



## DISTRICT OF METCHOSIN

### AGENDA

#### AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING

October 16, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.  
Council Chambers  
Metchosin Municipal Hall

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1. **Agenda, Additions, Approval**
2. **Presentations**
3. **Public Participation**
4. **Adoption of Minutes**
  - a) Agricultural Advisory Select Committee, May 15, 2024 ..... 1
5. **Receipt of Minutes**
  - a) Finance Committee Meeting, June 3, 2024 .....5
  - b) Special Finance Committee Meeting, July 9, 2024 .....9
  - c) Special Finance Committee Meeting, September 9, 2024 ..... 15
6. **Business Arising from the Minutes**
  - a) Livestock/Wildlife Conflict
7. **Reports**
  - a) Councillor Liaison Update (Verbal)
8. **Correspondence**
9. **Other Business**
  - a) Update on Cougars (Matt/John)
  - b) Update on Geese (Robin)
  - c) Metchosin Agricultural Area Plan..... 17
    - Final Plan
      - Metchosin Agricultural Area Plan 2024
      - Background Report
      - Engagement Summary
    - Next Steps
  - d) Metchosin Grown Society and Funding Opportunities
  - e) Metchosin Grown Brand Building
10. **Adjournment and Next Meeting Date**



District of Metchosin

Minutes

**Agriculture Advisory Select Committee Meeting  
May 15, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.**

Council Chambers  
Metchosin Municipal Hall

**Present:** Shelly Donaldson, Robin Tunnicliffe (Chair), Brent Donaldson, Peter Chettleburgh, Matt Ashton, Andrew Penn, Sasha Kubicek, Alex Fletcher, Candace Lecompte (Recorder)

The meeting was called to order at 7:12 p.m.

**1. Agenda, Additions and Approval**

**Moved and Seconded** by Brent and Candace that the Committee approve the agenda as presented.

**Carried**

Robin suggested Other Business – next steps for the Agricultural Plan.  
Metchosin Producers' Association added to next steps by Sasha.

**2. Presentations**

None.

**3. Adoption of Minutes**

Alex requested updates to the March 25, 2024 minutes:

- 10 b) include other communities (bordering communities) may have resources to contribute
- 10 e) terms of reference need to be updated, not the bylaw
- 10 i) include in the AG Plan about having – not an action item but just included in the AG Plan.

**Moved and Seconded** by Alex and Sasha that the Committee approve the minutes as amended of the AASC meeting held on March 25, 2024

**Carried**

**4. Business Arising from the Minutes**

**a) CRD Canada Goose Working Group**

Robin reported that there was a lively meeting at PAAC with Glen Harris and CRD CEO, Ted Robbins. Geese are currently nesting so less active/visible. PACC remains skeptical of the program but in good faith they are working towards reduction.

**b) Livestock/Wildlife conflict**

Metchosin livestock loss in 2023 – 61 lives, 2024 – 30 lives lost: Highlands lost five sheep in recent cougar kills.

- Wild Wise presented points of coexistence of humans and wildlife at a Council meeting suggesting options for farmers to exist managing their farms with electric fencing, securing livestock in barns overnight, guardian dogs, etc. These tactics have been used and are not all attainable or feasible.
- Matt will create a document of points from a livestock farmers perspective, so the public/council understand the complexities of managing livestock herds/flocks. The cause and effect of increased populations of wildlife attacks on livestock farming is a complex issue. The Conservation Office has its own constraints of timely assessments and attendants working within the provincial regulations.
  - Urban encroachment, decimation of wildlife habitat and increased human visits to regional parks are added pressures on wildlife to seek food and shelter. Livestock is an easy target to hunt.
  - Reducing flocks will inhibit food security, local economy at risk, employment reduced.
- Council meeting scheduled with AASC/MEASC/COs and P. Pauwels. AASC members are encouraged to attend Council meetings sharing firsthand experience and concerns of the effects of wildlife on agriculture activities. Explore solutions, i.e., COs response times.

c) Night market

No appetite right now. Colwood is supportive of having a night market in Royal Bay area – key focus is food and food byproducts as opposed to “crafty” merchandise. Pop up market is worth exploring for farmers with abundant seasonal inventory. Andrew is starting a weekly event at Bilston Farm that would support local food sales.

**5. New Business**

None.

**6. Reports**

None.

**7. Correspondence**

**a) Peninsula Area Agriculture Commission (PAAC), 2023 Annual Report**

Robin noted that the Saanich Council allowed Galey Farm to store vehicles including RV storage in their barns which replaces farming activity as does dumping. These activities interfere with the intended purpose of ALR land. PAAC will host a workshop in November on this issue and recommend best practices about bylaws i.e., Surrey implemented a fill bylaw that requires the landowner to post where the fill is coming/going. PAAC is also lobbying for more housing on farmland – up to three residences being pushed through in Central Saanich.

**8. Other Business**

**a) Agri-tourism**

Andrew Penn mentioned that he has been working with Rebecca at Keating Farm. They are running into issues working their way through the regularity documents with ALC and Saanich.

They want to have an association of farms that wants to get their needs met with concepts with argi tourism. Need satellite farms providing produce and food. The provincial government is trying to create iconic trails so that people can learn about ways through the province. One came through this territory – but they are a bit short on content. There are not enough things to do/see for tourism yet. Bilston and Keating would like to tie into local producers to have farm to table with all local producers. Tent pads etc., could be coordinated through the main farm.

**b) Agricultural Plan (AG) Plan - Next Steps**

Alex mentioned that we missed some grants. Robin said that the AG plan wasn't adopted so we don't have anything to stand behind. Alex said we can still apply for a grant – we are finalizing our AG plan but can still apply. The deadline for one of the grants was today. But there is another grant FCC grant but they like tangible objects. There were no previously funded projects paying someone to do coordination type of work. There is another \$10,000 grant that you can apply for any time of year, and it is more general. We could put money into branding “Metchosin grown” type of stuff or the coordinator position. Alex is curious about the kitchen space and how it could possibly benefit farmers. Shelley said it's a food safe kitchen but not a commercial size kitchen. The Fire Chief is doing all the bookings right now. Robin would like to join the South Island Farmers Institute to help apply for grants. Another option would be to create another entity for Metchosin food and farms. “Metchosin Grown Society” Andrew would like to help with an initial contribution to help get the ball rolling. Would like to present the AG plan to the Metchosin Farmers institute.

**c) Metchosin Producers Association (MPA)**

Shelly would like to see the community tent engaged again as a means to encourage small seasonal farmers participation. Peter would like to join with another entity or form an entity to be able to access grants, i.e., Farmers Institute. Robin would like to proceed with forming another entity to access grants for the AG plan.

**d) Farmers Group or Organization**

Shelly reported that the Community Garden group needs to register as a society; a partnership with farmers, future farmers and gardeners in one society would be an asset. Shelly explained the steps for registry – choose a name, minimum five executives, bank account, insurance, bylaws/constitution, lease agreement (district) vision/mission, branding. Several grants are available that would support the community garden infrastructure, workshops, agricultural promotional activities, branding etc.

**9. Adjournment and Next Meeting Date**

**Moved and Seconded** by Alex and Sasha that the Committee adjourn the meeting at 9:30 p.m.

**Carried**

The next meeting will be at the call of the Chair.



District of Metchosin

Minutes

**Finance Committee Meeting  
June 3, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.**

Metchosin Municipal Hall  
Council Chambers

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**PLEASE NOTE:** The meeting has been recorded.

**Present:** Councillor Donaldson in the Chair, Mayor Little, Councillors Epp, Gray and Shukin. Also present was Stephanie Dunlop, Fire Chief and Tina Hansen, Deputy Corporate Officer.

**Regrets:** Bob Payette, Chief Administrative Officer

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

The Chair provided a territorial acknowledgement.

**1. Agenda, Additions and Approval**

**Moved and Seconded** by Mayor Little and Councillor Gray that the Committee approve the agenda as presented.

**Carried**

**2. Public Participation**

Jim MacPherson, resident, addressed the Committee on his 2024 property tax notice and changes in property taxes since they became residents of Metchosin in 1999. Mr. MacPherson read his submitted letter which noted concerns regarding increases to municipal spending and property taxes in particular over the past two years.

**3. Adoption of Minutes**

**Moved and Seconded** by Councillors Shukin and Epp that the Committee adopt the minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held, May 6, 2024.

**Carried**

**Moved and Seconded** by Councillors Epp and Shukin that the Committee adopt the minutes of the Special Finance Committee Meeting held, May 27, 2024.

**Carried**

**4. Receipt of Minutes**

**Moved and Seconded** by Mayor Little and Councillor Shukin that the Committee receive the minutes of the Agricultural Advisory Select Committee Meeting, held May 15, 2024.

**Carried**

**5. Business Arising**

**a) 2024 Grant-in-Aid Program Applications (see separate package)**

**Moved and Seconded** by Councillors Shukin and Gray that the Committee recommend Council approve the 2024 Grant-in-Aid funding requests as follows:

	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Amount Requested</b>	<b>Recommended Grant Amount</b>
1	Access West Shore Society	\$250	\$250
2	Crisis Intervention and Public Information Society of Greater Victoria dba. NEED2: Suicide Prevention, Education & Support	\$1,500	\$1,300
3	Juan De Fuca Lacrosse Association	\$1,000	\$900
4	Juan De Fuca Performing Arts Centre Society	\$300	\$300
5	Mental Health Society of Greater Victoria	\$2,000	--
6	Prince Edward (Pacific No 91) Branch - The Royal Canadian Legion	\$350	\$350
7	ReImagine West Shore Community Society	\$320	\$320
8	South Vancouver Island Farmers Institute	\$500	\$500
9	Wild Wise	\$1,500	\$1,080
	Total Requests	\$7,720	\$5,000
	<b>Total Allocated Budgeted Amount</b>	<b>\$5,000</b>	

**Carried**

**6. Reports for Information**

**a) Councillor’s Update**

Councillor Donaldson provided an overview of her Councillor’s Update including:

- Greater Victoria Public Library Board (GVPL) Island Links Annual General Meeting on Pender Island
- Councillor Donaldson is now the Chair of the (GVPL) Island Links
- Roadside Stand articles in the Metchosin MUSE as successful home-based businesses
- West Shore Parks & Recreation Update
- Metchosin Invasive Species Cooperative (MISC) “working to restore local ecosystems” and “Make a Difference Week”

**7. Adjournment**

**Moved and Seconded** by Councillors Gray and Shukin that the Committee adjourn the meeting at 7:22 p.m.

**Carried**

**Certified Correct**

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**Chair**

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**Corporate Officer**



District of Metchosin

Minutes

**Special Finance Committee Meeting  
Joint Meeting with the Agricultural Advisory Select Committee and the  
Environmental Advisory Select Committee**

**July 9, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.**

Metchosin Municipal Hall  
Council Chambers

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**PLEASE NOTE:** The meeting has been recorded.

**Present:** Councillor Donaldson in the Chair, Mayor Little, Councillors Epp, Gray and Shukin. Also present was Bob Payette, Chief Administrative Officer, and Jennifer Miller, Legislative Services Assistant

Agricultural Advisory Select Committee (AASC): Alex Fletcher, Brent Donaldson, Robin Tunncliffe, Andrew Penn, Matt Ashton, Sasha Kubicek

Environmental Advisory Select Committee (MEASC): Andy MacKinnon, Bill Cave, Ric Perron, Anna Hall

**Guest:** Sergeant Scott Norris, BC Conservation Officer Services

**Regrets:** Guest: Retired Conservation Officer Peter Pauwels  
AASC: Candace Lecompte, Peter Chettleburgh  
MEASC: Garry Fletcher, Merrilee Hoen, Erin Van de Water

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Councillor Shukin provided a Territorial Acknowledgement.

**1. Agenda, Additions and Approval**

**Moved and Seconded** by Mayor Little and Councillor Shukin that the Committee approve the agenda as amended with the addition of the following correspondence related to cougar predation:

- Bev Bacon
- Frank Mitchell
- Nitya Harris, Coexisting with Carnivores Alliance
- Garry Fletcher

**Carried**

Peter Pauwels, Retired Conservation Officer, was not able to attend this evening. Attendance by Sergeant Scott Norris, BC Conservation Officer Services, was delayed. The presentation portion of the meeting was postponed until the arrival of Sergeant Norris.

**2. Public Participation**

None.

Adopted: \*

### 3. Reports

#### a) Cougar Predation in Metchosin

At the April 22, 2024 Council meeting, Council considered the Finance Committee recommendation of April 8, 2024 in relation to cougar predation on sheep in Metchosin and made the following resolution:

**That** Council direct staff to expeditiously schedule a meeting of the Finance Committee and the Agricultural Advisory Select Committee (AASC);

**And That** staff invite Conservation Officers from the BC Conservation Officer Service (COS) and retired conservation officer Peter Pauwels to the joint meeting of the Finance Committee and AASC;

**And Further That** Council invite the Metchosin Environmental Advisory Select Committee (MEASC) to the meeting.

**Moved and Seconded** by Councillor Epp and Mayor Little that the Committee receive the reports regarding Cougar Predation in Metchosin.

**Carried**

### 4. Correspondence

The following correspondence was received for information:

#### a) Correspondence Related to Cougar Predation

- Robin Tunnicliffe, Chair, Agricultural Advisory Select Committee, April 5, 2024
- Shannon Hamilton, April 9, 2024
- Nicole Shukin, April 10, 2024
- Bev Bacon, April 14, 2024
- Bev Bacon, July 6, 2024
- Frank Mitchell, July 6, 2024
- Nitya Harris, Coexisting with Carnivores Alliance, July 8, 2024
- Garry Fletcher, July 9, 2024

#### b) PowerPoint Presentations to Council

- Mollie Cameron, WildWise, April 22, 2024, "Coexisting with Cougars"
- Matt Ashton, Parry Bay Sheep Farm, June 17, 2024 "Wild Predators & Sustainable Livestock Farming"

**Moved and Seconded** by Councillors Shukin and Gray that the Committee receive the correspondence and PowerPoint presentations to Council related to Cougar Predation in Metchosin.

**Carried**

Sergeant Norris arrived at 7:06 p.m.

### 5. Presentations

#### a) Sergeant Scott Norris, BC Conservation Officer Services

Sergeant Scott Norris, BC Conservation Officer Services provided an overview of the Conservation Officer Service (COS) organization including the following:

Adopted: \*

- Policy and Guidelines information
  - Human-Cougar Response Guidelines
  - Preventing and Responding to Conflicts with Large Carnivores
- Cougar predation on livestock
- Mitigation strategies to protect livestock
- Responses and Best Management Practices for Sheep, Ministry of Agriculture
- Calls for service
- Cyclical nature of predation
- Compensation program overseen by the Ministry of Agriculture and the BC Cattlemen's Association designed to incentive producers to take steps to mitigate livestock
- Balance between protecting wildlife and the interest of producers
- Conservation Officers look to policies, experiences, and best management practices to make decisions based on individual assessments
- Following Best Management Practices ensures there are minimal losses, that livestock is being protected, and that predators can coexist on the landscape

Committee discussion with Sergeant Norris:

- Best Management Practices
- Practices to reduce the impact of predation such as such as fencing, dogs, donkeys, llamas, and farm buildings
- Balance between addressing the interests of producers and protecting livestock
- Habituation and food conditioning often looked at with bears
- Natural prey
- Kill patterns and mother cougars teaching kittens easy prey predatory behaviours
- Conservation Office resource levels on the South Island
- Potential to enter into joint funding agreements with other municipalities or First Nations for more resources, Sergeant Norris can obtain and forward the information from headquarters to the District
- Contracted houndsman and licensed hunters
- Tranquilizing and relocating cougars preying on livestock is rare and not effective in terms of science
- Concerns regarding response times and an increase in predators
- Prey/predator populations
- Euthanizing
- Risk management and public safety
- Responsibilities, other duties, and areas of coverage of the BC Conservation Officer Services

Committee discussion with Sergeant Norris continued:

- Changes to wildlife habitat, attractants, and human wildlife conflict
- Culling is not a common procedure and would need to be done in conjunction with the Wildlife Branch and would require a permit
- There is no model for municipalities to trap cougars, trapping would require a permit from the Wildlife Branch
- Cougars are not included in the list of furbearing animals outlined in BC's trapping legislation
- Home range sizes and defence
- Statistics and changes to the database

- Concerns regarding access to historical data to measure success, Sergeant Norris can inquire with headquarters regarding gathering data for the District
- Potential to utilize a research student to review data
- Problem cougars and public protection
- Animal husbandry
- Response times, resources, other duties of Conservation Officers, and cyclical nature of the varied responsibilities and work of Conservation Officers
- Sergeant Norris noted that the mandate of the BC Conservation Officer Services is broad as a public safety provider and law enforcement agency, not to protect livestock
- Importance of mitigative steps that can be taken by farmers and producers to protect livestock
- Cougar sightings and risk rankings
- Methods of investigating predation of livestock such as identifying the predator and determining the cause of death
- Postmortem examinations conducted by veterinarian in some instances
- Potential funding through the Ministry of Agriculture and Food for fencing and other programs, Sergeant Norris can forward contact information for a local connection
- Mapping of Wildlife corridors
- Potential of a subcommittee or a working group comprised of AASC and MEASC members
- Education, advocacy, and support of Council for agriculture, farmers, and wildlife corridors
- Approval and timing of the District of Metchosin Agricultural Plan
- Advocating for support from the provincial government to promote, conserve, and protect farming and increased conservation services via letters to the Minister of Environment and Agriculture
- Potential to discuss concerns with Ministers at the upcoming Union of BC Municipalities Convention
- Staff resources
- Educational and research programs
- Robin Tunnicliffe, AASC Chair, expressed concerns regarding the burden of another subcommittee and read a statement from the AASC requesting support for farmers in the timely relocation or dispatching of specific predators and to be kept abreast of the latest strategies in predator protection. Farmers commit to learning and adopting such strategies and support increasing habitat for predators and encouraging biodiversity.

