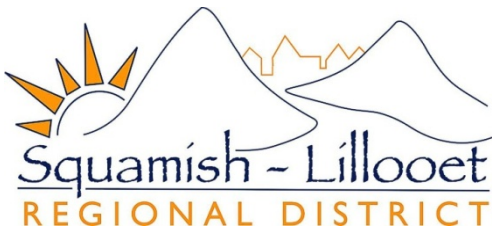


Pemberton Valley Agricultural Area Plan



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Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) is pleased to participate in the production of this Agricultural Area Plan. AAFC is committed to working with our industry partners and the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC to increase public awareness of the importance of the agriculture and agri-food industry to Canada. Policies and recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District and not necessarily AAFC's.

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Executive Summary

The Pemberton Valley Agricultural Area Plan was initiated by the SLRD in 2008 with the support of the Investment Agriculture Foundation. It is intended to be a Board policy, and to work in conjunction with existing policy documents such as the Official Community Plan, the Regional Growth Strategy, and others to inform future decisions related to agriculture, and provide guidance in decision making and priority setting related to agriculture in the valley.

This report represents the culmination of three phases of work and an extensive stakeholder engagement process including numerous open houses, public meetings, and committee review.

The plan covers all lands within the Agricultural Land Reserve within the SLRD Electoral Area C in the Pemberton Valley, and does not include those lands within the Village of Pemberton or on First Nations reserves.

The policies are informed by several guiding principles and a vision that includes an efficient, agriculture sector, with protected farmland, and a high level of recognition and respect for the value of agriculture to the broader community. The vision further includes a cooperative working environment between and among farms, engaged local markets, local secondary processing, and a balance of both new and continuing operations.

The plan describes 7 Goals, and then lists several objectives and action steps that stem from each goal. The goals are as follows:

1. Maintain the integrity of the ALR.
2. Develop mechanisms to maintain the agricultural land base for working agriculture.
3. Coordinate with other users to ensure that the natural advantages of the Pemberton Valley are protected.
4. Diversify agriculture and comply with Seed Potato Regulations.
5. Improve the economic viability of farming.
6. Increase community awareness of, and support for, agriculture.
7. Attract new farmers and engage new workers.

The last section of the plan looks at implementation, and breaks it down into three key elements: the creation of an Implementation Body, enlisting sufficient human resources, and securing sufficient financial resources. The recommended composition of the implementation body is described, and several suggestions to aid in the securing of financial and human resources are provided.

Lastly, the plan outlines that the next step, successful implementation, requires that opportunities for collaboration, coordination and cooperation be sought across governmental jurisdictions, and among agencies and community organizations.

Introduction

The Pemberton Valley agricultural land base consists of about 18,600 acres broken out between private lands (70%), Crown lands (18%) and First Nations lands (12%). The total area of farms consists of about 11,000 acres, almost all of it privately owned. In 2005, a total of about 72 farming units were operating in the Pemberton Valley

Pemberton Valley agriculture is an established community with an international reputation for high quality pest-free seed potato production, largely due to its pristine growing conditions and unique geographic isolation from other growing areas.

The Pemberton Valley Agricultural Area Plan (PVAAP) was initiated by the SLRD in September 2008, and jointly funded by the SLRD and Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC with the purpose of elaborating on the agricultural policies of the Area C Official Community Plan, and providing additional policy direction and recommending specific actions to achieve the stated objectives.

While this plan is intended to be a stand-alone document, it is also intended to be adopted as a policy of the SLRD Board of Directors. As a Board Policy it will inform future decisions related to agriculture, and provide guidance in decision making and priority setting not only for the SLRD but for other organizations in the Pemberton Valley who are interested in undertaking actions to support and sustain agriculture.

Policy Context

Regional Growth Strategy (RGS)

The RGS endorses *Smart Growth* principles, which includes ensuring the integrity of a productive agricultural and forestry land base. In addition, under the Goal to achieve a sustainable economy, one of the strategic directions is to undertake agriculture plans for Lillooet and the Pemberton Valley to provide a basis for new agricultural investment and protection of the ALR.

Area C Official Community Plan (OCP)

The Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (SLRD) has adopted an Official Community Plan (OCP) for Area C that identifies several objectives for agriculture:

- To preserve the agricultural land base in the plan area.
- To encourage diversification and economic sustainability of the farming community.
- To minimize the impacts from non-agricultural development occurring at the edge of farming areas and within agricultural lands.
- To accommodate housing that meets the needs of farmers and minimizes impacts on farm land.
- To balance the interests of agriculture and protection of the environment.
- To contribute to local and regional food security.

In addition to the objectives outlines above, the OCP sets out 40 policies related to agriculture. The intention of the PVAAP is to further elaborate on the policies of the OCP, to strengthen the policy position, and to begin to set out a strategy to operationalize the plan.

Area C Zoning Bylaw No. 765, 2002

Under the Area C Zoning Bylaw, all lands within the ALR have been zoned Agriculture (AGR). Within the AGR there is a sub-zone for the lands in the immediate vicinity of Pemberton, called the Pemberton Fringe sub-zone. In this sub-zone, additional permitted uses include a garden nursery, and on parcels 2ha or greater, a second single family dwelling (subject to ALC regulations), a bed and breakfast, and a “horse-riding academy, boarding stable and indoor riding arena”.

Residential density in the AGR is regulated according to parcel size (larger parcels are permitted an additional dwelling, subject to ALC regulations. In addition, there is a maximum floor area for dwellings in the AGR zone and in the Pemberton Fringe sub-zone there is a maximum floor area for horse riding academies, boarding stables and indoor riding arenas. The minimum parcel size in the AGR is 2ha, subject to approval from the ALC.

