sever or fragment agricultural land and describe/quantify the impact.

6.13. Consider the impact of the proposed use on drainage (on site and neighbouring properties).

6.14. Consider the impact of traffic (vehicular, pedestrian and cycling) of the proposed use to determine if proposed traffic volumes will impede farmers moving vehicles between fields and if recreational traffic will be kept out of agricultural land.

6.15. Examine and report on what it would take to develop the site for:

- Crops and by-products that would be new to the site and area;
- Non-soil based agricultural options (i.e. vegetable or nursery greenhouse, etc.); and
- Accessory farm uses (i.e. B&B, agri-tourism, on-farm processing, on-farm retail).

6.16. Examine and report on alternative financial models for farming and their appropriateness to this site such as:

- Leasing to other farmers;
- Joint ownership by two or more farmers;
- Community supported agriculture;
- Leased garden plots for urban residents; and
- Other.

6.17. Farm Home Plate - Assessments triggered by site development for residential uses on A1 zoned land should include a recommendation for the suitable location for the farm home plate. The farm home plate must be sited so as not to have a negative effect on the existing agricultural operation or potential for future agricultural operations.

6.18. Agricultural Worker Dwellings - Assessments triggered by site development of Agricultural Worker Dwellings (including temporary) should indicate the "need" for the additional dwelling onsite and why farm help cannot be accommodated offsite, along with the net benefit to agriculture.

7. Data Deliverables

7.1. Site description including legal description (i.e. lot & plan number, etc.), OCP designation, Zoning category, and Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) status should be illustrated on the location map or stated at the outset of the assessment. For large parcels, UTM coordinates of the site location where specific works will occur may be required.

7.2. Location Map at an appropriate scale (1:20,000) indicating the regional setting. This information should be overlaid on the most current cadastral map.

7.3. Site Map(s) at an appropriate scale (minimum 1:200 and maximum 1:5,000) indicating the layout of the project components and activities. This information should be overlaid on the most current cadastral map outlining surrounding property boundaries. Map legends should show clear descriptions of all symbols used as per provincial standards.

7.4. Cross sections in sufficient number to demonstrate terrain conditions prior to the proposed site disturbance and intended conditions post-development. A topographic survey must show natural slope contours (at appropriate contour levels e.g. 1 or 5 m) and the post-development contours.

7.5. Site Plans/sketches/colour photographs indicating the project location, site features and activities should be indicated with relation to easily identifiable landmarks such as those found on accompanying maps.

7.6. Appropriate referencing of all image and data sources, with a clear indication of the date of when the information was obtained.

7.7. Final Submission – shall include the following at a minimum:

- 1 colour hard copies.
- 1 digital copy in .pdf format and unprotected.
- Maps should be printed on 8-1/2 x 11 or 11 x 17" paper as appropriate and to scale.
- Where available, digital copies of supporting information should be provided in a format compatible with the ESRI platform (shapefiles) in NAD83 UTM Zone 11.

8. Incomplete or Deficient Assessments

If it is determined by the Director, Land Use Management, that an Assessment is incomplete or deficient, the applicant will be notified in writing the nature of deficiencies.

9. Third Party Review

The City of Kelowna reserves the right to seek a third party review of the Assessment submitted. If necessary, the third party reviewer will be a mutually acceptable QP and the cost of the review share equally among the applicant and municipality.