**Moved and Seconded** by Councillor Epp and Mayor Little to recommend that Council request Mayor Little to draft letters to the Honourable George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy and Honourable, Minister of Agriculture and Food regarding the need for increased conservation services and advocating for farmers and producers;

**And That** the draft letters be provided to AASC and MEASC for review and input.

**Carried**

It was recommended that the Agriculture Plan come forward to Council for approval later this month or next month.

It was suggested to invite Morgan Yates and Alison LeDuc to present to Council on work that has been done to preserve and promote the wildlife corridor between the Sooke Hills and Witty's Beach to help make the corridor a reality in the next five to ten years.

Councillor Shukin was requested to reach out to the University of Victoria and Royal Roads University to inquire about graduate students interested in project work.

**6. Adjournment**

**Moved and Seconded** by Councillors Shukin and Epp that the Committee adjourn the meeting at 8:59 p.m.

**Carried**

**Certified Correct**

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**Chair**

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**Corporate Officer**



District of Metchosin

Minutes

**Special Finance Committee Meeting  
September 9, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.**

Metchosin Municipal Hall  
Council Chambers

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**PLEASE NOTE:** The meeting has been recorded.

**Present:** Councillor Donaldson in the Chair, Mayor Little, Councillors Epp, Gray and Shukin. Also present was Geoffrey Kreek, Chief Financial Officer, Stephanie Dunlop, Fire Chief and Tina Hansen, Deputy Corporate Officer.

**Regrets:** Bob Payette, Chief Administrative Officer

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

The Chair provided a territorial acknowledgement.

**1. Agenda, Additions and Approval**

**Moved and Seconded** by Councillor Gray and Mayor Little that the Committee approve the agenda as presented.

**Carried**

**2. Public Participation**

Garry Lamb, resident, provided comments on the District of Metchosin Financial Report for the first half of 2024 and inquired as to whether the numbers reflected in the budget documents were for six months or for a full year. Mr. Lamb also inquired as to budget actuals, and calculation of depreciation.

Sasha Kubicek, resident, took the opportunity to thank Mayor Little for prioritizing agriculture and leading the push for an Agricultural Area Plan for Metchosin. Mr. Kubicek also took the opportunity to acknowledge the Agricultural Advisory Committee for their dedication and volunteer hours on the Plan and urged the Committee to move forward with approval of the Plan.

Alex Fletcher, resident, expressed his support for approving the Agricultural Area Plan and took the opportunity to thank everyone involved in the Plan. Mr. Fletcher stated the Agricultural Advisory Committee's mandate was to develop a Plan and this is one step towards taking action to improve agriculture in Metchosin. It is an important tool to access funding and strengthen the agricultural community, define goals and visions, and identify opportunities.

Nicole Shukin, resident, asked Council to unanimously support the Agricultural Area Plan and stated her support for Council's work and revisions to the Plan.

**3. Reports**

**a) Metchosin's Agricultural Area Plan**

The Chair provided an update on the District of Metchosin Agricultural Area Plan and summarized the proposed changes to the Plan.

Adopted \*\*, 2024

The Committee discussed the following:

- Support for the Agricultural Area Plan
- Appreciation for work that went into the Plan
- Managing expectations on Action Items within the Plan
- Agricultural Advisory Select Committee Chair's comments that Plan is a "living document"

**Moved and Seconded** by Councillors Gray and Shukin that the Committee accept the proposed changes to the Metchosin Agricultural Area Plan;

**And** recommend Council approve the Metchosin Agricultural Area Plan as amended.

**Carried**

#### **b) Staff Report, Financial Report, First Half of 2024**

Staff provided an overview of the staff report on the financial results for the first half of the 2024 fiscal year.

Committee discussed:

- Budget spreadsheet reflecting Year to Date
- Management of Fire Department expenses
- Caution with financial projections

**Moved and Seconded** by Councillor Gray and Mayor Little that the Committee receive the Financial Report, dated September 9, 2024 on the First Half of 2024 for information.

**Carried**

#### **4. Correspondence**

##### **a) Robin Tunnicliffe, Chair, Agricultural Advisory Select Committee**

The following items related to the Agricultural Area Plan were noted:

- Staff Report on home plates in the ALR
- Banning biosolids in Metchosin
- Letter to the province regarding carnivores
- Metchosin Producer's Association update

**Moved and Seconded** by Councillors Gray and Shukin that the Committee receive the correspondence from Robin Tunnicliffe, Chair, Agricultural Advisory Select Committee for information.

**Carried**

#### **5. Adjournment**

**Moved and Seconded** by Councillor Shukin and Mayor Little that the Committee adjourn the meeting at 6:29 p.m.

**Carried**

**Certified Correct**

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Chair

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Corporate Officer

# Metchosin Agricultural Area Plan 2024

*April 2024*

PREPARED FOR:  
District of  
Metchosin

PREPARED BY:



upland agricultural consulting

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## Acknowledgments

We acknowledge that this project is taking place on the traditional territory of the Scia’new and T’Sou-ke First Nations. The District of Metchosin is committed to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and we recognize, honour and respect the presence of Indigenous peoples past, present and future.

This report was created with the input and involvement of the Metchosin Agricultural Advisory Select Committee and District of Metchosin staff throughout 2023-2024.

## Acronyms

AASC	Agriculture Advisory Select Committee
AF	Ministry of Agriculture
ALC	Agricultural Land Commission
ALR	Agricultural Land Reserve
BMP	Beneficial Management Practices
CRD	Capital Regional District
DoM	District of Metchosin
EFP	Environmental Farm Plan
EMBC	Emergency Management BC
IAF	Investment Agriculture Foundation British Columbia
GVDA	Greater Victoria Development Agency
MFI	Metchosin Farmers Institute
MPA	Metchosin Producers Association
MISC	Metchosin Invasive Species Cooperative
SVIFI	South Vancouver Island Farmers Institute
YA	Young Agrarians

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# 1. Introduction

The District of Metchosin is located on the southernmost tip of Vancouver Island, on the traditional territory of the Scia’new and T’Sou-ke First Nations, approximately 16 km from downtown Victoria, between Colwood and Sooke (Figure 1). Metchosin is a small, rural community with just over 5,000 residents. Metchosin’s landscape provides regional benefits with an abundance of greenspace compared to neighbouring urban centres. There is limited commercial and industrial activity within the community. The federal government has a presence in Metchosin that includes two military bases and a correctional institution.

The District of Metchosin contains 1,658 ha (4,211 acres) of land in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) (Figure 2, next page). In addition to farms within the ALR, the community contains many large rural-residential lots outside of the ALR that lend themselves to hobby farming. Food production has a long history in Metchosin, which began in pre-colonial times through Scia’new First Nation land and water-based food practices and continues to be a vital part of the economic and social fabric of the community.

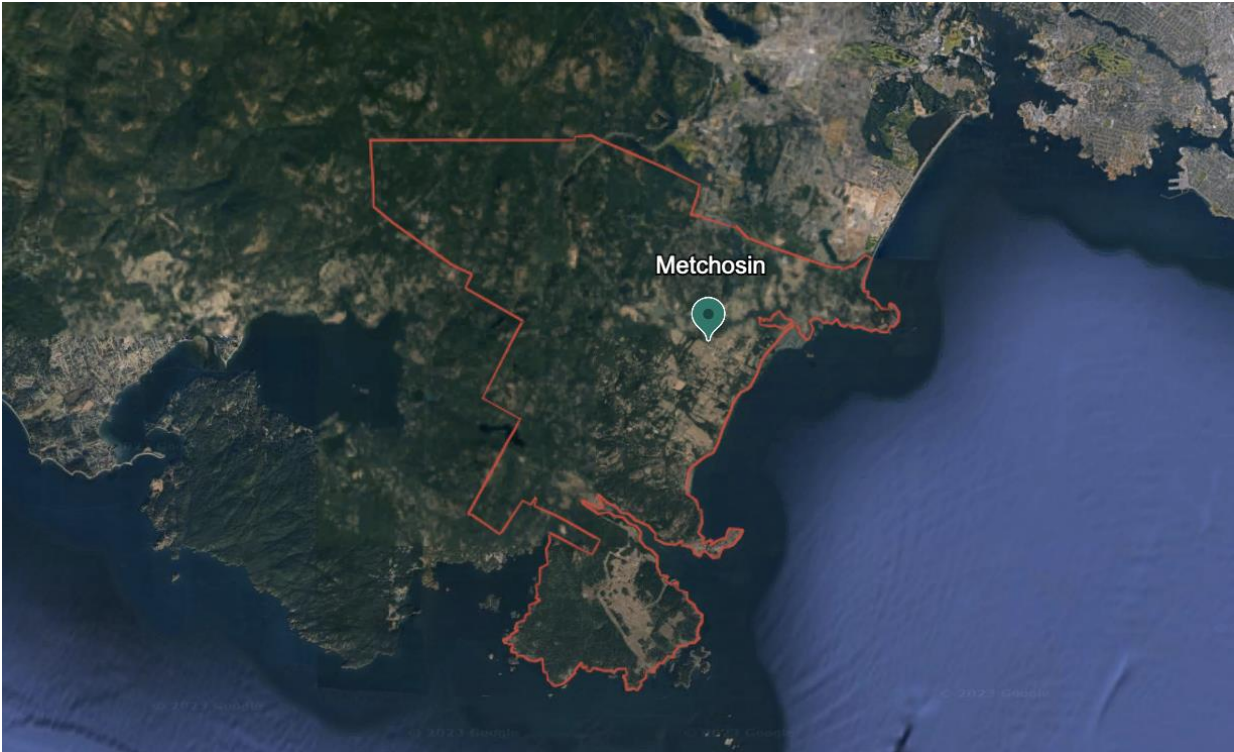


Figure 1. Boundaries of the District of Metchosin (Google Earth)

## Metchosin’s Agricultural Planning Framework

Due to the evolving nature of the agriculture sector, and land-use planning policies, the District of Metchosin embarked on a project to develop an Agricultural Area Plan. An Agricultural Area Plan focuses on uncovering

practical solutions to challenges and identifies opportunities that strengthen the agricultural sector and contribute to the community's long-term sustainability.<sup>1</sup>

The Plan was commissioned by the District, in collaboration with the Metchosin Agriculture Advisory Select Committee (AASC). The development of the Plan took place over the fall and winter of 2023-2024. In preparation for developing the Plan, a review of the District's bylaws and policies, and existing plans and strategies was conducted, and a Background Report was completed. The goals and recommendations were developed through the lens of a collaborative approach between both the District and the agriculture community. The Plan explores some of the contributing factors relating to the current state of the local agricultural sector in the Metchosin area, and presents findings from engagement activities, along with a set of key goals and recommended actions to grow the sector. The Plan recommends actions specific to Metchosin to support the local agricultural sector in the short (1-2 year) to long term (5+ years) timeframe.

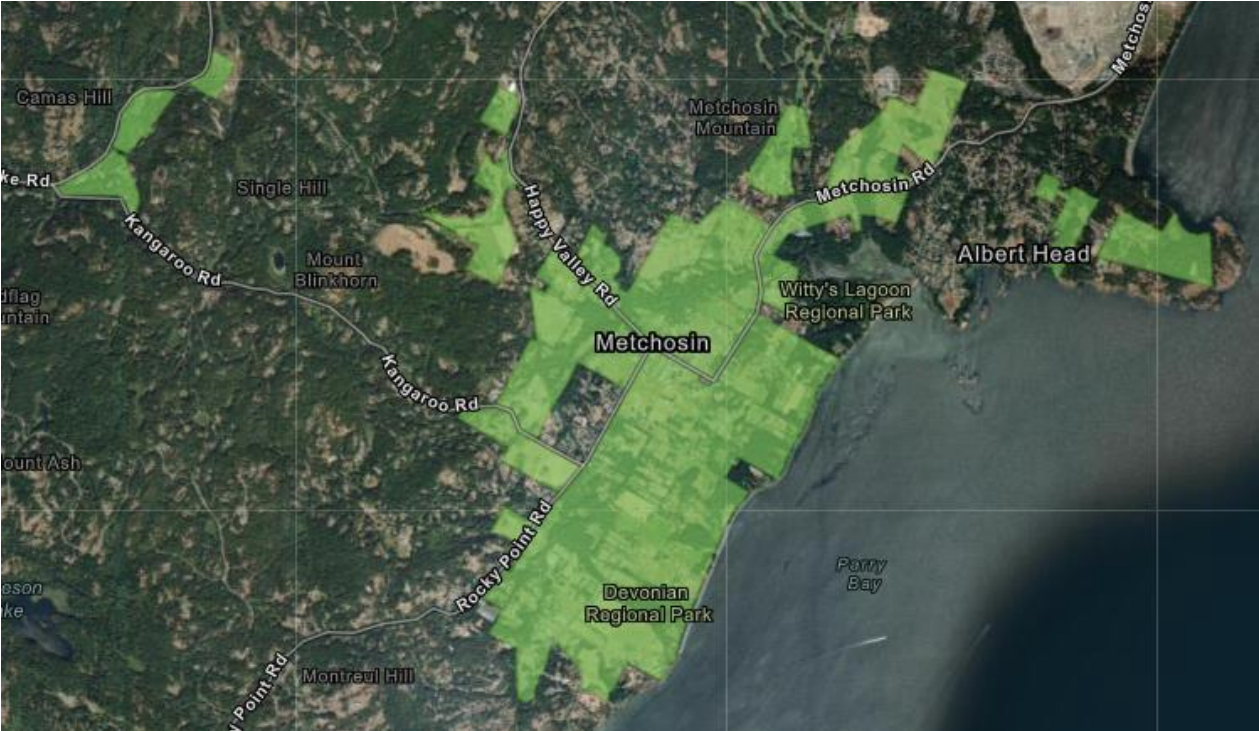


Figure 2. ALR in Metchosin. (BC [SIFT](#))

### Agricultural Governance

Agriculture is governed by a network of Federal, Provincial, and local governments, each playing a specific role in regulating the use of agricultural land, the making and distribution of food products, and ensuring the health and safety of the food system. Other government agencies focus on the economics of agriculture and on the interface between environmental protection, climate change and agriculture. At the provincial level, important policies and regulations include the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, *Farm Practices*

<sup>1</sup> Smith, B. 1998. [Planning for Agriculture](#). BC Ministry of Agriculture publication.

*Protection (Right to Farm) Act, Water Sustainability Act, Environmental Management Act, and Assessment Act.*

### **Capital Regional District**

Local governments, including regional districts and municipalities, play a role by developing a Regional Growth Strategy (RGS), Official Community Plans (OCPs), Zoning Bylaws, and other initiatives that link to agriculture and land use planning. The Capital Regional District (CRD) RGS was adopted in 2018 and contains seven goal areas. The agriculture and food sector intersect with several goal areas, such as “Managing and Balancing Growth”, “Environment and Infrastructure”, “Housing and Community”, “Food Systems” and “Climate Action”. The CRD released a *Regional Food and Agriculture Strategy* in 2016, which contains ten recommendations for supporting agriculture systems in the region. These recommendations were considered in the creation of this Plan to ensure continuity and to seek opportunities to leverage regional support.

The CRD is currently developing a Foodlands Access Program to support new and young farmers by facilitating affordable access to productive farmland. This work delivers on recommendations from the 2019 [Regional Foodlands Access Program Feasibility Study](#), which identified ways to help address farmland access and increase local food production across the region. Recently, the CRD partnered with Kwantlen Polytechnic University to develop technical assessments and a business case for suitable sites. As a result, the first phase of the CRD Foodlands Access Program is set to launch in 2024 and will focus on:

- Reactivating an underused portion of Bear Hill Regional Park for a five-year agriculture pilot project that will host an incubator program for 10-15 farmers to start or expand their farming operations.
- Providing grant funding to support farmers who participate in the B.C. Land Matching Program, pairing private landowners with aspiring farmers for long-term land leases.

On June 28, 2023, the CRD Parks Committee gave an initial indication of support for using the Bear Hill farm site for the program. Once experienced operators are identified, the program proposal will be refined, and staff will canvas local governments and electoral areas for interest in service participation to finalize the funding approach. The target for establishing the new service is early 2024.

### **District of Metchosin**

The District of Metchosin’s OCP contains several policy statements that are in support of agriculture. In addition, the Land Use Bylaw contains several areas that could be strengthened to support agriculture. Both of these documents are reviewed in the Background Report. Potential updates to the Land Use Bylaw are identified in the recommended actions and in Appendix 1 of the Agricultural Area Plan. The District also established the Agricultural Advisory Select Committee (AASC). This committee assists Metchosin Council in promoting and sustaining the agricultural community and improving agricultural viability within Metchosin. The Committee reports its findings to the Council through the Finance Standing Committee.

## **Non-Governmental Organizations**

There are several non-governmental organizations in Metchosin which focus on or work to support agriculture. The Metchosin Producers Association (MPA) is the governing body of the local Metchosin Farmers' Market. The MPA has previously received a Tourism Grant to make improvements to the market site. The Metchosin Farmers Institute (MFI) concentrates its efforts on keeping the local community informed about agricultural heritage through traditional events such as spring and fall fairs at the Luxton Fairgrounds, as well as through the sponsorship of the Luxton Antique Farm Equipment Club, Metchosin 4H Club, and the Vancouver Island Blacksmith's Association.