Energy Resilience Task Force Report

The Task Force Report states that in the context of increasing energy costs, it will be “important to bolster the foundations of the food system in order to improve food security. In particular, the foundations of production, processing, packaging and delivery will need to be made more resilient”.

The report contains 21 policies related to agriculture and food systems, many of which are echoed in this plan. Of particular note is the first recommendation, to champion Agricultural Land Trusts to buy land for community food growing and protect in perpetuity as an investment in long-term food security.

Integrated Sustainability Plan (ISP)

An ISP is defined as a “long-term planning, developed in consultation with community members, to help the community realize sustainability objectives it has for the environmental, cultural, social and economic dimensions of its identity.” It is anticipated that as the ISP process moves forward, objectives and action steps from various plans will be inventoried and worked into an Action Plan for Sustainability. While the AAP will stand alone as a plan, it is desirable to coordinate objectives and actions from across our policy documents, in an effort to realize opportunities for collaboration and cooperation in achieving common goals.

The Process

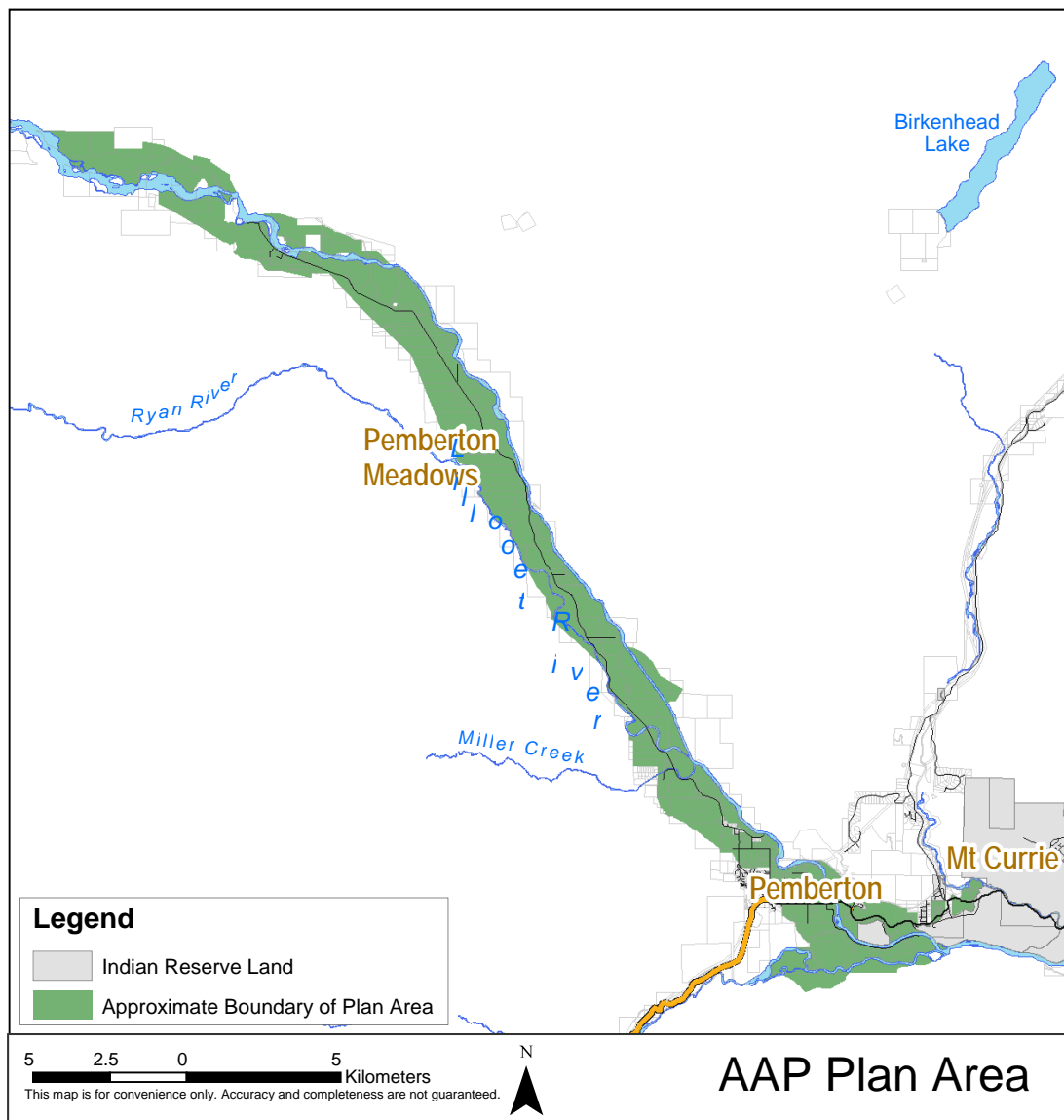
The Pemberton Valley Agricultural Area Plan (PVAAP) represents a further development of policies in support of agriculture. The specific tasks of the PVAAP process were to:

1. Complete an inventory of lands and crops;
2. Communicate with farmers to discover strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats affecting the local industry;
3. Conduct a preliminary market opportunities analysis for agricultural crops; and
4. Draft policies to address issues and capitalize on opportunities.

In order to accomplish those tasks, work was undertaken in three separate phases: 1) the Situation Analysis; 2) identification of Issues and Options; and 3) drafting of the Plan. This report draws on the material gathered under the process, and puts forward policies regarding agricultural issues and opportunities. In the Appendices of this plan one will find the Land Use Inventory, the SWOT Analysis, the Preliminary Market Opportunities Analysis, and also a selection of mapping of the valley.

Plan Area

The Plan Area is all ALR lands in Area C between the north end of Pemberton Meadows, and the west end of Lillooet Lake, as shown on Map 1, below. The Plan area does not include lands within the Village of Pemberton or lands in Indian Reserves.



Map 1: Approximate plan area of the Pemberton Valley Agriculture Area Plan

Vision

The agricultural land base in the Pemberton Valley is protected, the agricultural sector operates efficiently as a result of appropriate investments in infrastructure, and conditions for working agriculture are maintained and enhanced. All stakeholders are actively working together to protect the Pemberton Valley's unique natural agronomic advantages, and both residents and visitors are aware of the uniqueness of the valley and the importance of agriculture to the valley. The value and contribution of agriculture is widely recognized and respected as a strength of the local community.

The seed potato and other agricultural sectors have developed cooperative relationships and protocols that facilitate inter-farm management, cropping diversity, and agricultural opportunity and are able to work together to expand agricultural opportunities and maintain necessary seed production conditions.

Local markets are a key to the success of Pemberton Valley agriculture, increasing the economic viability of farming operations and services. Agriculture is supported by expanded local storage, handling, distribution, processing and marketing infrastructure.

Opportunities have been created to make land available for working agriculture and sufficient new participants able and willing to respond to new and continuing agricultural opportunities have been attracted to the industry.

Guiding Principles

Through the planning process for the agricultural area plan; a series of principles to guide the plan have been collaboratively developed and articulated as follows:

- 1. The existing ALR is to be respected and protected. Exclusions and non-farm uses are generally not supported.*
- 2. Sustainable agriculture is the highest and best use of the ALR and policy will support productive and profitable agricultural use of the ALR.*
- 3. The unique agronomic advantages of the Pemberton Valley are to be protected.*
- 4. Impacts on conditions necessary for seed potato production are to be addressed in promoting the Pemberton Valley.*
- 5. Promoting local markets for local agricultural goods and services is key to a sustainable local agricultural economy.*
- 6. Awareness of the contribution of agriculture by the public, politicians and students must be promoted to develop respect for farming and farmland and to maintain conditions for continued viability.*
- 7. Recruiting new and younger farmers is key to perpetuating the agricultural sector.*

Goals, Objectives, and Action Steps

Based on the Guiding Principles listed above, the plan is structured around 7 Goals, from which flow a number of objectives and actions.

GOAL 1: Maintain the integrity of the ALR

Objective 1.1 – Retain the agricultural production capacity of the ALR

When farmland properties are purchased for rural-residential purposes there is a risk that non-agricultural structures will be situated without due regard to agricultural land use practices or the integrity of the land for agriculture. The resultant impacts on soil and possible fragmentation of fields, etc. are what many would consider ‘avoidable impacts’ on the agricultural production capacity of the land. Development on agricultural lands should be carefully planned to ensure that there are minimal impacts on current and future agricultural activities of the land.

Action Steps

The Regional Board will:

- 1.1.1 Consider amending the zoning bylaw as per the Minister’s bylaw standard regarding size and siting of non-agricultural development on agricultural land.
- 1.1.2 Consider creating a Development Permit Area for the protection of farming that would apply to lands adjacent to or nearby farmland, and include requirements for screening, buffering, landscaping, fencing, and siting of buildings or other structures, in order to provide for the buffering or separation of development from farming on nearby lands.
- 1.1.3 Support the permanence of the ALR boundary by generally not supporting applications for subdivision or exclusion.
- 1.1.4 Discourage the purchase of farmland for non-agricultural uses by generally not supporting ALR non-farm use applications.
- 1.1.5 Request the province to consider establishing tax disincentives for creating large non-agricultural building footprints on agricultural land.

Objective 1.2 – Maintain the ALR in good agronomic condition

There is concern that if both farm and non-farm land in the valley is not properly managed to control the spread of noxious weeds and other pests that this can create negative consequences for farmland. Particularly, this can lead to the establishment of invasive weeds, higher pest populations, and ultimately lead to increased costs of pest control for working agricultural land.

All land owners are encouraged to maintain their properties so as to prevent the establishment of noxious weeds and pests in the plan area.

Action Steps

The Regional Board will:

- 1.2.1 Encourage corridor land owners, such as the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, the PVDD, and CN Rail, to develop a weed management plan that sets out an appropriate mowing schedule to reduce the spread of seeds.
- 1.2.2 Encourage the placement of signage at trailheads and parking areas to educate recreational users in the risks associated with invasive species, and the best way to ensure they do their part to not spread invasive species. Any signage within the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure right of way requires their approval.
- 1.2.3 Investigate ways to support local invasive species councils with invasive weed mapping projects.
- 1.2.4 Work with local organizations to educate land owners about noxious weeds and other invasives and pests, and what the landowner's responsibilities are in relation to these issues.
- 1.2.5 Support initiatives for land owners, particularly in the ALR, to maintain their farmland in pest-controlled condition.
- 1.2.6 Collaborate with the agricultural sector to develop and implement a code of good agricultural practice.

Objective 1.3 – Educate and increase awareness of farm practices for non-farming property purchasers

It may sometimes be the case that farmland is marketed to property purchasers more interested in the recreational and/or rural residential aspect of living in the Pemberton Valley rather than making a living from farming. To help offset non-agricultural pressure it may be helpful to inform purchasers buying farmland primarily for non-agricultural purposes of the scope and nature of agricultural activities so that the non-farm residents do not carry unrealistic expectations with respect to the 'quiet enjoyment' of agricultural land.

Action Steps

To assist new property owners to adjust to conditions in a farming area, the Regional District will explore opportunities to:

- 1.3.1 Work with realtors and agricultural community to prepare a 'Farmland Information Brochure' that can be given to prospective purchasers to advise them of typical farm activities, and land owner responsibilities with respect to pests, noxious weed control, Seed Potato Control Area Regulations, etc.
- 1.3.2 Work with agriculture organizations to identify options for new non-farming agricultural land owners to learn how to make their land available for farming by others, particularly for seed potato rotations.