## **Community Food Security and Indigenous Food Sovereignty**

While food security is an important component of a resilient food system, the underlying contributors to household food insecurity (e.g. low-incomes, housing affordability, job security) are outside the scope of agricultural plans. Indigenous Food Sovereignty plays an important role in a safe and secure food system, and efforts were made to connect with Scia'new First Nation to share information regarding the Metchosin Agricultural Plan process. Recommendations are included in the Plan to continue communications regarding agriculture and food systems in the wider community with Scia'new First Nation. Specific concerns expressed by Scia'new First Nation related to agriculture include the dealing with archeological chance finds on farms, and environmental impacts from agricultural practices, such as runoff into water systems. Actions to address both of these issues are included within the recommendations section of this report.

While the recommendations in the Plan do not directly address food security or Indigenous food sovereignty, it is clear that during pre-colonial times and up until the late 1800s to mid-1900s most of the food required by local residents was provided by local sources.<sup>2</sup> In the last 50 years there has been a decrease in the proportion of food that is produced on the Island – unverified figures suggest what was once a resiliency rate of 85% is now closer to 5-10%.<sup>3</sup> A strong agricultural sector, where producers of all commodity types and sizes are supported, will contribute positively to community food security.<sup>4</sup> Whether farm products produced in Metchosin are sold locally or not, having active farms in the community attracts and retains the supporting systems such as equipment dealers, mechanics, food distribution companies and other supporting businesses. Increasing the agricultural productive capacity of Vancouver Island, through methods which are sustainable as well as economically and socially beneficial to local communities, will support food security in Metchosin and beyond.

## **Profile of Metchosin Farms**

The local agricultural sector in Metchosin is well established, with many producers having resided in the area for decades, implementing innovative farming approaches to manage landscapes and adapt to a changing climate. Colonial agricultural production in Metchosin dates back to the 1850s, with the

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<sup>2</sup> Strategies for Increasing Food Security on Vancouver Island. Vancouver Island Community Research Alliance, Office of Community Based Research. 2011.

<sup>3</sup> A Baseline Assessment of Food Security in British Columbia's Capital Region. Emily MacNair. 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Community food security arises when all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice.

establishment of the first homestead, a 121-hectare (300 acre) farm between Witty’s Lagoon and St. Mary’s Church.

According to the 2018 Agricultural Land Use Inventory (ALUI) data, which is based on activities observed on the ground rather than attempts to define a “farm”, the District of Metchosin contains 330 parcels of land within the ALR. Some of those parcels may be farmed cohesively as a single farm “unit”, while other ALR parcels may currently be unused and/or available for farming. Figure 3 indicates that 148 parcels (614 ha) are used for farming (shown in green), and a further 98 parcels (218 ha) are available for farming but are not being used for agriculture (shown in yellow). There are 71 parcels (covering 826 ha or about half of all of the ALR), are considered “unavailable” for farming due to current land cover or land uses (shown in blue). These “unavailable” parcels include the Canadian Forces Base at Rocky Point, golf courses, parks, and institutional uses such as churches and schools. Therefore, when considering the agricultural potential of the ALR within the Metchosin community, there are 236 parcels comprising 832 ha of land. There are additional parcels of land being farmed outside the ALR, however these are not captured within the ALUI analysis.



Figure 3. Use of ALR in Metchosin. (2018 CRD ALUI)

Recent years have seen a rise in small scale, mixed production in Metchosin. Results from the agricultural survey indicated the most popular crops are field vegetables, tree fruit, greenhouse vegetables, berries, and hay (Figure 4). Laying hens, sheep & goats, and meat birds are the most common livestock found in the area. “Other”, responses included: wool, aquaponics, seed production, and natural plant decorations.

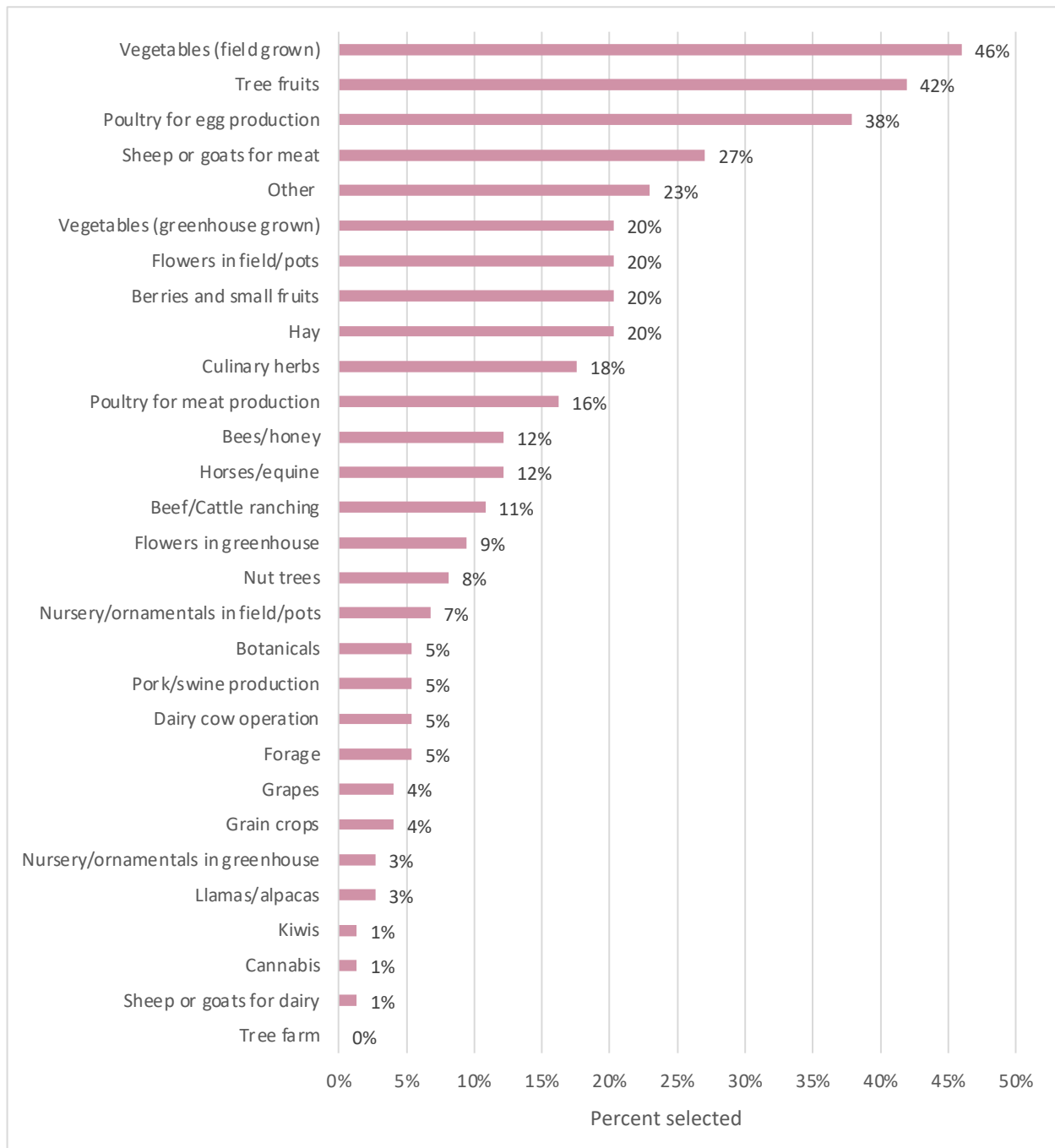


Figure 4. Agricultural survey answers to the question: what are you growing on your farm?

Within the “other” category, there was a mix of responses. The most common responses were:

- Taxes (4);
- Seed production (3);
- Wool production (2);
- Gardening (2); and
- Not currently farming anything (2).

While over 50% of Metchosin producers sell their products at the farm stand, many also sell directly to customers through deliveries and about a third sell to restaurants. The number of farms selling wholesale vs. selling at the farmers market is about the same (22%). Only a small amount (<10%) engage in sales related to agri-tourism, such as U-Pick, farm retail, or farm events and farm tours.

The majority (56%) of producers in Metchosin are earning under \$10,000 of annual revenue from their farms, and another 19% earn between \$10,000 and \$25,000. Another 6% selected “Other” and their responses included “nothing” and “sustenance”. Under half (40%) of Metchosin producers engage in agricultural processing to create value-added products, most of which are red meat (beef, sheep or lamb) and poultry, which is supported by a local abattoir, and wool products.

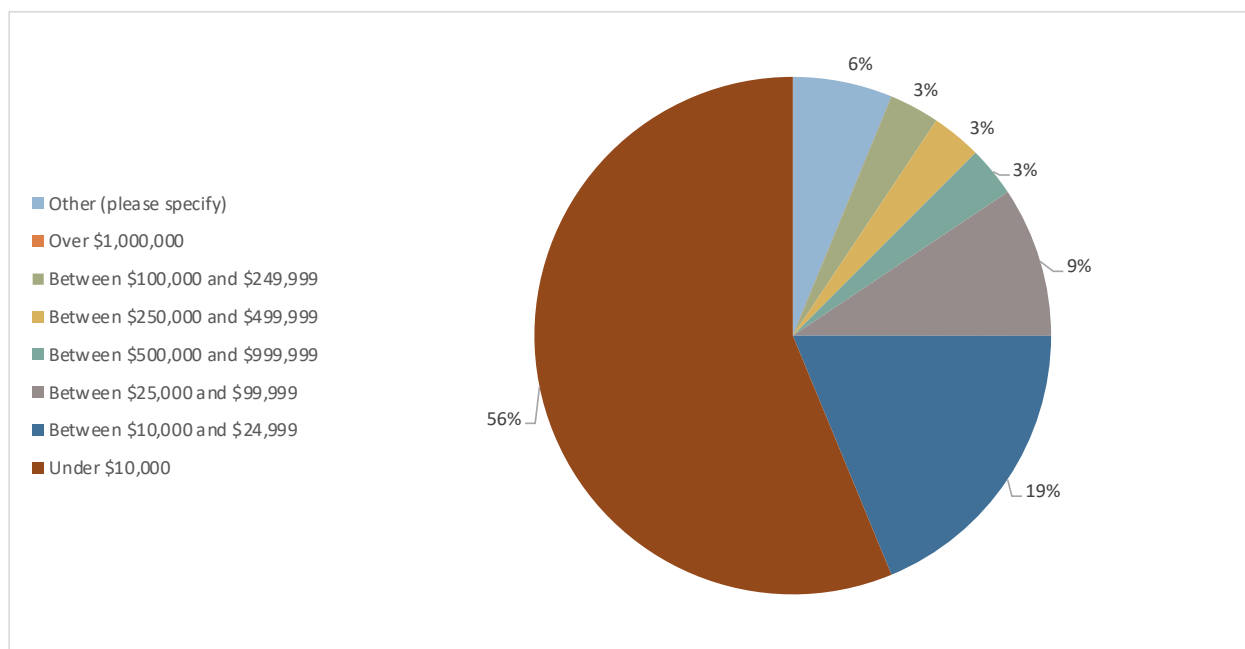


Figure 5. Income from farm business in Metchosin

## 2. Agricultural Plan Development

To achieve the Plan’s objectives the following steps were taken:

1. First, a comprehensive background review was undertaken to better understand the current agri-food system in Metchosin. The review culminated in the creation of a Background Report (Figure 6), including a summary of local context, an agriculture profile, biophysical and environmental considerations, and an inventory of agriculture supports and services.
2. A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis was developed to organize the findings from the Background Report into clear categories to inform key findings.

3. Third, a series of engagement activities were conducted to obtain meaningful input and feedback from the community. The events occurred primarily over the fall and winter of 2023. The following activities were conducted:

- Fifteen (15) interviews with stakeholders in the agriculture sector;
- A Community Survey for the general public (298 responses);
- An Agri-Food Sector Survey for farming and food stakeholders (76 responses);
- A community Open House to present the draft Plan (30 attendees); and
- Three (3) meetings with the AASC.

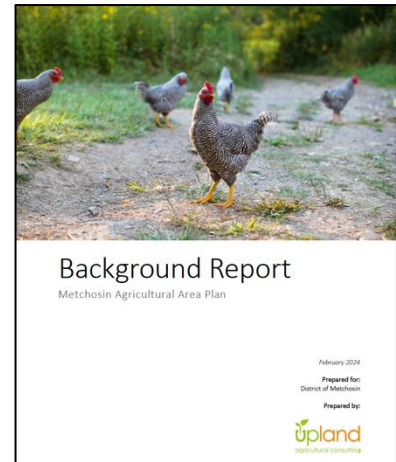


Figure 6. Agricultural Background Report (2023)

4. Next, an Engagement Summary Report was created to provide an overview of the findings from the engagement activities. The report highlighted the input from interviews and provided detailed results from the surveys.
5. The final step in the project involved the creation of the Agricultural Area Plan (this report). The Plan consists of a summary of findings from the Background Report and Engagement Summary Report, and includes a vision, goals, and actions to support and grow the agriculture sector in Metchosin.

### 3. Key Findings

While a myriad of challenges and opportunities exist for the Metchosin farming community, these key findings are distilled from all of the engagement that was undertaken as part of the planning engagement process. These findings were then used to inform the development of the vision, goals, and recommended actions. Details regarding the input received from the community can be found in the Engagement Summary report.

#### **1: The community is interested in buying more local Metchosin farm products.**

Metchosin is uniquely positioned close to urban markets of potential customers, within a 5-20 minute drive of a new development in Royal Bay and the existing communities of Colwood, Langford and Sooke. Getting locally-grown produce, eggs, meat, and nursery products into the hands of these potential customers could improve with strategic marketing and finding more convenient ways for customers to purchase local food items. Through the community survey, 51% of respondents indicated that they often purchased locally produced food in Metchosin, while 58% said that increased convenience of buying local foods is a major factor in being able to purchase locally more often (and a bigger factor even than the price of local food). An informal survey of market attendees showed that many people shopping at the Metchosin Farmers

Market were attending from these surrounding communities, however there are typically only a few local farm vendors present at the market, with most stalls selling crafts and non-farmed goods. There is a hesitancy on behalf of many farmers to sell at the market, due to the time commitment involved in preparation, and risk of having a slow sales day. As such, only 22% of those who responded to the farmer survey indicated that they use the farmers market to sell their goods. Alternative sales routes include the Local Food Box, a subscription-based option that includes products from a collective of Metchosin farms. This is a popular option for customers, however it is currently only available by pick-up at one location in Metchosin. While Metchosin is also home to a number of farm stands, survey comments from residents and visitors suggested that the farms may not be easy to locate, or it is unclear what dates/times the stands will have products, or that driving from farm to farm is an inconvenience. Furthermore, there are few opportunities in the community to find locally grown foods in shops or grocery stores, leaving a potential gap in the market for local food sales. Over 40% of community survey respondents indicated that having better resources to help find local food products would be beneficial.

## **2: Residents and visitors would like to have more opportunities to participate in agri-tourism.**

A few farms in Metchosin are already focusing on agri-tourism as a means to attract customers to their businesses, but more opportunities exist. An increasing awareness and appreciation for local foods, small-scale agriculture, as well as an abundance of cruise ships arriving at the Victoria Cruise Ship Terminal during summer months result in a high demand for tourists seeking agricultural experiences. The community survey indicated that 84% of respondents were interested in buying food directly from farms. Over 40% showed interest in farm-to-table dining experiences, visiting local beverage operations, and attending workshops. Furthermore, when asked if local residents had a vision for agriculture in Metchosin in the next 10 years, a number of respondents suggested that Metchosin could be known as a destination for local food and rural experiences, similar to Salt Spring Island. However, a disconnect exists between the level of agri-tourism that customers would like to experience, and the activities that local farmers are currently willing to provide.

Agri-tourism is an economic development opportunity that could be more widely considered and examined in order for producers to better understand the potential revenues that could be realized. Bringing potential customers from outside of Metchosin to visit farms and purchase products can infuse the local farm economy with outside dollars, rather than relying on a hyper-local clientele. Growing the local agri-tourism scene may not work for all farms and would require a targeted strategy to streamline efforts and avoid duplication of activities. Advertising and marketing campaigns, offering agricultural experiences in addition to selling products, might be particularly effective and low-cost if managed online. Collaboration between local farms and businesses may be beneficial in establishing a brand for marketing purposes. The Luxton Spring Fair and Luxton Fall Fair, operated by the Metchosin Farmers Institute, could be included within the agri-tourism marketing plan. There is also an opportunity to connect with Scia'new First Nation and discuss any potential shared areas of interest in terms of food-related tourism sector development.

### **3: Metchosin’s high land values create multiple challenges to farming.**

The high cost of farmland in Metchosin is associated with challenges related to succession planning and the ability to both enter into farming as well as expand existing farms. The high cost of housing for farm managers and/or farm employees is also tied to the value of farmland. Furthermore, the cost to rent or purchase non-farmland housing in Metchosin often exceeds the average income that can be generated through farm work, despite Metchosin producers’ efforts to pay their employees living wages. It was reported that housing affordability challenges (both for farm managers and employees) puts further strain on an already challenging task of finding capable workers. In the agriculture survey, 46% of respondents indicated that a lack of housing for farm workers is an impediment to growing Metchosin’s agricultural sector.

There is a knock-on effect whereby high land values lead to limited productivity on agricultural operations, and of the land base itself. Interviewees have observed that Metchosin is experiencing an increase in estate acreages on farmland, which are unproductive, or are operating at a level just to obtain farm tax status. It is felt that this activity is leading to further speculation and is driving up the cost of farmland in Metchosin. Some of these observations are anecdotal and it can be difficult to measure “agricultural productivity”. It is worth noting that there were 145 parcels of land with farm tax status in Metchosin in 2023, which align with data from 2011 that indicated 147 parcels with farm tax status.

With the current cost of farmland in Metchosin, it is unreasonable to expect that mortgage payments could be paid through agricultural revenues alone. Leasing is a more affordable option but can be difficult to secure for newcomers or new entrants, as well as reducing land security for producers who do lease. This has an impact on the level and type of infrastructure investments that lessees are willing to contribute to improve the farm property. BC’s Land Matching program, hosted by Young Agrarians, has proven helpful for some producers and land holders, but there is opportunity to increase the amount of farmland available for lease in Metchosin, including collaborating with landholders outside of the ALR (estate acreages) to bring these lands into production.

### **4: Support from government will be critical in expanding the Metchosin agricultural sector.**

Both the District of Metchosin and the CRD can act as advocates for the local farming community by directly working with the province on many issues of mutual concern, such as compliance and enforcement of non-farm uses in the ALR, and initiatives to support land access, productivity, access to processing services and knowledge transfer. Producers noted several other areas of the local agricultural sector that could be directly supported by various levels of government. These include the following:

- **Land Access Programs:** In 2019, the CRD commissioned a study to examine the feasibility of establishing a Regional Foodlands Access Program<sup>5</sup>, whereby municipal land within the ALR can be leased out to new and expanding farmers. The CRD is in the process of establishing this new service

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<sup>5</sup> [A Regional Foodlands Access Program for the Capital Regional District](#), 2018.

by bringing land in Bear Hill Regional Park into production in 2024<sup>6</sup>. Metchosin producers are interested in existing programs (i.e. Young Agrarians) or future initiatives that have the potential to create new opportunities to access farmland. This will require renewed support both from the CRD and the District of Metchosin.

- **Processing and Value-Added Initiatives:** There are several companies that provide services to Metchosin’s producers, including an equipment dealer, a meat processor (abattoir) and a miller. Like all businesses supporting the agricultural sector, these service providers can be impacted by the broad factors affecting producers, such as pricing, weather, consumer demand, and the need for continued capital investment. For example, it was reported by the abattoir owners, which serves lamb, pork, and goat producers in the community, that significant upgrades are required as well as a reliable succession plan to remain operational in the future. Processing resources such as a commercial kitchen or juice press are also missing from the community, with producers in need of these resources travelling to Victoria or Saanich to access them. In the agricultural survey, 36% of respondents indicated that investing in agri-food processing infrastructure and resources would be an important component to growing the agriculture sector in Metchosin. Providing support to develop a small-scale food hub to centralize processing and building an equipment and/or tool library are two specific ways that local and provincial governments can help to improve processing opportunities in the Metchosin area.
- **Extension and Knowledge Transfer:** While the crop and livestock assistance offered through AF’s regional agrologists is improving year-over-year, certain topics can be challenging to receive assistance with. For example, expertise in organic vegetable production, herb production or floral production are lacking. Many provincial programs offer funds to hire external consultants or contractors through grant applications. Additional cross-ministerial support is required for important issues such as water licensing and the management of wild animals such as cougars and bears that prey on livestock or waterfowl that impact field crops.

## 5: Local agriculture has an important role to play in climate change and biodiversity in Metchosin.

At the December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022 regular council meeting, the District of Metchosin adopted the declaration of a Climate Emergency and Biodiversity Crisis, recognizing that these issues are real, human caused and require immediate cuts in GHG emissions. As a rural and coastal community, Metchosin is in a vulnerable position for the impacts of climate change, including extreme heat, flooding, droughts and rising sea levels. Following the declaration, the District of Metchosin committed to developing a Climate Action Plan to inform future decision making. The plan was adopted by Council in June 2023 and contains 4 priority actions which are

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<sup>6</sup> Any new agricultural land development will also need to be mindful of any chance archeological finds that could impact Scia’new First Nation. Most farming activities do not result in artifacts being uncovered, but it may be required to follow the [Archeological Chance Find Procedure](#), as outlined through the *Heritage Conservation Act*.

directly connected to the agriculture sector including the creation of an agriculture plan (this plan) which supports climate change resilience, enhanced biodiversity and low carbon agricultural practices.

Agriculture is both a major contributor to climate change through land use conversion and GHG emissions, as well as being a critical leverage point for the delivery of key ecosystem services. Regenerative farming practices can support climate change resilience and promote ecosystem services. Such activities include producing and saving seeds, soil conservation, managing invasive species, planting hedgerows, creating pollinator strips, utilizing cover crops and diversifying production. Reducing reliance on fossil fuel use in farm machinery as well as through transportation of goods are also critical elements of creating a more climate friendly agriculture sector. While actions that mitigate climate change are important, establishing resilience and adaptability in the face of climate change is increasingly becoming an important reality for the agriculture sector. This includes emergency planning and preparedness, managing new diseases, adopting new crop varieties and building in water conservation efforts. The farming community also acknowledges that agriculture in Metchosin sometimes finds itself to be at odds with the objectives of conservation and biodiversity. For example, crop destruction by waterfowl and livestock predation by predators (ie. Cougars and/or bear) can create tension between the dual objectives of developing economically resilient farms while supporting wildlife and the environment.

## 4. Vision, Goals and Recommendations

The vision statement, 3 goals, and 17 recommendations are based on the culmination of the work undertaken to complete the Background Report and the engagement activities.

### Vision Statement

The following vision statement is used to describe a clear, comprehensive future state and intention for agriculture in Metchosin.

***The Metchosin community collaborates to support productive farms using a diversity of land tenure solutions to create a robust local economy and contribute to climate change resiliency.***

### Goals

Three goals are identified to help the Metchosin agricultural community achieve the vision:

1. Protect Metchosin farmland for farming.
2. Support the economic viability of Metchosin's farming community in a collaborative manner.
3. Create a sustainable and climate resilient farming sector in Metchosin.

There are several actions associated with each goal, as described in the following tables. For each recommended action, a lead agency and supporting organizations are identified for implementation. The

timeframes for getting the actions underway are presented as ongoing, short (1-2 years), medium (3-5 years), and long (more than 5 years). This is followed by an implementation plan and monitoring and evaluation framework.

## Goal 1: Protect Metchosin Farmland for Farming

Action	Description	Lead/Supports	Timeframe
<p><b>1.1 Continue to strengthen Metchosin policies to support agriculture.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The OCP includes several strong policy directions for supporting agriculture. However, additions could be made over time as opportunities arise, such as providing support for the CRD's regional foodland access initiative; support for a year-round farmers market; support for a central local food processing hub; and policies regarding farmworker housing.</li> <li>Ensure that policy statements are included in support of Scia'new First Nation food sovereignty, and the opportunity to explore areas of mutual interest for agriculture and food.</li> <li>Support the transition of golf courses that are in the ALR back into productive farming areas if and when the properties change ownership or the business winds down.</li> <li>Ensure all OCP updates are vetted by the ALC by allowing ALC staff the opportunity to comment prior to third reading.</li> <li>Publish policies and resolutions pertaining to agriculture on the District website on a clear and easy to find page.</li> <li>Follow best land use planning practices as published by the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food and by learning from other local governments (e.g., North Saanich).</li> </ul>	<p>Lead: DoM</p>	Ongoing	
<p><b>1.2 Update the Metchosin Land Use Bylaw to support agriculture.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update the Land Use Bylaw based on the suggestions provided in Appendix 1. These suggestions should be used as a starting point for discussion between the AASC and DoM planning staff.</li> <li>Where amendments are made to the Land Use Bylaw that apply to lands within the ALR, or may impact lands used for agriculture, provide opportunities for ALC staff to provide input.</li> </ul>	<p>Lead: DoM</p>	Ongoing	
<p><b>1.3 Advocate to other levels of government for legislation that supports productive stewardship of the agricultural land base.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocate to BC Assessment for opportunities to better match tax rates with farmland production activities (e.g., higher BC Farm Tax Status minimum thresholds; changes to the application of the school tax on inactive farmland; progressive tax rebates based on agricultural production), to help prevent land speculation and support the productive use of the land base.</li> <li>Advocate to the ALC and AF for increased provincial resources to support enforcement of provincial regulations in the ALR, including the administration of the ALC Act.</li> </ul>	<p>Lead: DoM</p> <p>Support: Metchosin farmers</p>	Ongoing	

Action	Description	Lead/Supports	Timeframe
<p><b>1.4 Continue to support the establishment of a Foodland Access Program in the CRD.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reach out to CRD staff to inquire about timely progress updates regarding the establishment of a Regional Foodland Access program.</li> <li>Identify land within the DoM that could be adopted into a Regional Foodland Access framework.</li> <li>Support the CRD in policy and budgetary decisions that may arise regarding the Regional Foodland Access program.</li> </ul>	<p>Lead: Short (1-2 years)</p> <p>DoM</p> <p>Support: Metchosin farmers</p>		
<p><b>1.5 Improve datasets pertaining to agriculture sector in Metchosin</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify information gaps regarding the agriculture sector in Metchosin that could be filled through farmer surveys or other means.</li> <li>Use this Agricultural Plan and the Monitoring &amp; Evaluation Framework as baseline data.</li> <li>Initiate an annual or biennial survey of farmers to collect relevant local farming information.</li> <li>Maintain the database and track progress of industry growth and improvement.</li> </ul>	<p>Lead: Medium (3-5 years)</p> <p>Metchosin farmers</p> <p>Support: DoM</p>		
<p><b>1.6 Support succession planning and establishment of new entrants.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-host workshops to help farmers create innovative and site-specific succession plans.</li> <li>Disseminate land tenure agreement resources to ALR landowners who do not farm, to new entrants, and to those interested in expanding existing farm businesses.</li> <li>Share resources that highlight the benefits of leasing land including food security, ecological wellbeing, farm tax status, and community economic development.</li> <li>Explore options to establish a Metchosin-specific farmland trust, or other mechanisms for protecting farmland for farming in Metchosin.</li> </ul>	<p>Lead: Medium (3-5 years)</p> <p>Metchosin farmers</p> <p>Support: YA, AF</p>		
<p><b>1.7 Engage and educate the community about best practices in living in or near agricultural areas.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with Scia'new First Nation to co-host workshops regarding archeological chance finds on farms and other topics of mutual interest.</li> <li>Provide informational resources to local realtor agencies, to inform them and potential property buyers about land use restrictions, normal farm practices, and the <i>Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act</i> (e.g. <a href="#">The Countryside and You</a> brochure).</li> <li>Provide informational resources to existing residents to convey the importance of agriculture and how to be a good neighbour to agricultural operations.</li> <li>Provide information on agriculture and its importance for the local economy and local food systems, reconciliation and Indigenous food sovereignty. This could include publishing infographics, videos, and other messaging through District communications channels and/or through a new Facebook page led by a Metchosin farmer's group.</li> </ul>	<p>Lead: Medium (3-5 years)</p> <p>DoM</p> <p>Support: AASC AF, Scia'new First Nation</p>		

## Goal 2: Support the Economic Viability of Metchosin’s Farming Community in a Collaborative Manner

Action	Description	Lead/Supports	Timeframe
<p><b>2.1 Identify an existing organization to lead the implementation of the Plan or establish a new group.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to meet with the MPA, MFI, and SVFI to determine interest and/or opportunities to collaborate in implementing the actions in this Agricultural Area Plan that must be led by Metchosin farmers.</li> <li>If no interest exists, consider forming a new non-profit society representing Metchosin farmers. This group could also apply for grants and take advantage of other funding opportunities and assist with advocacy work.</li> <li>Explore funding models for the group that would allow for a part-time Agricultural Coordinator to be hired to support the Plan’s implementation.</li> </ul>	<p>Lead: Metchosin farmers</p> <p>Support: MPA, MFI, SVFI</p>	Short (1-2 years)	
<p><b>2.2 Develop new forms of routes to market.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using an online market model such as <a href="#">Local Food Marketplace</a>, <a href="#">LocalLine</a> or <a href="#">MyFarms</a>, set up a web-based sales platform for interested farms. This could be done using the <a href="#">e-commerce food platform resources</a> published by the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food.</li> <li>Meet with the manager of the <a href="#">South Island Food Hub</a> to obtain information regarding how farms can become new suppliers to the hub.</li> <li>Explore opportunities to coordinate transportation of goods from multiple farms to shops or markets in Victoria, Langford, Colwood or Sooke. A small fee could be paid to a farmer (or other small business) leader, preferably with a refrigerated truck.</li> <li>Take the success of the Local Food Box program and move into a next phase that includes additional pick-up or drop-off times and locations.</li> <li>Meet with the MPA to discuss the following opportunities to create a more attractive Farmers Market sales environment for local farmers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine if farmers can share vending space, such that representatives can take turns at the market selling on behalf of a small group of farms.</li> <li>Inquire about reduced table rates or alternative commitments (e.g bi-monthly) for farmer vendors who are unable to attend on a weekly basis.</li> <li>Explore interest levels in initiating a Farmers Market on a weekday evening to extend accessibility for customers.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Lead: Metchosin farmers</p> <p>Supports: MPA, South Island Food Hub</p>	Short (1-2 years)	

Action	Description	Lead/ Supports	Timeframe
<b>2.3 Explore opportunities to initiate a bulk buying club for production inputs such as compost, feed, seed and hay/straw.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey local farmers to identify what inputs are being utilized, costs associated with inputs, level of difficulty in acquiring inputs and what is wanted but not secured.</li> <li>Identify sources of needed inputs and costs associated with bulk purchasing and shipping.</li> <li>Develop a cost breakdown sheet that outlines the costs associated with each input when purchased in bulk and distribute to interested farmers.</li> <li>Raise the funds necessary (or charge a service fee) to pay for a delivery team to source, purchase, and deliver the inputs. This may include renting a van and traveling to the Lower Mainland by ferry.</li> </ul>	Lead: Metchosin farmers  Support: AF	Short (1-2 years)
<b>2.4 Develop a collective marketing campaign for Metchosin farm products.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revitalize the “Metchosin Grown” logo and brand. Promote it for local products (see “<a href="#">Lillooet Grown</a>” for a successful example). This may involve developing design and use standards, updating the logo, and creating an online presence for the brand.</li> <li>Explore funding models whereby participating farms pay a nominal fee to take part in the marketing campaign and the funds collected are redirected to pay for communications materials.</li> <li>Work with Tourism Vancouver Island and/or Destination Greater Victoria to create a series of videos that highlight the Metchosin farming community and publish the videos on YouTube and through the DoM website.</li> </ul>	Lead: Metchosin farmers  Support: Tourism Vancouver Island, BuyBC	Medium (3-5 years)
<b>2.5 Improve local post-production processing capacity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore opportunities to establish a shared commercial kitchen or food hub in Metchosin with tools for post-production processing.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify the processing needs of local producers (juicing, drying, flash freezing, canning etc.)</li> <li>Identify how many producers require these services to determine viability of investment and frequency of use.</li> <li>Explore options for housing a commercial kitchen, such as the Metchosin Community Hall, or feasibility of recruiting semi-annual mobile services, such as <a href="#">McBarleys Juicer</a>.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Work with Metchosin Meats proprietors to develop a long-term succession and management plan for the abattoir.</li> <li>Seek funding to perform necessary upgrades to the Metchosin Meats abattoir.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek funding opportunities from government or community/social organizations</li> <li>Consider a community fundraiser to support the abattoir.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Lead: Metchosin Farmers  Supports: MPA, MFI, SIFI, DoM	Medium (3-5 years)

Action	Description	Lead/ Supports	Timeframe
<p><b>2.6 Explore opportunities that showcase the cultural food history of the community.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet with Scia'new First Nation to explore areas of mutual interest in food system economic and cultural development initiatives. Examples may include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Signage that indicates traditional foods along hiking trails, or in popular visitor areas.</li> <li>○ Initiatives that include collective fundraising for Scia'new First Nation food system projects.</li> <li>○ Invitation for Scia'new First Nation members to participate in the farmers market and fall fair.</li> <li>○ Supporting Scia'new celebrations and highlight traditional activities, blessings, acknowledgments at community events.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Promote Metchosin agriculture through social media (Facebook, Instagram) and use it as a way to build support for local agricultural projects and attract volunteers.</li> <li>• Develop an agri-tourism strategy that explores opportunities such as participating in Flavour Trails through Destination Greater Victoria, updating the Metchosin Grown Guide and Map, and creating signage for participating farms using the Metchosin Grown logo.</li> <li>• Develop a fact sheet or brochure to distribute to ALR parcels regarding agri-tourism, ensuring that it is aligned with ALC regulations and policies. The educational materials should be available at the DoM office, online and distributed, when possible, to owners of ALR parcels.</li> </ul>	<p>Lead: Metchosin farmers</p> <p>Supports: Scia'new First Nation, Tourism Vancouver Island, DoM</p>	<p>Medium (3-5 years)</p>
<p><b>2.7 Establish an equipment and/or tool-sharing program.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an inventory of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Farmers interested in participating in a shared equipment and/or tool program.</li> <li>○ Existing tools and equipment in the community that could be included in the program, as well as key materials that may be missing.</li> <li>○ Potential storage locations for the sharing program (e.g. Metchosin Municipal Grounds).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Explore models such as the <a href="#">Coopérative d'Utilisation de Matériel Agricole</a> in Quebec or the Sunshine Coast's <a href="#">One Straw Society Tool Library</a>, to determine the right fit for governance of the program.</li> <li>• Develop a business plan for the program to present to the farming community and request registration for membership/ participation.</li> <li>• Seek funding to initiate program.</li> </ul>	<p>Lead: Metchosin farmers</p> <p>Supports: AF, IAF</p>	<p>Long (&gt; 5 years)</p>