GOAL 2: Develop mechanisms to maintain the agricultural land base for working agriculture

Objective 2.1 - Keep the farmland base in working agriculture

It is sometimes suggested that removing the real and perceived financial advantages associated with owning farmland for non-agricultural purposes can be an effective way to ensure that farmland values are determined by working agriculture competing for the land base. In addition,

if non-farm property owners are encouraged to make their land available for farming activities, it can help keep the land available for working agriculture.

Action Steps

The SLRD will:

- 2.1.1 Consider requesting the province to implement a taxation classification for rural residential ALR land that does not have Farm Class that assesses and taxes residential land and improvements in the ALR at a residential rate and eliminates any tax subsidy for non-farm uses of ALR land.
- 2.1.2 Support the establishment of a database to link owners of ALR land with potential renters wishing to farm.
- 2.1.3 Seek to provide attractive zoning opportunities for non-farm development in non-ALR areas.
- 2.1.4 Consider requiring that agricultural impact assessments are done as part of the development approval process, to identify the impacts of developments on agricultural lands and operations prior to development, including on non-agricultural farmland uses.
- 2.1.5 Engage with the Province to encourage them to require that provincially reviewable projects such as independent power projects 1) identify potential agricultural impacts at the project design stage and 2) to create a “no net loss to agriculture” policy for these developments (eg. mitigation be undertaken to protect and/or compensate agriculture where impacts are identified).
- 2.1.6 Investigate the establishment of an Agricultural Land Trust Fund that could be used to purchase and/or lease agricultural land.
- 2.1.7 Encourage property owners, perhaps through tax incentives, to amalgamate small parcels of land in the ALR into larger holdings.
- 2.1.8 Discourage non-farm use on agricultural land, however, where non-farm use is being considered, pursue an approach (e.g. development agreement or amenity zoning) that will create tangible improvements in the conditions for the agricultural sector and will ensure a “net benefit to agriculture”.

Objective 2.2 – Support the agricultural capability of the ALR with adequate infrastructure

While there have been significant improvements made over the years to flood control, drainage and irrigation infrastructure in the valley, there remain opportunities to improve the systems to create more favourable conditions for agricultural productivity and efficiency. Some of the issues that should be investigated include aging infrastructure, condition of existing infrastructure, cross jurisdictional co-operation, and possible changes in capacity that will be created by climate change.

Action Steps

The SLRD will explore opportunities to address agricultural infrastructure needs throughout the valley by:

- 2.2.1 Supporting the undertaking of a needs assessment to look at drainage and flood control measures using an agricultural standard, and looking across jurisdictions to find solutions that will support and enhance agricultural lands throughout the valley.
- 2.2.2 Encouraging collaboration among jurisdictions in the valley, including First Nations, to establish coordinated economic development objectives that will address infrastructure issues such as flood control, that impact agricultural lands.
- 2.2.3 Supporting the undertaking of a needs assessment to look at water demand and availability.
- 2.2.4 Seeking opportunities to improve irrigation infrastructure for agriculture, particularly in areas that do not currently have access to irrigation.
- 2.2.5 Seeking to ensure that water supply infrastructure provides water that is of a quality that is acceptable to farmers for irrigation.

Objective 2.3 – Ensure agriculture is considered in Crown land use decisions

It is important that proposed non-agricultural uses of Crown ALR lands consider the impacts on existing and potential agricultural activities. While it is recognized that conservation and recreation uses are permitted uses within the ALR, such uses require thorough review to ensure that impacts to existing and potential agricultural use are fairly considered.

Action Steps

The Regional Board will endeavour to ensure that processes are in place to consider impacts of non-agricultural uses of Crown ALR lands on existing and proposed agricultural activities by:

- 2.3.1 Requesting agencies with control of Crown ALR to offer Crown ALR grazing leases or other agricultural tenures to Pemberton Valley farmers on lands appropriate for grazing/suitable for farming.
- 2.3.2 Requesting agencies with control of Crown ALR to perform agricultural impact assessments on all proposals to use Crown ALR for non-agricultural purposes.
- 2.3.3 Ensuring that if there are to be any adverse impacts on agriculture as a result of non-agricultural uses of Crown ALR lands, that such impacts are mitigated or off-set in favour of agriculture. This could involve both improved infrastructure and/or acquisition of land for agriculture.

Objective 2.4 – Minimize impacts at the agriculture/non-agriculture interface

Edge planning along borders of agricultural areas is an effective method for managing the transition from agricultural to non-agricultural areas and of minimizing impacts related to the agricultural/urban interface. Any encroachment of rural-residential into a farming area is likely to increase the zone of interface between agricultural and non-agricultural property owners.

Action Steps

Potential conflicts at the rural-urban interface may be avoided by using appropriate land use planning mechanisms. The SLRD will consider the following initiatives to increase awareness and minimize conflict at the agriculture/non-agriculture edge:

- 2.4.1 Where there is opportunity in conjunction with a Regional District approval, request that sale of property on the non-farm side of the ALR boundary have a notice registered on title informing purchasers of adjacent farming activities and associated sights, smells and sounds.
- 2.4.2 Request real estate vendors to inform prospective purchasers of ALR parcels that they will be residing in an agricultural area, where agriculture is practiced, and sights, sounds, and smells of agriculture are to be expected.
- 2.4.3 Explore the possibility of developing a farm bylaw that could regulate activities on both sides of the agricultural/urban interface, with the goal of minimizing and/or mitigating incompatible uses and activities.
- 2.4.4 Implement buffer guidelines recommended by the ALC.
- 2.4.5 Create signage to inform non-farming neighbours about where the farming areas are and farm practices are occurring.
- 2.4.6 Seek opportunities to create an agricultural festival called “Pemberton Farm Week” and use the festival to inform the greater community of farm / non-farm interface issues, and also to provide education and awareness opportunities, to market local farm products, to host specific events that will highlight local agricultural capacity. This could be organized around an existing event such as the Slow Food Cycle.
- 2.4.7 Work with appropriate Ministries to resolve potential safety issues with slow moving farm vehicles, farm animals, and logging trucks that are sharing Pemberton Meadows Road.