### Goal 3: Create a Sustainable and Climate Resilient Farming Sector in Metchosin

Action	Description	Lead/ Supports	Timeframe
<p><b>3.1 Support sustainable farming practices, including the protection of ecosystem services on farms, and a low carbon agricultural sector.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage local farmers to participate in the province’s Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) program, which is run by Investment Agriculture Foundation BC (IAF) and is free, voluntary, and confidential. Participating farms may be eligible for funding through the Beneficial Management Practices (BMP) program to implement sustainable farming practices and technologies including water storage and riparian restoration.</li> <li>Support and distribute information about IAF’s Farmland Advantage program, which provides resources to farmers in the sustainable management of riparian areas, grasslands and forest fire mitigation.</li> <li>Advocate for farm tax status criteria to allow for retention of healthy forest stands on farmland.</li> <li>Encourage seed production, soil conservation, and other regenerative practices that promote the health and resiliency of the agri-food system.</li> <li>Create a local solid waste management plan that is inclusive of composting, plastics recycling, and chemical waste pick-up services for farms.</li> <li>Circulate information regarding the provincial <i>Agricultural Environmental Management Code of Practice</i> to ensure that producers are aware of their responsibilities regarding environmental protection.</li> </ul>	<p>Lead: Metchosin farmers</p> <p>Support: IAF, AF, CRD, DoM</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	
<p><b>3.2 Involve the agriculture sector and farmers in emergency preparedness planning and response.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance on-farm emergency preparedness by ensuring producers are aware of existing risks, roles &amp; responsibilities during an emergency. Emphasize that the responsibility for livestock during an emergency belongs to the livestock owner and the importance of registering through AF’s Premises ID program.</li> <li>Ensure all producers have access to emergency planning tools such as livestock farm “buddy systems” and the <i>Farm Flood Readiness Toolkit</i>.</li> <li>Engage with and include producer perspectives when reviewing local emergency response plans.</li> <li>Include Scia’new First Nation in discussions regarding agricultural emergency planning and response initiatives.</li> </ul>	<p>Lead: DoM</p> <p>Support: Metchosin farmers, AF, EMBC, Metchosin fire department</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	

Action	Description	Lead/Supports	Timeframe
<p><b>3.3 Support the agriculture sector in managing wildlife conflicts on farms</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage with the CRD, AF, BC Conservation Officers, and Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) to discuss local experiences with predators (impacting livestock and poultry), deer, and migratory birds (impacting both cropland and poultry flock health) and explore solutions to improve these issues. Canadian Geese are an increasingly significant problem for field based crops.</li> <li>Look to Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust and DUC, for examples and collaborative opportunities in farm management and migratory bird grazing.</li> <li>Advocate on behalf of the agriculture sector to the CRD to find more effective solutions to managing wildlife conflicts.</li> </ul>	<p>Lead: CRD, DoM, Metchosin farmers</p> <p>Support: DUC,</p>	<p>Short (1-2 years)</p>
<p><b>3.4 Support biodiversity by proactively managing invasive species in increasing native plant species.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage with the Metchosin Invasive Species Cooperative (MISC) to produce communication materials specific to producers on identifying, managing and destroying invasive species. Include information about the ecological importance of managing invasives.</li> <li>Include information about invasive species on farmland on the DoM webpage, linked to the agriculture section for ease of access and clarity.</li> <li>Prioritize the selection of native species for crops, hedgerows, pollinator buffers, cover crops, pasture and riparian areas whenever possible.</li> </ul>	<p>Lead: Metchosin farmers</p> <p>Support: MISC, DoM</p>	<p>Medium (3 – 5 years)</p>

## 5. Implementation

Given the broad scope of the Agricultural Area Plan, many of the actions will require further research, engagement, and planning. All actions will be expected to consider the following principles in their scoping and activation:

- Advance reconciliation: Seek opportunities to partner with and strengthen Metchosin’s relationship with the Scia’new First Nations as part of the implementation phase.
- Collaborate across sectors and with other levels of government: Bring all interested and affected organizations together to identify collaborative solutions.
- Use resources effectively: Build on existing initiatives and partnerships for efficiency and impact.
- Engage farmers and community members: Ensure farmers and community members are engaged throughout implementation.

Implementation timelines are identified in the following tables along with lead and supporting organizations and estimated budgetary requirements. Additional or external funding refers to either an annual budget request, other funding sources, or a combination thereof. Priority levels are tied to timing of the *start* of implementation. Ongoing actions are already underway; high priority actions are to be targeted to begin within 1-2 years; medium priority actions are to be targeted to begin within 3-5 years; and lower priority actions are to be targeted to start in about 5 years.

### Ongoing Actions

Recommendation	Description	Lead Organization	Supporting Organizations	Additional/ external funding required
1.1	<p><b>The District of Metchosin will:</b></p> <p>Continue to strengthen the Metchosin policies to support agriculture in the context of the District’s commitments to promoting biodiversity and adapting to climate change through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using best practice agricultural land use planning</li> <li>• Developing a working relationship with the ALC.</li> <li>• Improving public communication of policies.</li> <li>• Considering OCP updates</li> </ul>	DoM	N/A	No

1.2	<b>The District of Metchosin will:</b> Update the Metchosin Land Use Bylaw to support agriculture: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare staff report(s) on the Agricultural Advisory Select Committee (AASC) recommendations regarding District’s Land Use Bylaw changes (Appendix 1).</li> </ul>	DoM	N/A	No
1.3	<b>The District of Metchosin will:</b> Advocate to other levels of government for legislation that supports productive stewardship of the agricultural land base.	DoM	Metchosin farmers	No
1.3.1	<b>The District of Metchosin will:</b> Prepare a staff report on AASC recommendations on matching tax rates with farmland production.	DoM		
1.3.2	<b>The District of Metchosin will:</b> Request the Province provide increased resources to support ALR enforcement.	DoM		
3.1	<b>The District of Metchosin supports:</b> Sustainable farming practices including the protection of ecosystem services on farms, and a low carbon agricultural sector.	Metchosin farmers	IAF, AF, CRD, DoM	Yes
3.2	<b>The District of Metchosin supports:</b> Involving the agriculture sector and farmers in emergency preparedness, planning and response.	Metchosin farmers	Metchosin farmers, AF, EMBC, fire department	No

**Short Term Actions (1–2 Years)**

Recommendation	Description	Lead Organization	Supporting Organizations	Additional/ external funding required
1.4	<b>The District of Metchosin will:</b> Continue to support the establishment of a Foodland Access Program in the CRD through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying land for the Foodland Access Program use in Metchosin.</li> <li>CRD-level decision-making.</li> </ul>	DoM	Metchosin farmers	Maybe
2.1	<b>The District of Metchosin supports:</b> Identifying an existing organization to lead the implementation of the Plan or establish a new group.	Metchosin farmers	MPA, MFI	Maybe

2.2	<b>The District of Metchosin supports:</b> Developing new forms of routes to market.	Metchosin farmers	MPA, South Island Food Hub	Yes
2.3	<b>The District of Metchosin supports:</b> Exploring opportunities to initiate a bulk buying club for production inputs such as compost, feed, seed and hay/straw.	Metchosin farmers	AF	Maybe
3.3	<b>The District of Metchosin will:</b> Support the agriculture sector in managing wildlife conflicts on farms in the context of public safety and the District's commitments on protecting biodiversity.	CRD, DoM, Metchosin farmers	DUC	No
1.8	<b>The District of Metchosin will:</b> Consider the agricultural sector when undertaking aquifer and watershed planning and policy development.	DoM	AASC	

**Medium Term Actions (3–5 Years)**

Recommendation	Description	Lead Organization	Supporting Organizations	Additional/ external funding required
1.5	<b>The District of Metchosin supports:</b> Improving datasets pertaining to the agriculture sector in Metchosin by committing to providing an annual report on farm tax status.	Metchosin farmers	DoM	Maybe
1.6	<b>The District of Metchosin supports:</b> Succession planning and establishment of new entrants.	Metchosin farmers	YA, AF	No
1.7	<b>The District of Metchosin will:</b> Engage and educate the community about best practices in living near and within agricultural areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeking partnerships with Sc'ianew Nation on archeological awareness</li> <li>• Providing resources to realtors.</li> <li>• Developing and implementing a multi-pronged communications plan.</li> </ul>	DoM	AF	No
2.4	<b>The District of Metchosin supports:</b> Developing a collective marketing campaign for Metchosin farm products.	Metchosin farmers	Tourism VI, BuyBC	Yes

2.5	<b>The District of Metchosin supports:</b> Improvements to local post-production processing capacity.	Metchosin farmers	MPA, MFI, SIFI, DoM	Yes
2.6	<b>The District of Metchosin supports:</b> Metchosin farmers exploring opportunities that showcase the cultural food history of the community.	Metchosin farmers	Tourism Vancouver Island, DoM	Yes
3.4	<b>The District of Metchosin supports:</b> Proactive management of invasive species and increasing native plant species to support biodiversity.	Metchosin farmers	MISC, DoM	Maybe
3.5	<b>The District of Metchosin supports:</b> The establishment of a representative group of Metchosin farmers to explore and implement actions of interest identified in the District's 2024 Agricultural Area Plan.	Metchosin farmers		

**Long Term Actions (>5 Years)**

Recommendation	Description	Lead Organization	Supporting Organizations	Additional/ external funding required
2.7	<b>The District of Metchosin supports:</b> Establishing an equipment and/or tool-sharing program.	Metchosin farmers	IAF, AF	No

## 6. Monitoring and Reporting Framework

A monitoring and reporting framework has been developed to support implementation of the Agricultural Area Plan. For each goal, at least one progress indicator has been identified as well as measurement metrics, data sources, and baseline information where available. The Plan includes a recommendation to better measure and track local agricultural data generally, which could include the dissemination of a survey to the farming community every year or two. While the indicators help to track the overall health of the local agricultural sector, it is important to note that many are influenced by factors that are beyond the District or the farming community’s control.

Goal	Indicator	Measure	Data source(s)	Baseline information (2023)
<b>1. Protect Metchosin Farmland for Farming</b>	The ALR is protected and preserved for agriculture.	Amount of land in the ALR (based on 2023 values).  Percentage of ALR that is in agricultural (productive) use.	ALUI ALC	Total ALR in Metchosin 1,658 ha (4,211 acres) (2018, ALUI)
	Agricultural land is productive.	Number of policies and bylaws regarding agricultural land that are revised and/or improved.	ALUI Survey of Agricultural Community	The ALUI provides a measure of agricultural productivity
<b>2: Support the Economic Viability of Metchosin’s Farming Community in a Collaborative Manner</b>	Amount of local processing and sales of agricultural products.	Number and/or capacity of local processing plants facilities.	Survey of Agricultural Community	N/A
		Number of farms and number of farm operators in Metchosin.	Census of Agriculture  Survey of Agricultural Community	N/A
	Succession planning and new farmers are supported.	Number of farms with succession plans.	Survey of Agricultural Community	17% have succession plans. (2023 Agriculture Survey)
	Local food sales are supported.	Total farm revenues	Survey of Agricultural Community	N/A
		Number of direct sale routes to market (e.g. farm stand, online, wholesale, etc.)	Survey of Agricultural Community	56% use direct farm sale techniques. (2023 Agriculture Survey)
		Number of local farms represented at the	MPA	N/A

Goal	Indicator	Measure	Data source(s)	Baseline information (2023)
		Metchosin Farmers Market.	Survey of Agricultural Community	
<b>3: Create a Sustainable and Climate Resilient Farming Sector in Metchosin</b>	Improved resilience of the agriculture sector to the effects of climate change.	Number of on-farm innovative projects to reduce waste and GHG emissions.	Survey of Agricultural Community	N/A
		Number of farms that have emergency preparedness plans.	Survey of Agricultural Community	N/A
	Farmers maintain, restore and enhance areas of biodiversity and ecological significance.	Number of biodiversity/riparian enhancement projects undertaken on farmland.	Investment Agriculture Foundation – Farmland Advantage Survey of agricultural community	N/A
		The number of collaborative projects with Ducks Unlimited, Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust and/or IAF.	DUC DFWT IAF Survey of agricultural community	N/A
	Waste generated from farms is diverted from the landfill.	Agricultural waste drop-off / pick-up events.	DoM	N/A

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Considerations regarding updates to the Land Use Bylaw

- Align definitions of agriculture, farming, agri-tourism, and other related terms with those used in ALC regulations, Right to Farm Act, and BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food guidelines and policies.
- The main differences in zone AG and AG1 appear to be with regards to housing density. Now that there are housing allowances specified in the ALR from ALC regulations, these 2 zones could be combined into a single zone. The current housing allowances do not align with ALC regulations.
- Subsection 5 of the AG and AG1 zones should be revisited as to the current restrictions on certain types of agricultural activities.
- Zones AG and AG1 allow for an Agricultural Fairground, this is a use that would require permission from the ALC.
- Create a maximum residential area footprint following the Guidelines set out by the AF, including maximum lot line setbacks, to preserve as much viable farmland as possible.
- Allowing food production in all zones, even outside of the ALR, at appropriate levels of scale.
- Consider increasing the size of signs allowed for agricultural businesses (above 2 m<sup>2</sup>).
- Consider increasing the minimum parcel subdivision size in zones AG and AG1 (currently it is at 4 ha (10 acres) and include a note that any subdivision in the ALR requires the approval of the ALC, which may not align with the minimum parcel size set out by local government.
- AG zone setbacks for intensive livestock production (e.g. 60m from a front lot line and 20m from side lot lines) should be revisited to ensure they are not limiting expansion of a productive farm base.
- Include reference to the Agricultural Environmental Management Code of Practice regarding any concerns about manure management, composting, fertilizer runoff and the quality of watercourses and groundwater affected by the farming property.
- Rural Residential Zone 4 (RR4) should be re-titled as an agricultural AG zone. The minimum parcel size of 2 acres should be increased to reduce speculation of possible subdivision, and a note that all subdivision applications must be approved by the ALC should be included.
- RR4 zone subsection 5 should be revisited, as local governments cannot restrict certain types of agricultural activities if the land is in the ALR.
- Consider adding the processing of livestock and poultry (abattoirs) within the list of permitted uses in Industrial zones.
- Consider altering the Commercial Recreation 4 (CR4) zone, which is in the ALR, to encourage a use other than golf courses if and when property ownership changes or the current business ends. Often these uses are non-transferable as set forth in the associated ALC non-farm use decision.
- Consider revisiting Industrial 2 (M2) zone, which is in the ALR and allows for industrial activities (precast concrete products manufacturing). A better option may be to re-designate it as AG2 and simply allow a spot zoning for the particular industrial use, with a note that the use may not be permitted if the property changes ownership.





# Background Report

Metchosin Agricultural Area Plan

*April 2024*

**Prepared for:**  
District of Metchosin

**Prepared by:**

  
upland  
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## Acronyms

AF	Ministry of Agriculture and Food
ALC	Agricultural Land Commission
ALR	Agricultural Land Reserve
ALUI	Agricultural Land Use Inventory
AWDM	Agricultural water Demand Model
BC	British Columbia
BCA	British Columbia Assessment
CCS	Census Consolidated Subdivision
CFB	Canadian Forces Base
CLI	Canadian Land Inventory
CRD	Capital Regional District
GDD	Growing Degree Days
Ha	Hectare
MFI	Metchosin Farmers Institute
MISC	Metchosin Invasive Species Council
MPA	Metchosin Producers Association
OCP	Official Community Plan
PAAC	Peninsula and Area Agricultural Commission
PCIC	Pacific Climate Impact Consortium
SIFT	Soil Information Finder Tool
SVIFI	South Vancouver Island Farmers Institute
YA	Young Agrarians

## 1.0 Introduction

Agricultural production in Metchosin dates back to the 1850s, with the establishment of the first homestead, a 121-hectare (300 acre) farm between Witty's Lagoon and St. Mary's Church. Soon after, more farms appeared on the landscape, cultivating vegetables, strawberries, tree fruits, as well as dairy, pig and sheep farming. The Metchosin Farmers Institute was established in the 1890s.

While farmland in Metchosin is extremely fertile, parcels of land were slowly subdivided into smaller and smaller lots, many of which are used for non-agricultural purposes, until the creation of the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) and the enactment of the BC Land Commission Act in 1974, which prevented further subdivisions of agricultural land.

Recent years have seen a rise in small-scale, mixed production in Metchosin, with most farmers producing fruit and/or vegetables. Metchosin is also home to many small-scale egg producers, flower or plant growers, and sheep farmers. Metchosin producers largely sell their products through direct-to-consumer sales and at local farmers markets, allowing them to fetch higher prices than would be possible through wholesale markets. The following report will explore some of the factors relating to agricultural production in the Metchosin area in order to provide a clear baseline of information to inform the development of the Agricultural Plan.

## 2.0 Local Context

The District of Metchosin is located on the southernmost tip of Vancouver Island, sandwiched between Colwood and Sooke. Metchosin is a small, rural community with just over 5,000 residents. Metchosin is located approximately 16 kilometers from downtown Victoria, providing good access for producers to an urban customer base and tourism sector. Metchosin contains many large rural-residential lots outside of the ALR, which lend themselves to hobby farming, as well as many lots within the ALR which host small scale agricultural production.

Metchosin's landscape provides regional benefits with an abundance of greenspace away from the busy centres of neighbouring Colwood, Langford and Victoria. Metchosin is comprised of rolling hills and rugged coastline, dotted with golf courses, parks and small agricultural holdings. The region has a relatively low population, therefore a limited tax base from which the District of Metchosin can draw resources from. There is limited commercial and industrial activity within the community, but the Department of Defense has had a long-term presence with a military base located at Rocky Point. The local agricultural sector in Metchosin is well established, with many producers having resided in the area for decades, implementing innovative farming approaches to manage landscapes and adapt to a changing climate. The Metchosin agricultural sector includes an abattoir that is used by producers from within and outside the community, and the farms provide food for residents of greater Victoria and beyond.



Figure 1. Boundaries of the District of Metchosin. (Google Earth)

According to the 2021 Census data, the population of Metchosin is 5,067 which is a 7.6% increase since 2016. Table 1 provides an overview of the changes in population demographics between 2016 and 2021.<sup>1</sup> The majority of the increase in population is attributed to residents over the age of 65. Metchosin has a relatively low population with a population density of 72.8 people/km<sup>2</sup> compared to 571.3 people/ km<sup>2</sup> across the Victoria metropolitan area.<sup>2</sup>

Table 1. Population demographics in Metchosin. (Statistics Canada Census of Population 2016 & 2021).<sup>3</sup>

	2016	2021	% Change
Total Population	4,708	5,067	+7.6
0-14 years old	565	605	+7.1
15-64 years old	3,120	3,140	+0.6
65 + years old	1,025	1,320	+28.7
Average age	46.5	46.6	+0.2

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada. Census of Population. District of Metchosin Census Profile. [2016](#) & [2021](#).

<sup>2</sup> Census of Population. 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

Average total income in Metchosin rose by 26.8% from 2015 to 2020, at which point the average total income was \$61,850. This average is relatively high compared to the average across the province (\$54,450) and the increase has outpaced the rate of inflation in Canada.<sup>4</sup>

Table 2. Income statistics for Metchosin. (Statistics Canada Census of Population 2016 & 2021)<sup>5</sup>

	2015	2020	% Change
Total income earners over 15 years old	3,955	4,115	+4.0
Average total income (\$)	\$48,760	\$61,850	+26.8
Inflation	\$1.00	\$1.08	+8.0

### 3.0 Agriculture Profile

The following section provides an overview of the agriculture sector in southwest Vancouver Island including Metchosin. A variety of data sources were used to compile the information and trends over time and are described below.

#### 3.1 Agriculture Profile Methodology

This agricultural profile was compiled using existing reports and data sets. The main sources of data regarding agricultural activities are the 2018 Agricultural Land Use Inventory (ALUI) from the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food (AF), the Census of Agriculture (2011, 2016, 2021) from Statistics Canada and the 2023 BC Assessment Farm Class Data. There are some clear differences in the way that these data sets are compiled, which can lead to discrepancies when some indicators are compared. Whenever possible, these differences are explained. For example, if five acres of apple trees are noted on a parcel in the ALUI then this contributes to the acreage listed as 5 acres of apple orchard production, even if the apples may not be sold and/or otherwise be brought into the local food system. By contrast, the Census of Agriculture includes data on farms that are self-reported by individuals, specifically those from commercial operations. This is one example of how the data sets can lead to differences in results.

##### Agricultural Land Use Inventory

The most up-to-date ALUI data is the 2018 Capital Regional District (CRD) dataset. Metchosin agriculture data was segregated out from the whole data set, offering a more accurate depiction of the Metchosin agricultural profile in 2018. While the data is specific to Metchosin, some inaccuracies may occur. The ALUI data is collected through visual interpretation of aerial imagery combined with a drive-by 'windshield survey'. The resulting product is a snapshot in time of land cover and land use on agricultural parcels, and is subject to human error, and will depend on what types of livestock and farm infrastructure is present on

<sup>4</sup> Bank of Canada. [Inflation Calculator](#). Access October 2023.

<sup>5</sup> Statistics Canada. Census of Population. District of Metchosin Census Profile. [2016](#) & [2021](#).

the day of the inventory. Despite some potential site-based omissions, the ALUI data is helpful in answering the following questions:

- What is the current extent, type, location, and scale of agricultural activities in the area?
- To what extent is irrigation used and what are the water demands?
- What proportion of the ALR is available for farming?

### **Census of Agriculture**

The Census of Agriculture collects information from self-reporting individuals every five years as part of the larger Statistics Canada census collection and the completion is mandatory under the Federal *Statistics Act*. The Census of Agriculture is a federal data collection initiative, and as such the geographic resolution is coarser than that of the ALUI. This is another reason for some discrepancies found in the datasets. The latest available Census of Agriculture uses 2021 data from Statistics Canada. Census Canada agglomerates data from Juan de Fuca EA, and the Districts Highlands, Colwood, Langford, up to Port Renfrew including Jordan River, Shirley, Sooke and Metchosin. This area together makes up Census Consolidated Subdivision (CCS) Juan de Fuca (Part 2) [CCS590117056] (Figure 2, next page).

In the 2011 and 2016 Census, a “farm” was defined as any “agricultural operation” that grows or produces agricultural products with the intent to sell these products. This means that farms with no to very low farm revenues were included as long as the agricultural products produced were intended for sale. In the 2021 Census, the definition of a farm changed so that: a “farm” or an “agricultural holding” (i.e., the [census farm](#)) now refers to a unit that produces agricultural products and reports revenues or expenses for tax purposes to the Canada Revenue Agency. The new definition removes ambiguity in the definition of a farm, focusing on business-oriented agricultural operations. This change affects the comparability of farm counts and related statistical data from previous census years, particularly for small-scaled operations with low levels of farm income earnings.<sup>6</sup>

### **BC Assessment Farm Class Data**

The *Assessment Act* is administered by BC Assessment, a provincial Crown Corporation responsible for the classification of properties for property assessment and tax purposes. Farm classification is a voluntary program providing the benefit of a lowered tax rate for assessed properties.

Even though a property may be zoned as agricultural land, or located in the provincial ALR, farm classification will only be granted if the land (or at least a portion of it) is being actively used for agricultural production and it meets the other requirements of the Act. Only land can be classified as farmland - buildings (residences and outbuildings) are classified separately. Farm status properties may or may not be located within the ALR and are valuable for noting the distribution of farmed land in both the urban and rural areas. A certain minimum amount of gross income must be produced from the primary agricultural production, and these requirements vary depending on the total land area. Minimum gross income requirements are calculated as follows:

\$10,000 on land less than 0.8 ha (1.98 acres);

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<sup>6</sup> The Western Producer. [Stats Can changes “Farm” definition](#). April 2022.

\$2,500 on land between 0.8 ha (1.98 acres) and 4 ha (10 acres); and  
On land larger than 4 ha (10 acres), you must earn \$2,500 plus 5% of the actual value of any farmland in excess of 4 ha.

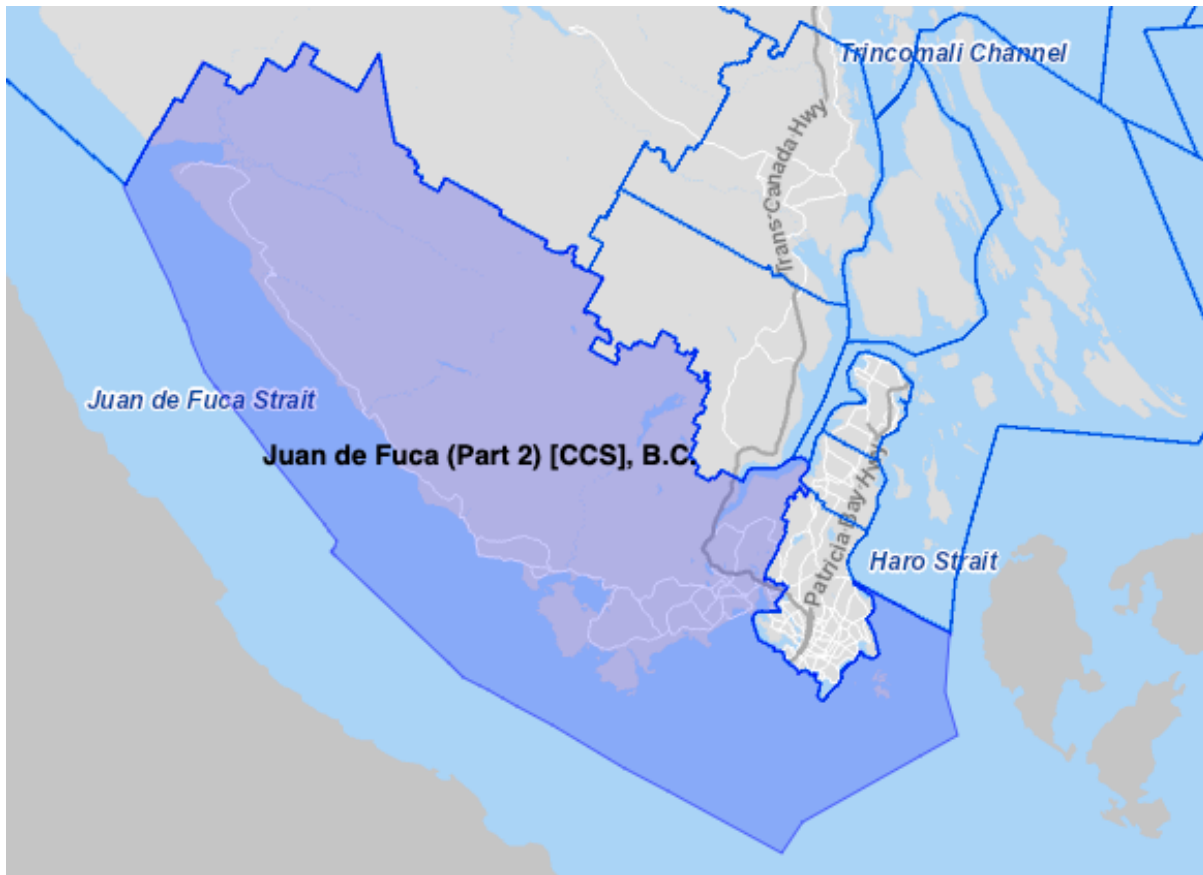


Figure 2. Map of Census CCS [CCS590117056] (Statistics Canada).

### 3.2 Agricultural Land

Metchosin has 1,569 ha (3,877 acres) of land within the ALR<sup>7</sup>, as shown in green in Figure 3 (next page). This land is protected from development and non-farm use under the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* (ALC Act). There are also parcels of land outside the ALR that are being used for agricultural production.

The majority of farmland in the Census area is being used as pastureland and cropland (Table 3). The exact amount of land in each category was suppressed in the 2021 Census of Agriculture for privacy reasons because the overall number of farms reporting is reduced (likely due to the changes made to the definition of a “farm” as noted above), but the 2016 statistics offer a clearer image of agricultural land use in the CCS area.

<sup>7</sup> CRD 2018 ALUI. Accessed November 2023.

Table 3. Agricultural land use in Juan de Fuca CCS. (Census of Agriculture 2011, 2016, 2021<sup>8</sup>).

Agricultural Land Use	2011		2016		2021	
	# of farms	ha (acres)	# of farms	ha (acres)	# farms	ha (acres)
<b>Total Farm Area</b>	217	2,905 (7,178)	181	2,351 (5,810)	147	x
Natural land for pasture	104	799 (1,974)	76	1,096 (2,709)	60	x
Cropland	122	613 (1,515)	98	523 (1,292)	92	x
Tame or seeded pasture	48	611 (1,510)	33	280 (691)	37	x



Figure 3. ALR in Metchosin. (BC SIFT)

### 3.3 Farm Characteristics

#### 3.3.1 Number of Farms and Farmed Parcels

In 2023, BCA data indicated that the number of Farm Tax Status properties in Metchosin was 145. It is assumed that some active farms in Metchosin do not have Farm Tax Status, therefore the total number of active farms in Metchosin is likely higher than the BCA representation. The 2018 ALUI notes 148 parcels of land in Metchosin being actively used for agriculture.

<sup>8</sup> Statistics Canada. Census of Agriculture. Land Use [2011](#), [2016](#) & [2021](#).

According to the 2021 Census data, the number of farms in the Juan de Fuca CCS decreased from 181 to 147 between 2016 and 2021 (Table 4). This reduction is consistent with census numbers across the province which reflect a reduction of 1,687 of Census-defined “farms” between 2016 and 2021 in B.C. The reduction is likely due to the change in definition of a “census farm” in 2021, as described in section 3.1.

According to the 2018 ALUI data, which is based on activities observed on the ground rather than attempts to define a “farm”, the District of Metchosin contains 330 parcels of land within the ALR, comprising 1,023 ha (2,528 acres) of land. Some of those parcels may be farmed cohesively as a single farm “unit”, while other ALR parcels may currently be unused and/or available for farming. Figure 4 shows that 148 parcels (614 ha) are used for farming (shown in green), and a further 98 parcels (218 ha) are available for farming but are not being used for agriculture (shown in yellow). An additional 71 parcels (826 ha) are unavailable for farming due to current land cover or land uses (shown in blue). The unavailable parcels include the Federal Government’s Department of Defence as Canadian Forces Bases (CFB) at Rocky Point, golf courses, parks, and institutional uses such as churches and schools.



Figure 4. Availability of ALR parcels in Metchosin, excluding Esquimalt-Rocky point CFB. (2018 CRD ALUI)

### 3.3.2 Size and Type of Farms

Census of Agriculture data indicates that land in the region supports mainly small-scale agriculture operations, with 59% of farms measuring under 4 ha (<10 acres), 29% of farms to over between 4 – 28 ha (10-69 acres) and 11% of farms from 28 ha and over (>70 acres) (Table 4). BC Assessment data indicates that 99 (68%) of properties in Metchosin with Farm Tax Status are under 4 ha (10 acres), and only 4

properties are over 28 ha (70 acres). This points to a greater proportion of small farms (<10 acres) in Metchosin as compared to the wider Juan de Fuca Census region.

Table 4. Farm Size in Juan de Fuca CCS (Census of Agriculture 2016 & 2021<sup>9</sup>) and BC Assessment (2023).

	2016 Ag Census		2021 Ag Census		2023 BC Assessment	
	Number of Farms	% of Farms	Number of Farms	% of Farms	Number of Farms	% of Farms
<b>Total Number of Farms</b>	181	100%	147	100%	145	100%
<b>Under 4 ha (10 acres)</b>	114	63%	87	59%	99	68%
<b>4-28 ha (10 - 69 acres)</b>	54	30%	43	29%	41	28%
<b>&gt; 28 ha (70 acres)</b>	10	7%	17	12%	4	3%

The 2023 BC Assessment Farm Tax Data shows mixed farming as being the most common primary use of parcels with farm tax status in Metchosin. Grain and Forage and “Other” are the second most common uses, followed by beef and vegetable production.

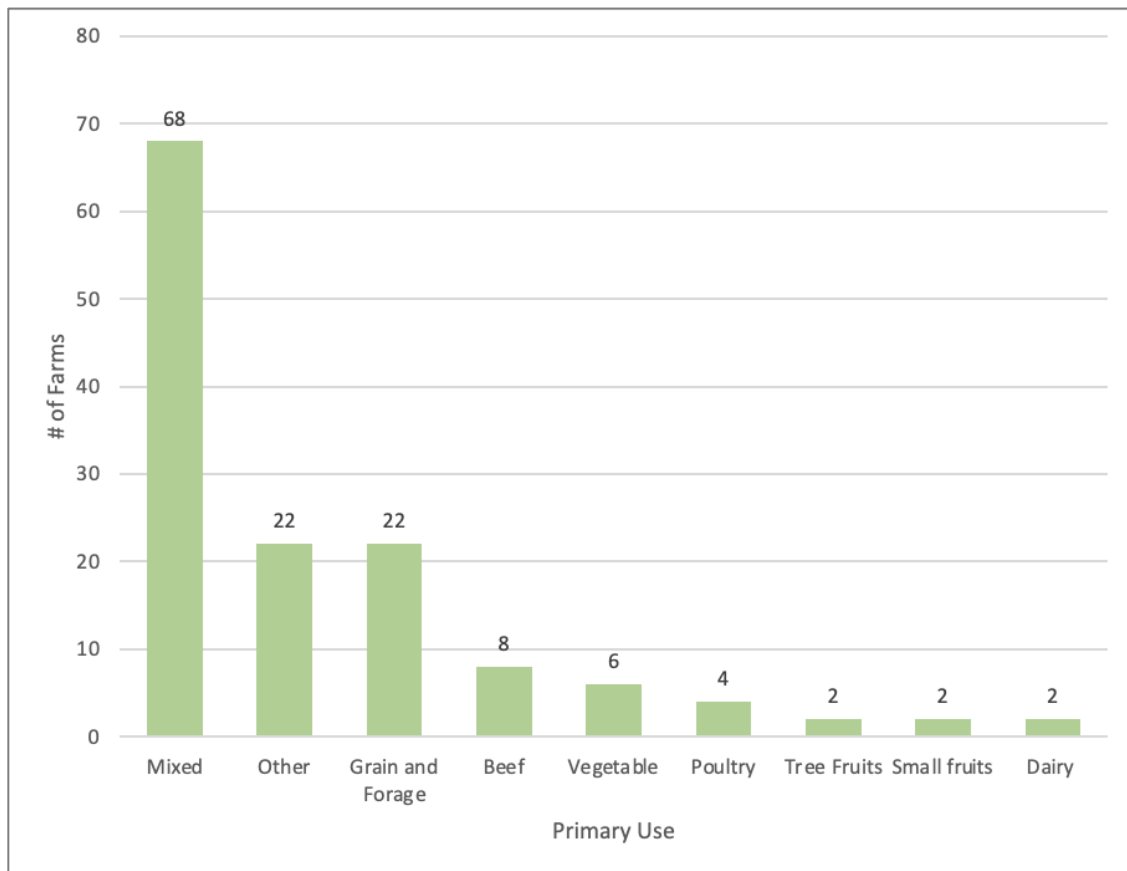


Figure 5. Primary Land Use on Farms in Metchosin. Source: BC Assessment 2023.