GOAL 3: Coordinate with other users to ensure that the natural advantages of the Pemberton Valley are protected

The natural agronomic attributes of the Pemberton Valley are internationally recognized. These unique conditions bestow advantages ranging from “northern vigour” to the absence of invasive species and diseases affecting other growing areas of the continent. Current practices and precautions are inadequate to prevent the inadvertent introduction of invasive pests and disease. As well, precautions are insufficient to prevent the establishment of noxious weeds in the ALR.

The introduction of invasive pests and disease would threaten the agricultural viability of the area and livelihood of farmers. The establishment of these pests would eliminate an agronomic advantage of the Pemberton Valley.

Action Steps

The Regional District will encourage the development of a coordinated approach to pest management with agricultural interest groups to ensure that mutually beneficial pest control protocols are implemented. All users of agricultural land in the Pemberton Valley should be engaged in a pro-active manner, and opportunities should be explored to:

- 3.1.1 Increase public awareness of pest risks through signage in recreational areas, brochures handed out to new property purchasers, supporting initiatives of the Sea to Sky Invasive Species Council (SSISC).

- 3.1.2 Work with commercial users, such as recreation/tourist operations, landscapers, nurseries, and gardeners to provide education on the risks of invasive species, teach pest identification skills, and encourage vigilance in the approach to invasives.
- 3.1.3 Support the development of ways to assist recreation/tourism operators and recreationists to take precautionary measures with respect to invasive species, such as a 'wash station' in town to allow users to hose down their vehicles/trailers and thereby reduce seed spread.
- 3.1.4 Require recreation/tourism operations/initiatives to develop precautionary practices to protect against invasive pests/ disease/soil erosion as part of a master recreation/tourism plan.
- 3.1.5 Capitalize on the existing knowledge of farmers to develop a Code of Good Farm Practices that can be used as a resource by farmland owners in the Pemberton Valley.

GOAL 4: Diversify agriculture and comply with Seed Potato Control Regulation

Pemberton was the first commercial seed potato area in the world to grow virus-free seed potatoes. Since 1967, the sector has carried out strict production practices, monitoring, inspection and testing, to ensure that Pemberton Valley potatoes remain free of all known viruses, bacterial ring rot and spindle tuber viroid.

Seed potato production is governed by the *Seed Potato Act* and the Seed Potato Control Area Regulation. Maintaining conditions for seed potato production is vital to the current agricultural viability of the Pemberton Valley and it is important to be cautious when exploring other agricultural opportunities, that such actions will not jeopardize the seed potato sector. The major concerns of the seed potato sector are that 1) precautions are taken to ensure that quarantine pests do not enter the valley, 2) that pest control in organic farming supports the Seed Potato Control Regulation; and 3) that potato growers access to rental lands for crop rotation is not restricted by property owners because of the potato growers use of pesticide.

Action Steps

The SLRD supports the principles of the Act, and Regulation, and can seek opportunities to strengthen local bylaws and policies to align with the intention of the Act and Regulations.

It is important to recognize that management of invasive species is more easily managed by prevention rather than treatment, and that certain invasive species are very difficult to manage by any means other than spraying insecticides. In light of this, prevention should be emphasized.

The SLRD will explore opportunities to work with the agriculture sector and provincial agencies to develop a pro-active approach to:

- 4.1.1 Educate owners and users of Pemberton Valley ALR lands about requirements of the Seed Potato Control Area regulation.
- 4.1.2 Explore opportunities in the implementing bylaws to support and enhance Seed Potato Control Area regulations.

- 4.1.3 Explore opportunities in the implementing bylaws to support and enhance the regulations of the *Noxious Weeds Act*.
- 4.1.4 Communicate implications of quarantine pest introduction on valley agriculture.
- 4.1.5 Establish and implement a Valley-wide precautionary approach to pests.
- 4.1.6 Re-evaluate requirements of the *Seed Potato Act* and Regulations from a pest control perspective.
- 4.1.7 Support and encourage research on methods of effective pest control in farming areas adjacent to potato farms, public lands, roads, and rights-of-way.
- 4.1.8 Encourage research projects that will identify pest control practices that might better meet the diversifying needs of the area.

GOAL 5: Improve the economic viability of farming

Objective 5.1 – Support agricultural use of land base

When there is high demand for agricultural land for rural residential purposes it can result in higher prices being paid than would typically be affordable for farmers, based on the economic return from conventional agriculture. High land prices and low economic returns can keep farmers out of the market, and can also constrain farmers from expanding their holdings at affordable cost.

Agricultural operators can consider higher land costs only if margins from agriculture increase. Such increases in margins could be from reduced input costs, increased yields or through the production of higher valued crops. In addition, increased diversification on the farm will ensure that economic dips create less risk to the overall farm balance sheet.

Action Steps

The SLRD will seek to support farmers in their competition for farmland by exploring opportunities to work with other organizations and agencies to:

- 5.1.1 Make improvements to increase the agricultural productivity of the land base.
- 5.1.2 Work with BCAGRI to access extension services as they are available.
- 5.1.3 Provide farmers with information to take advantage of local food trends.
- 5.1.4 Assist farmers in orienting themselves to local food markets.
- 5.1.5 Host local courses and training in new agricultural opportunities.
- 5.1.6 Investigate options for bulk purchasing of inputs.