<sup>9</sup> Statistics Canada. Census of Agriculture. Farms Classified by Total Farm Area. [2011](#), [2016](#) & [2021](#).

Census of Agriculture data indicates that the most common type of farming in Juan de Fuca CCS is chicken egg production (31 farms), followed by vegetable and melon farming (21 farms), and horse and equine (15 farms) (Table 5). Most types of farming have experienced a decline in the number of farms reporting to the Census of Agriculture, most notably beef and cattle ranching, which has reduced by 10 farms since 2011, horse and equine (reduced by 17 farms), nursery tree production (reduced by 15 farms) and sheep production (reduced by 8 farms). As previously discussed, these figures reported through the Census of Agriculture have been impacted by the changes in the definition of a “farm”, therefore it is possible that these farms are still actually productive but are just not reporting any farm income to the CRA.

*Table 5. Type of farming in Juan de Fuca CCS (Census of Agriculture 2011, 2016 & 2021<sup>10</sup>).*

	<b>2011 (217 Farms Reporting)</b>	<b>2016 (181 Farms Reporting)</b>	<b>2021 (147 Farms Reporting)</b>
<b>Chicken egg production</b>	21	35	31
<b>Vegetable &amp; Melon</b>	17	22	21
<b>Horse and equine</b>	32	19	15
<b>Fruit and tree nut</b>	22	14	12
<b>Sheep</b>	16	12	8
<b>Apiculture</b>	10	8	7
<b>Beef cattle ranching</b>	15	7	5
<b>Nursery tree</b>	18	10	3
<b>Dairy cattle</b>	1	1	2

A closer look at the livestock and poultry inventory in Table 6 shows that Juan de Fuca CCS is most populated by sheep and lambs (1,575), followed by pigs (447) and horses (244). Many of the specific animal numbers are suppressed in the 2021 census data for privacy reasons, however we can deduce that there are likely many chickens, as chicken egg production is one of the most common types of farming, and 76 farms are reporting chickens in 2021.

<sup>10</sup> Statistics Canada. Census of Agriculture. Farms Classified by Farm Type. [2011](#), [2016](#) & [2021](#).

Table 6. Livestock Inventory for Juan de Fuca CCS (Census of Agriculture 2011, 2016 & 2021)<sup>1112131415</sup>

Total Animals	2011			2016			2021		
	# of farms	# of Animals	Average per farm	# of farms	# of animals	Average per farm	# of farms	# of Animals	Average per farm
Horses & Ponies	51	260	5	30	122	4	26	244	9
Cattle & calves	33	384	12	18	536	30	17	x	X
Hens & Chickens	108	96,070	890	103	25,882	251	76	x	X
Sheep & lambs	36	2,957	82	34	2,600	76	28	1,575	56
Pigs	8	156	19	7	497	71	9	447	50
Goats	15	98	7	16	152	9.5	10	x	X
Llamas & Alpacas	8	112	14	6	60	10	5	36	7.2

Of the crops produced in the region, the Census of Agriculture indicates that tame hay and fodder historically consumed the most land base, however the exact numbers are suppressed in the 2021 census data (Table 7). Fruit is reported on the most farms (50) with a total of 24 ha in production, most of which is under apple production. 42 farms reported producing field vegetables.

Table 7. Most common crops produced in Juan de Fuca CCS (Census of Agriculture 2011, 2016 & 2021)<sup>1617</sup>

Crops Produced	2011		2016		2021	
	# of farms	ha	# of farms	ha	# of farms	ha
Tame hay & fodder	45	407	40	335	25	x
Alfalfa	6	91	4	x	10	x
Potatoes	8	3	11	8	13	x
Field vegetables	51	22	48	28	42	x
Fruits	67	33	48	21	50	24

The 2018 ALUI data provides insight into the types of crops being produced in Metchosin more specifically than the Census of Agriculture (Table 8). Of the 304 ha (751 acres) in production in Metchosin, the most common crop is forage, at 133 ha (329 acres), followed by pasture at 92 ha (227 acres). Vegetable production is recorded at 8 ha (20 acres) and mixed fruit as 4 ha (10 acres).

<sup>11</sup> Statistics Canada. Census of Agriculture. Other Livestock Inventories on Farms. [2011, 2016 & 2021](#).

<sup>12</sup> Statistics Canada. Census of Agriculture. Cattle Inventory. [2011, 2016 & 2021](#).

<sup>13</sup> Statistics Canada. Census of Agriculture. Poultry Inventory. [2011, 2016 & 2021](#).

<sup>14</sup> Statistics Canada. Census of Agriculture. Sheep Inventory. [2011, 2016 & 2021](#).

<sup>15</sup> Statistics Canada. Census of Agriculture. Pig Inventory. [2011, 2016 & 2021](#).

<sup>16</sup> Statistics Canada. Census of Agriculture. Field Crops and Hay. [2011, 2016 & 2021](#).

<sup>17</sup> Statistics Canada. Census of Agriculture. Fruit. [2011, 2016 & 2021](#).

Table 8. Crops produced in Metchosin (2018 CRD ALUI)

Crops Produced	ha	acres
Forage	132.9	328.4
Pasture	91.7	226.6
Forage & Pasture	47.9	118.4
Barley	8.5	21.0
Mixed Vegetable	8.3	20.5
Mixed Fruit	4.0	9.9
Other	10.6	26.2

### 3.3.3 Farm Labour and Succession

In terms of labour, farms in Juan de Fuca CCS provided 16 year-round full-time jobs across 6 farms in 2021 (Table 9). Year-round part-time employment was provided to 21 individuals on 8 farms, and 5 farms employed 13 seasonal workers. Farm labour is not tracked through the ALUI, therefore more specific data for Metchosin was not available.

Table 9. Labour on farms in Juan de Fuca CCS (Census of Agriculture 2011, 2016 & 2021)<sup>18</sup>

Labour Types	2016		2021	
	Farms reporting	Total employees	Farms reporting	Total employees
Year-round full time	9	19	6	16
Year-round part time	12	19	8	21
Seasonal/ Temporary	17	41	5	13

## 3.4 Farm Profitability

Producers in the region must offset income with expenses related to land, labour, inputs and fuel. Farmers in most of BC have difficulty producing sufficient revenues to afford adequate farm labour, equipment, and other farm inputs (seeds, feed, soil amendments, etc.) to enhance production levels, and the situation in Metchosin is no different. Most farmers need financial assistance (through loans or other investments) in order to scale up their production and often one family member must work off the farm. Farm profitability is difficult to measure or to estimate. The following proxies can be used:

- Farm capital and assets
- Gross margin of farm operations
- Average farm receipts per farm
- Net revenue margin

<sup>18</sup> Statistics Canada. Census of Agriculture. Paid Labour. [2011](#), [2016](#) & [2021](#).

### 3.4.1 Gross Margin of Farm Operations

In the decade between 2011 and 2021, gross margin of farm operations increased from -2% to 12% (Table 10). This can be considered as a margin of 12 cents on every dollar spent in the farm in 2021.

Table 10. Gross margin of farms in Juan de Fuca CCS (Census of Agriculture 2011, 2016, 2021)<sup>19</sup><sup>20</sup>

Year	Number of Farms	Gross farm receipts (Million \$)	Total operating expenses (Million \$)	Gross margin
2011	217	5,972,934	6,113,457	-2.3 %
2016	181	5,993,586	5,386,514	10.1 %
2021	147	5,942,274	5,220,722	12.1%

### 3.4.2 Farm Revenue by Category

While gross margins have been on the rise, most farms in Juan de Fuca CCS (91 farms in 2021) report earning less than \$10,000 annually (with 8 farms reporting \$0 income) (Table 11). Very few farms (8%) report earning over \$100,000. It is also likely that the number of farms earning under \$10,000 is higher than reported. This is due to the change in the definition of “farm” as previously discussed, whereby only operations reporting revenues to the CRA are participating in the Census of Agriculture. This would also partly account for the large decrease in the number of farms reporting less than \$10,000 from 2011 (155 farms) to 2021 (91 farms).

Table 11. Total Gross Farm Receipts in Juan de Fuca CCS (Census of Agriculture 2011, 2016 & 2021)<sup>21</sup>

Farm Revenue by Category	2011 (217 farms)	2016 (181 farms)	2021 (147 farms)
\$0	x	x	8
\$1 - \$10,000	155	125	83
\$10,000 – \$24,999	32	28	31
\$25,000 - \$49,999	13	11	6
\$50,000 - \$99,000	5	4	6
\$100,000 and above	12	13	13

<sup>19</sup> Statistics Canada. Census of Agriculture. Farms Classified by Total Operating Revenues. [2011, 2016 & 2021](#).

<sup>20</sup> Statistics Canada. Census of Agriculture. Operating Expenses. [2011, 2016 & 2021](#).

<sup>21</sup> Statistics Canada. Census of Agriculture. Farms Classified by Total Operating Revenues. [2011, 2016 & 2021](#).

## 4.0 Biophysical and Environmental Context

The biophysical and environmental context of an area impacts the agricultural production through landscape, soil, water, growing conditions and climate change. The following section explores all of these factors and how they relate to and influence the agriculture sector now and into the future.

### 4.1 Agriculture Capability

Not all agricultural lands are created equal and not all agricultural land is capable of, or suitable for, producing all agricultural products. Some agricultural land is more suitable for certain crops than others, and some land is best suited to pasture or grazing lands for livestock. BC's diverse agriculture industry needs all classes of land to thrive.

There are three dominant limiting factors to agricultural lands in BC<sup>22</sup>:

1. Climate - defined by the heat energy and moisture inputs available for agricultural production.
2. Soil variability - properties and characteristics affect the land's ability to sustain agricultural products.
3. Topography - can limit access and the ability to use cultivation equipment.

The decision to put a particular parcel into a particular agricultural production is not a sole reflection of its agricultural capability or suitability. Agricultural business costs, physical accessibility and market vagaries may result in a certain block of land being used or left fallow and this may vary over time.

The Canada Land Inventory (CLI), developed in the 1980s, used defensible criteria to apply agricultural capability rating for soils in the ALR. There are seven classes<sup>23</sup>:

- Class 1 land is capable of producing the very widest range of crops. Soil and climate conditions are optimum, resulting in easy management.
- Class 2 land is capable of producing a wide range of crops. Minor restrictions of soil or climate may reduce capability but pose no major difficulties in management.
- Class 3 land is capable of producing a fairly wide range of crops under good management practices. Soil and/or climate limitations are somewhat restrictive.
- Class 4 land is capable of a restricted range of crops. Soil and climate conditions require special management considerations.
- Class 5 land is capable of production of cultivated perennial forage crops and specially adapted crops. Soil and/or climate conditions severely limit capability.
- Class 6 land is important in its natural state as grazing land. These lands cannot be cultivated due to soil and/or climate limitations.
- Class 7 land has no capability for soil bound agriculture.

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<sup>22</sup> Agricultural Land Commission. [Agricultural capability and the ALR](#). 2021.

<sup>23</sup> Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Ministry of Environment. [Land Capability Classification for Agriculture in British Columbia](#). 1983.

Although Class 6 and 7 lands have limited capability for soil bound agriculture, they may be agriculturally productive where topography and climate allow. The following are not considered in the classification: distance to market, available transportation facilities, location, farm size, type of ownership, cultural patterns, skill or resources of individual operators, and hazard of crop damage by storms.

Metchosin sits upon a relatively flat landscape close to the coastline, with moderate mountains occupying its northwest reaches. Home to fertile soil, the largest limiting factor for agricultural production in the area is drainage. Figure 6 and Figure 7 provide a snapshot of the agricultural capability classes that have been mapped Metchosin, illustrating that there are some areas of Class 3 lands close to the coast, with ribbons of Class 4 running through it. The vast majority of land in Metchosin is Class 6 and 7, however few farms operate within these areas.

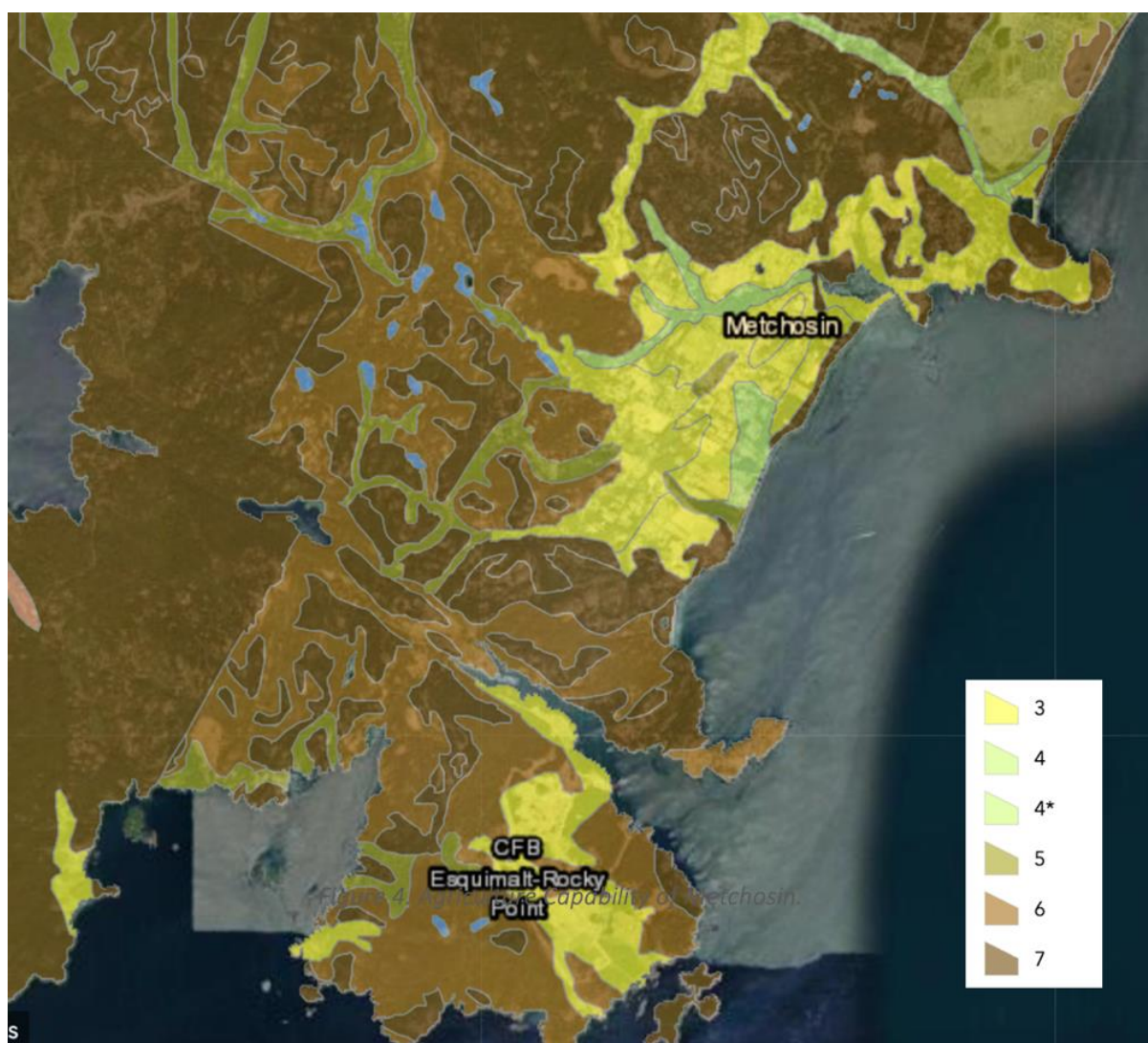


Figure 6. Agricultural Land Capability map of Metchosin and area (BC SIFT).



Figure 7. Agriculture Capability of Metchosin (BC SIFT)

## 4.2 Soils

In the 1980s, the federal government conducted soil surveys across the CRD. These soil surveys provide detailed descriptions of soils and can be accessed through the [BC Soil Information Finder Tool](#) (SIFT) (Figure 6) and the original maps are available [online](#). Much of the area is made up of a colluvium soil, Ragbark, which is stony and sloped, shown in pink on Figure 8. The soils most suitable for agricultural production are found in the lower lands near the coastline. Other soil types in the area are Marine soils, Saanichton soils (shown in brown), Somenos soils (shown in green) and Quamichan soil (shown in orange). These soils are sandy or silty loams and range from poorly drained to moderately drained. The Marine soils in Metchosin are fertile, however remain wet for most of the growing season unless work is done to improve drainage throughout the soil.