Objective 5.2 – Pursue value-added opportunities

There is opportunity for local farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs to process commodities, create specialty items, and add value to products grown in the valley. The increasing inflow of recreationists and tourists promises a steady flow of potential customers seeking to purchase differentiated products that can be manufactured in the Pemberton Valley. The Village of Pemberton is well positioned to support opportunities to create business in the community.

Action Steps

The SLRD endorses the following key actions that the agriculture sector and/or local government can pursue to provide the greatest potential for supporting local valued opportunities:

- 5.2.1 Encourage and support innovative value-added opportunities for farmers.
- 5.2.2 Seek investment, grant, seed capital, and local support to explore options for meat processing (e.g. mobile abattoir) and potato processing (e.g., vodka distillery).
- 5.2.3 Access small scale food processing technical programs (SSFPA) to “get it right” from the outset.
- 5.2.4 Conduct annual technical workshops for farmers and those interested in farming, perhaps in conjunction with a Pemberton Valley agricultural fair (e.g. Pemberton Farm Week). Invite speakers to discuss topics of interest to area farmers and the community.
- 5.2.5 Encourage the creation of an agri-industrial area within the existing urban footprint to centralize agricultural processing.
- 5.2.6 Include agriculture development in the local Economic Development Strategy.
- 5.2.7 Seek out other BC communities with strong agri-tourism markets and value added sectors and build relationships to share ideas and experiences.

Objective 5.3 – Pursue local and regional markets

The SLRD encourages local farmers to consider cooperating to capture the local food market to their collective advantage. This could focus on working cooperatively to eliminate redundant marketing costs; developing differentiated food products, promote processing of commodities grown in the valley, and providing high standards of food safety.

Action Steps

The SLRD will explore opportunities to work collaboratively with other agencies and organizations to support Pemberton Valley agriculture in local and regional markets by:

- 5.3.1 Examining the feasibility of a local products marketing cooperative, including bulk purchasing of inputs.
- 5.3.2 Providing a permanent venue for country sales, such as a farmer’s market.
- 5.3.3 Investigating coordinated regional facilities for the handling, cooling and transport of valley agricultural products.
- 5.3.4 Collaborating with PFI and other local organizations to further develop and add value to the Pemberton brand and labeling initiative.
- 5.3.5 Encourage local chefs and restaurants to develop menus that enable them to purchase the ‘whole animal’ and not leave farmers with odd cuts that are difficult to market.
- 5.3.6 Work with local chefs and restaurants to further develop and market the Pemberton brand.

Objective 5.4 – Develop comprehensive approach to agri-tourism

The Agricultural Land Reserve Use, Subdivision and Procedure Regulation defines agritourism as a “tourist activity, service or facility accessory to land that is classified as farm under the *Assessment Act*.” Such uses are permitted only subject to meeting specific criteria set out in the Regulation, and if the conditions are not satisfied, approval of the Agricultural Land Commission is required in order for the use to proceed.

Recreation and tourist use of the Pemberton Valley is expected to increase in the future. Agritourism represents an opportunity to increase farm operator revenues from farming by marketing to recreationists and tourists and attracting tourists to the Pemberton Valley for agritourism events. Agritourism also has the potential to be used effectively as a way of interacting with the consumer public and raising the awareness of agriculture.

In order to plan effectively for the nurturing and growth of benefits associated with agritourism, the concerns of all local agricultural interests should be addressed in a systematic manner. Agritourism needs to be coordinated within the farming community to provide broader benefits. Better communication and a policy of inclusion will help to overcome the challenges of tourism in farming areas. Agritourism is perceived as a tool for promoting other objectives of the plan such as increased local marketing and sales, improved farm viability, and increased agricultural diversity.

Action Steps

The SLRD supports Pemberton agricultural interests working together to provide a comprehensive approach to agri-tourism that spreads benefits and manages impacts effectively and fairly for the benefit of all, by seeking to:

- 5.4.1 Communicate with other local governments to share ideas and learn from their experiences about how to successfully promote and manage agritourism.
- 5.4.2 Promote local food production in agritourism initiatives.
- 5.4.3 Promote broad based agritourism opportunities.
- 5.4.4 Encourage the appropriate agencies to consider improvement to transportation corridors to handle agritourism traffic.
- 5.4.5 Systematically coordinate upcoming agritourism activities with neighbours.
- 5.4.6 Work with appropriate agencies to develop and implement more flexible regulations to better accommodate small scale agritourism.
- 5.4.7 Link farmers and agri-tourism events to Whistler tourism.
- 5.4.8 Promote diversity of agritourism products.
- 5.4.9 Continue to promote Slow Food Cycle Tours.
- 5.4.10 Create local food events.
- 5.4.11 Research new and evolving approaches in other jurisdictions.

GOAL 6: Increase community awareness of and support for agriculture

Objective 6.1 – Increase agricultural awareness among youth

Action Steps

- 6.1.1 Encourage schools to incorporate agricultural education materials in curriculum.
- 6.1.2 Encourage schools to develop school gardens.
- 6.1.3 Encourage school ‘farm days’ that could include tours of local operations.
- 6.1.4 Encourage schools to develop cafeteria menus that include local food where possible.
- 6.1.5 Gather and prepare materials such as brochures, reports, studies, and fact-sheets related to agriculture and make them available for reference, perhaps through an agriculture page on the SLRD website.

Objective 6.2 – Increase access to agricultural information and awareness of events and issues

Action Steps

- 6.2.1 Encourage the creation of a regular “Agriculture Events’ page in local papers.
- 6.2.2 Consider developing an Agriculture web page on the SLRD website that would provide news and events information related to agriculture and provide links to other agriculture information and resources.
- 6.2.3 Develop interpretive signage for recreational trails to inform users of agricultural issues, and encourage responsible trail use.
- 6.2.4 Encourage positive relationships and collaboration between trail groups and farmers to work together to protect and preserve farmland and recreational land, and to protect private property rights while also preserving public access to public lands.
- 6.2.5 Work with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure to explore the possibility of posting signage to advise of slow moving vehicles and farm equipment in appropriate areas.

Objective 6.3 – Develop tools to help promote agriculture

Action Steps

- 6.3.1 Work with Village of Pemberton and Chamber of Commerce to explore the possibility of making gateway signage that will identify Pemberton as a farming community (i.e. “Welcome to Pemberton – This is a Farming Community”). Such signage could also warn visitors about slow moving vehicles and animals in farm areas.
- 6.3.2 Consider collaborating with the Chamber of Commerce and other interested organizations to undertake a study (and create a report for the public) to show the economic contribution of agriculture to the community and the net tax benefit of agricultural land.
- 6.3.3 Promote farm tours, public workshops and information meetings.
- 6.3.4 Hold an annual Pemberton Valley agricultural fair that includes a market, exhibits, farm tours, lectures, workshops, dining events, networking opportunities, etc.
- 6.3.5 Cross-market local products.
- 6.3.6 Encourage/promote purchasing of local foods at public institutions.

- 6.3.7 Engage regional chefs, restaurants to promote valley agriculture.
- 6.3.8 Engage local food security groups to promote local food.
- 6.3.9 Engage Health Authority to promote valley agriculture.

GOAL 7: Attract new farmers and engage new workers

While traditionally, replacement of retiring farmers with new farmers has been achieved predominantly within the ranks of farming families, this cannot necessarily be relied upon to meet the numbers required to have a critical mass of farmers. While there is a concern that a poorly targeted farmer recruitment program could contribute to tougher short term economic conditions for farmers locally, the need for replacement is critical in order to preserve the critical mass of farm operators. Farmer recruitment/succession should be promoted through initiatives to support farming families to continue family farms, and also initiatives that support new farmer entrepreneurship and increase access to farmland. These measures would contribute to needed diversification as well as bring new entrants into the sector.

Action Steps

The SLRD supports in principle the following key actions intended to provide the greatest potential recruiting new farmers into Pemberton Valley agriculture:

- 7.1.1 Create incentives for non-agricultural property owners to make their land available for entry level lease farming. Incentives could include leasing arrangements, defining financial arrangements, and increased cost of keeping land out of production.
- 7.1.2 Facilitate access to farmland held by non-agricultural property owners by supporting the creation of a database that would link owners with leasees.
- 7.1.3 Coordinate mentorship and apprenticeship opportunities for young would-be farmers with established operators.
- 7.1.4 Pursue agricultural business and practices training workshops for aspiring farmers.
- 7.1.5 Pursue financing options to assist low asset new farmers to enter the sector.
- 7.1.6 Support the building of residences for farm families on family farms to allow and support family farming, as per the requirements of the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, *Agricultural Land Reserve Use Subdivision and Procedure Regulation* and the Minister's bylaw standard regarding residential uses in the ALR.
- 7.1.7 Recognize and value the farming knowledge of current farm families as an asset to successful farm operations.
- 7.1.8 Support the creation of an Agricultural Land Trust that could offer leases to new farmers.

Implementation

Implementation of the agricultural plan will require effective response in three essential areas:

- Implementation body
- Financial resources
- Human resources

Agricultural Plan Implementation Body (AIB)

The implementation of the PVAAP is envisioned as a shared responsibility. The SLRD has a primary role stemming from its authority in terms of regulating land use through the Area C Official Community Plan and bylaws, however many actions require mobilization of both human and financial resources that go beyond the capabilities of the SLRD.

The implementation model for the agricultural plan should ensure that all stakeholders are included and have meaningful access to the implementation processes. Currently, the Pemberton Farmers Institute (PFI) and the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) are active in agricultural affairs in the area.

If formed, an Agricultural Plan Implementation Body would have several functions, including but not limited to:

- Prioritizing implementation actions and identifying lead implementation roles and support roles.
- Developing an annual work plan for implementation.
- Assisting with coordination of stakeholders.
- Identifying sources of funding and assisting with funding applications.
- Providing a forum for all stakeholders to share their concerns and to identify the appropriate organization(s) to address concerns.
- Being an advocate for agriculture in the Pemberton Valley.
- Monitoring the progress of implementation of the Agricultural Area Plan and preparing an Annual Report.
- Reviewing and revising the Implementation Plan every 5 years.

To initiate implementation of the plan, it is recommended that a PVAAP Implementation Steering Committee be formed with membership from the SLRD, Village of Pemberton, Pemberton Farmer's Institute, Lil'wat First Nation, Pemberton Chamber of Commerce, Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, the Pemberton Seed Potato Grower's Association, and the Pemberton Valley Dyking District. This committee would be charged with developing terms of reference for the implementation body, determining the best format (e.g., a Council, a Coordinating Committee, etc.), membership and mandate (functions).

To assist the Implementation Body, funding could be pursued for a Coordinator. The Coordinator would have appropriate training, qualifications and experience in agriculture and be a capable facilitator and communicator. The individual would need to work with the various interests involved and assist in pursuing financial assistance to implement recommendations. The Coordinator would also develop an annual work plan identifying priorities, responsible organizations and funding requirements.

Financial Resources

There are several options that can be pursued to generate the financial resources to carry out key high priority items of the plan.

Squamish-Lillooet Regional District

Consideration can be given to establishing a joint service between the local jurisdictions (SLRD Area C, Village of Pemberton, and Resort Municipality of Whistler) to raise funds to support and promote agriculture. This could be similar to the one used to fund the Sea-to-Sky Recreation Trails Network and may be suitable for raising resources in a stable, coordinated manner.

Alternatively, the *Local Government Act* contains provisions for the Lieutenant Governor in Council to incorporate an area as an improvement district, approved by the Board of the Regional District. A Pemberton Valley agricultural improvement district could be organized and empowered to levy and collect taxes for the purpose of promoting agriculture,¹ similar to provisions that have enabled incorporation of mountain resort improvement districts in BC.

Grant Funding

The Investment Agriculture Foundation (IAF) manages a federal-provincial pool of capital that is well positioned to assist in funding project priorities identified in this plan. It is anticipated that this program will be readily accessible to the AIB through a variety of leveraged funding opportunities supported by the SLRD, BCAGRI and other provincial agencies.

Various federal, provincial and private organizations are available to provide expertise and advice to the Pemberton Valley in lieu of capital contributions. School, social and health programs are also paying more attention to food and nutrition issues and are partnering with agricultural interests.

Pemberton Farmers Institute

The PFI is anticipated to become a more active organization specifically tasked with initiating some of the farm level aspects of the plan. This would require the development of a strategy of how to increase its support, membership base, and financial capacity.

First Nations

There may be opportunities to pursue, with the Lil'wat Nation, federal agricultural initiatives targeting First Nations. Interest in exploring these opportunities has been indicated and specific well-coordinated proposals may have increased potential for success in the future.

Engaging Local Businesses

It is anticipated that local business groups may be engaged (recreation and tour operators, restaurants, chefs) to assist in promoting the agricultural message. This may best be accomplished through interactions with the Chamber of Commerce.

¹ See the *Local Government Act*, Part 23. http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/freeside/--%20L%20--/Local%20Government%20Act%20%20RSBC%201996%20%20c.%20323/00_Act/96323_25.xml#section729 and the Mountain Resort Association Act http://qp.gov.bc.ca/35th4th/3rd_read/gov10-3.htm

Human Resources

Human resources need to be enlisted to undertake agricultural area plan tasks. It is envisioned that the expertise of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Agricultural Land Commission will be available on an as needed basis independently of the PVAAP, for specific requests and information needs.

Agricultural Plan Coordinator

As discussed above, it is recommended that funding for a Coordinator be pursued. At this point it is premature to recommend whether this person would be a SLRD staff person or working directly for the Agricultural Plan implementation body. This is a decision that should be reviewed by the Implementation Steering Committee, discussed above. The Coordinator would assist in ensuring that the plan is advanced with informed knowledge of the agricultural considerations and communicated to the public and politicians at large. Terms of Reference for the Coordinator position would be determined by the Implementation Body.

Pemberton Farmers Institute (PFI)

It is anticipated that a strong case can be made to the Investment Agriculture Foundation (IAF) to support a pilot project in local governance capacity building directly aimed at managing the impacts on agriculture in the Pemberton Valley. The first order of business for the PFI would be to apply for a 3-year AIF grant to expand its agricultural organizational governance capacity.

It is expected that this would include employment of a person in an administrative capacity. This person would be qualified to develop the role of the organization, complete applications for special projects, target high priority items identified in the agricultural plan, convey PFI concerns and positions to the Implementing Committee, and leverage financing received from partners.

In addition to a minimal staff to coordinate the initiatives proposed in this plan, the local agricultural sector should also seek to engage young leaders, particularly by capitalizing on the experience and knowledge of established and successful farmers. Retired farmers can seek opportunities to mentor new farmers. The PFI can also seek opportunities to collaborate with First Nations on agricultural initiatives, and coordinate efforts at obtaining support from other levels of government.

Next Steps

This Agriculture Area Plan was developed as a living plan that is a reflection of the plan process and ideally provides representation of the vision and goals of the community with respect to agriculture.

The next step in this path is to look at how to take action, and how to move ahead with the implementation tasks described above. Other future tasks could include the development of specific indicators and a monitoring plan, to help gauge the success of the plan over time, and to help coordinate the actions taken in this plan with actions and initiatives throughout the valley and across organizations.

Success will be achieved by seeking opportunities for collaboration, coordination and cooperation across the governmental jurisdictions, and among other agencies and community organizations.

Glossary of Terms

Agritourism

Agritourism is defined by the Agricultural Land Reserve Use, Subdivision and Procedure Regulation (BC Reg. 171/2002) as a “tourist activity, service or facility [that is] accessory to land that is classified as a farm under the Assessment Act.”

Food Security

According to the website of the World Health Organization, food security is premised on three concepts: food availability, food access and food use. In 1996 the World Food Summit defined food security as existing “when all people, at all times, have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life.” (<http://www.who.int/trade/glossary/story028/en/>)

Sustainable Agriculture

Broadly speaking, sustainable agriculture is agricultural practices that meet the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future. The key pillars of sustainability, in relation to agriculture are the ongoing production and availability of food, protection of the environment, and economic viability of both the farm and community.

Working Agriculture

Working agriculture is economically viable agriculture that can support an operator from the proceeds of farming.

List of Acronyms used in this Plan

AAC – Agricultural Advisory Committee
AAFC – Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
AAP – Agricultural Area Plan
ACAAF – Advancing Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food
AIB – Agricultural Implementation Body
ALC – Agricultural Land Commission
ALR – Agricultural Land Reserve
BCAGRI – Ministry of Agriculture and Lands
ERTF – Energy Resilience Task Force
IAF – Investment Agriculture Foundation
ISP – Integrated Sustainability Plan
MoTI – Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure
OCP – Official Community Plan
PFI – Pemberton Farmer’s Institute
PVDD – Pemberton Valley Dyking District
SLRD – Squamish-Lillooet Regional District
SWOT – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
VoP – Village of Pemberton