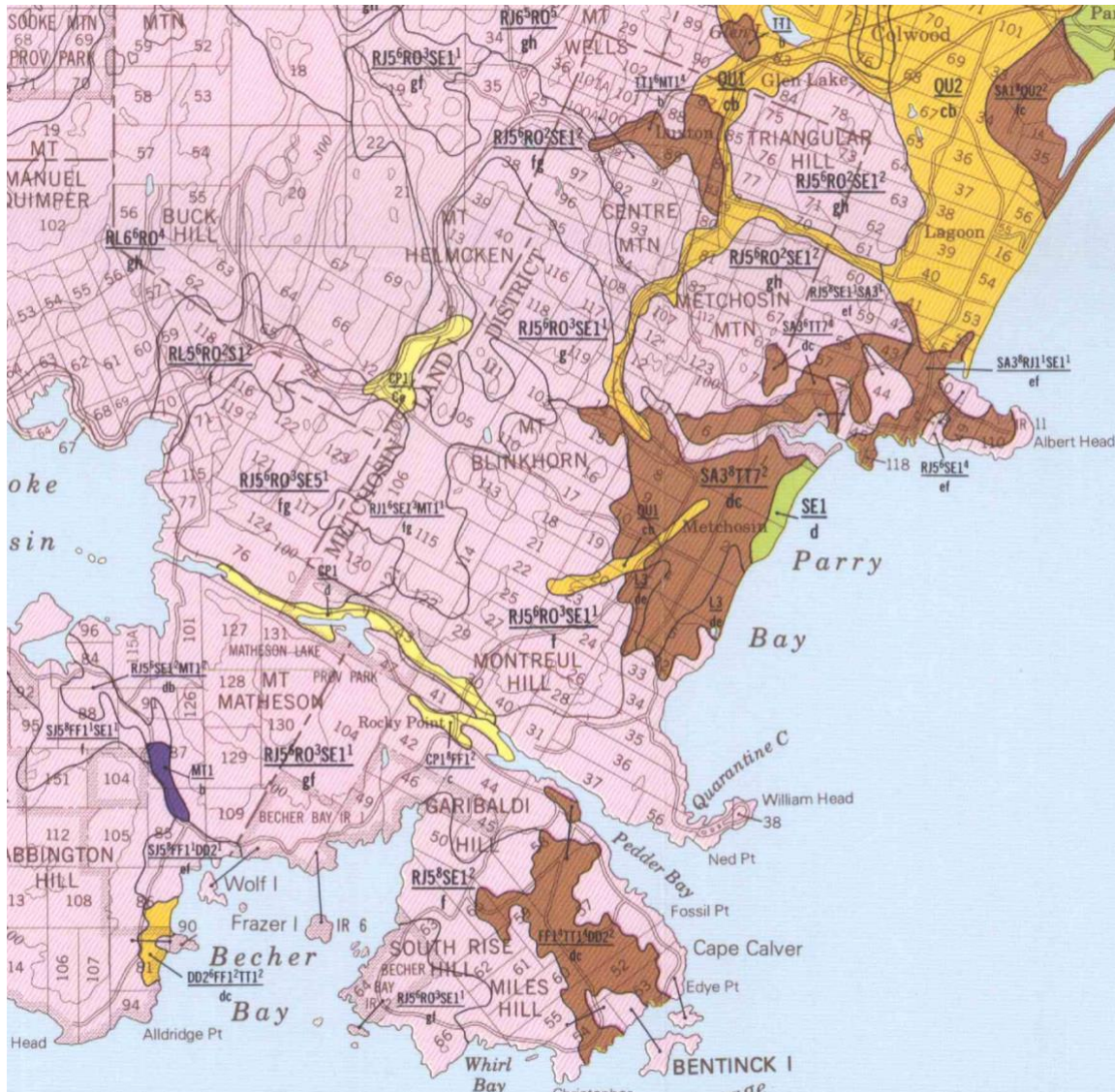


Figure 8. Soil survey map of Metchosin (BC SIFT).

## 4.3 Water Resources

### 4.3.1 Groundwater

There are 3 aquifers which serve the water needs of Metchosin (Figure 9).

#### Aquifer 606: Sooke-Metchosin

Aquifer 606 encompasses Colwood, Langford, Metchosin and Sooke, covering 537 km<sup>2</sup>. This aquifer is made of bedrock with low water output and high vulnerability. It serves 1,554 wells and produces 15 artesian wells. There is only 1 groundwater licence officially listed within this aquifer, however it is possible that additional groundwater licence applications are being processed.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> BC Groundwater Wells and Aquifers. [Aquifer 606 Summary](#). Accessed October 2023.

### Aquifer 682

Aquifer 682 encompasses Colwood, Langford and Metchosin, covering 24.1 km<sup>2</sup>. This aquifer has moderate productivity and is moderately vulnerable. Aquifer 682 only serves a very small portion of Metchosin, with only 5 of its 48 wells falling within Metchosin’s jurisdiction. There are no groundwater licences within this aquifer, however it is possible that additional groundwater licence applications are being processed.<sup>25</sup>

### Aquifer 683

Aquifer 683 is a small aquifer and encompasses Metchosin inland 3km from Parry Bay, covering 9 km<sup>2</sup>. This aquifer’s parent material is sand and gravel, it is moderately productive, with low vulnerability. It serves 28 wells and produces 1 artesian well. There are no groundwater licences within this aquifer, however it is possible that additional groundwater licence applications are being processed.<sup>26</sup>

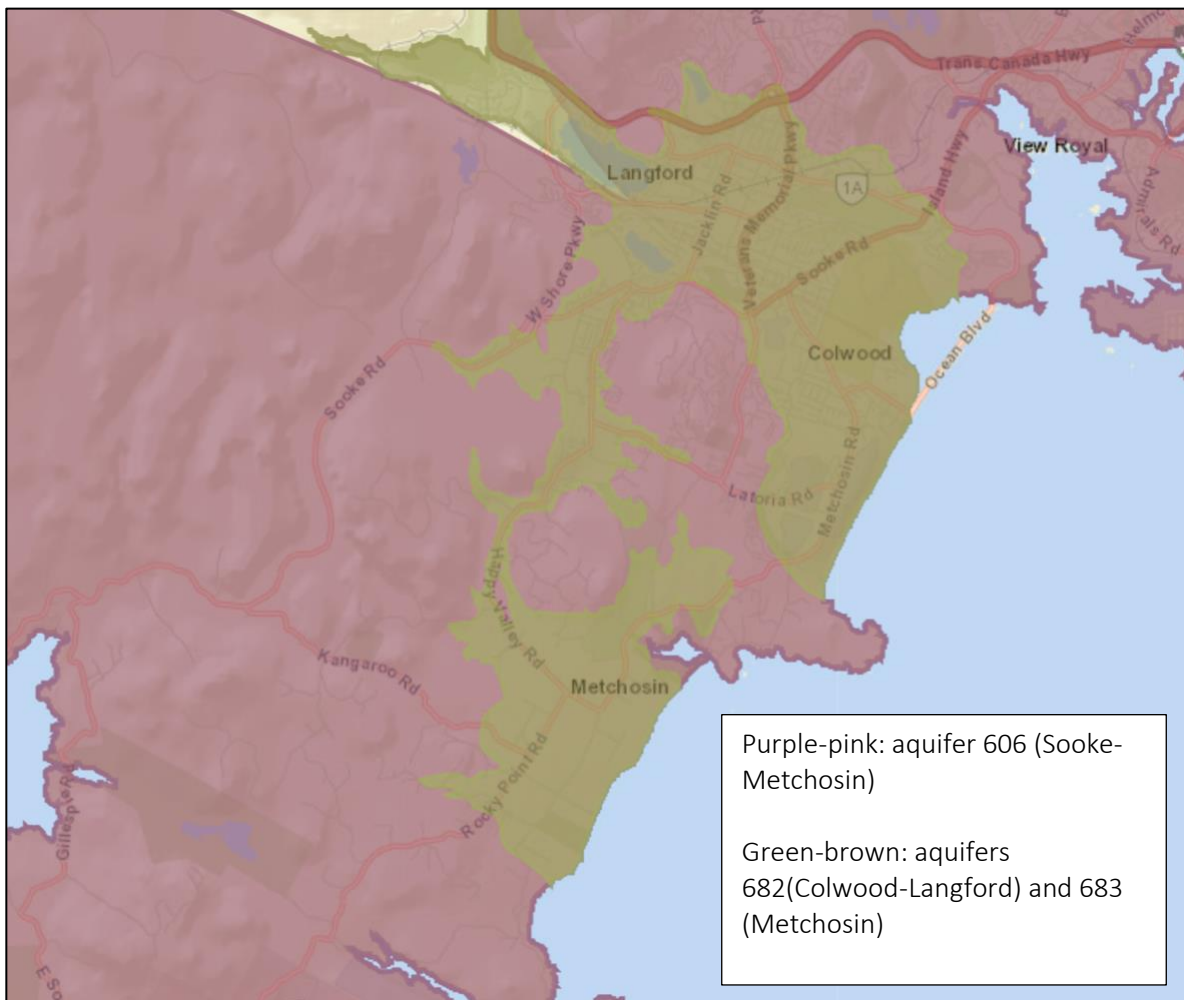


Figure 9. Three aquifers serving Metchosin water needs (BC Groundwater Level Data).

<sup>25</sup> BC Groundwater Wells and Aquifers. [Aquifer 682 Summary](#). Accessed October 2023.

<sup>26</sup> BC Groundwater Wells and Aquifers. [Aquifer 683 Summary](#). Accessed October 2023.

### 4.3.2 Surface Water

Metchosin lies within several watersheds including the Bilston Creek watershed (over 3,000 ha), the Cole Creek watershed (710 ha), and the Sherwood Creek watershed (110 ha). There are several surface water licences held in and around the Metchosin area, as identified in Figure 9. Irrigation licences are noted on Cole Creek, Rainey Brook, Hewitt Creek, Coolidge Creek, Bilston Creek, and others.

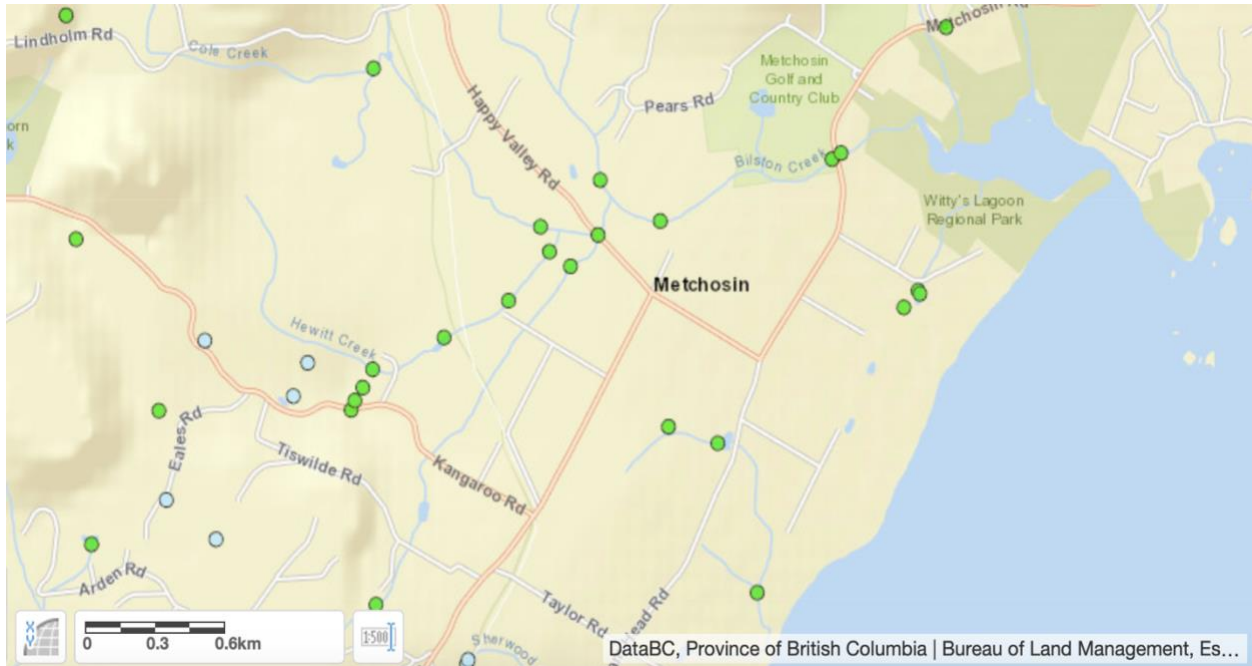


Figure 10. Surface water licences in and around Metchosin (BC Water Resources Atlas, 2023).

### 4.3.3 Irrigation

In 2019, the CRD completed an Agricultural Water Demand Model<sup>27</sup> (AWDM) for the entire region except Salt Spring Island and the Southern Gulf Islands electoral areas. Table 12 summarizes the specific water demands identified in Metchosin.

Table 12. Agricultural water demand in Metchosin. (CRD AWDM 2019).

Source	Irrigated area (ha) (acres)	Irrigation demand volume (m <sup>3</sup> )	Average depth of water required (mm)
Surface Water	10.6 (26.2)	94,588	889
Ground water	37.4 (92.4)	285,570	764
<b>Total</b>	<b>48.0 (118.6)</b>	<b>380,158</b>	<b>792</b>

<sup>27</sup> Capital Regional District. Agricultural Water Demand Model. 2019.

The AWDM also provided insight into a potential future scenario for water demand in the 2050s accounting for climate change projections<sup>28</sup>. Table 13 shows the baseline data from 2003, followed by three demand projections in the 2050s across all of the CRD, for both surface and groundwater. The table shows that across the region and without expansion of agricultural land or expansion of irrigation systems, demand is expected to nearly double.

*Table 13. Agricultural water demand and climate change in the 2050s. (CRD AWDM, 2019)*

	<b>Irrigated land (ha)</b>	<b>Irrigation Demand (m<sup>3</sup>)</b>	<b>Average Req. (mm)</b>
<b>2003</b>	1,019.7	4,103,475	402
<b>2053</b>	1019.7	7,273,826	714
<b>2056</b>	1019.7	5,836,547	572
<b>2059</b>	1019.7	7,523,769	738

## 4.4 Climate Change and Agriculture

Farmers are accustomed to the weather influencing their activities and weather-dependent decisions are a part of farming life. Adapting to climate change, however, involves a more systematic assessment and response. Agriculture is highly vulnerable to changes in climatic conditions and even small shifts could have significant consequences for farm viability and food production. Various climate change modelling scenarios developed by UBC and the Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre<sup>29</sup> all predict that precipitation will increase in winter and decrease in summer months on Vancouver Island, when it is needed most. As a result, agricultural water demands are expected to increase as climate change creates hotter summers and longer growing seasons. Table 14 summarizes the most current climate change projections for the Capital Regional District from the Pacific Climate Impacts Consortium.

The data shows an overall increase in annual precipitation, though significant decreases in summer months, with moderate increases in winter. The data also suggests that by 2050 the area will see a median 2.7% increase in annual temperatures and an additional 789 Growing Degree Days (GDD) along with 40 frost free days. GDD is a weather-based indicator for assessing crop development and a measure of heat accumulation over time. Exponentially increasing GDDs do not necessarily improve the productivity of an area, as plants also have high temperature cut-offs at which the development of a plant ceases. For example, the cut off temperature for the development of corn is 30°C.

<sup>28</sup> The Model also has access to climate change information until the year 2100. While data can be run for each year, three driest years in the 2050s were selected to give a representation of climate change. Figure 6 shows the climate

<sup>29</sup> [Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre](#). Accessed October 2023.

Table 14. Projected changes in climate characteristics for the CRD. (PCIC Plan 2 Adapt)

		2020 change from 1961-1990 baseline		2050 change from 1961-1990 baseline		2080 change from 1961-1990 baseline	
Characteristic	Season	Range	Median	Range	Median	Range	Median
Mean Temperature	Annual	+1.2°C to +2.0°C	+1.5°C	+1.8°C to +4.0°C	+2.7°C	+3.2°C to +6.1°C	+4.3°C
Precipitation	Annual	-1.8% to +3.6%	+0.54%	-0.98% to +4.9%	+2.3%	+0.38% to +13%	+8.0%
	Summer	-29% to +10%	-7.3%	-40% to +3.8%	-11%	-53% to -0.63%	-19%
	Winter	-1.8% to +8.3%	+2.5%	-0.44% to +7.9%	+2.3%	-0.11% to +18%	+10%
Snowfall*	Winter	-87% to -66%	-78%	-94% to -83%	-90%	-98% to -84%	-96%
	Spring	-91% to -0.93%	-67%	-100% to -49%	-69%	-100% to -63%	-100%
Growing Degree Days	Annual	+303 to +595 degree days	+440 degree days	+531 to +1210 degree days	+789 degree days	+967 to +1940 degree days	+1330 degree days
Frost-free days	Annual	+20 to +32 days	+27 days	+32 to +48 days	+40 days	+43 to +53 days	+50 days

\* This variable has a low baseline, percentage changes from a low baseline value can result in deceptively large percentage change values. A small baseline can occur when the season and/or region together naturally make a zero or near-zero value.

In 2017, the CRD completed a Climate Projections Report<sup>30</sup> which highlighted some of the noticeable changes which can be expected in the region. These include:

- Warmer winter temperatures;
- Fewer days below freezing;
- More extreme hot days in summer months;
- Longer dry spells;
- More precipitation in fall, winter and spring; and
- Higher intensity of extreme weather events.

<sup>30</sup> Capital Regional District. [Climate Projections for the Capital Region](#). Updated July 2017.

The impacts of these changes on agricultural systems will be significant. While an increase in GDD and frost-free days will lengthen the growing season, the negative outcomes may outweigh the positive. Hotter and drier summers will likely lead to increased pressure on water supply and increased drought conditions across the region. Water will be less available for producers in the months when it is needed most. Increased rainfall in the spring and more intense rainstorms can lead to flooded fields and delayed planting causing a shift in seasonal production which may not align with pollinator emergence, limiting pollination and overall yield.

Farming practices and expenses can be expected to change as more energy will be required to cool greenhouses and livestock facilities. New soil management practices will need to be adopted to adapt to wet soils. Infrastructure and ecosystem enhancement may also be required to improve wetlands for stormwater management as well as culverts and ditches to drain fields and improve the movement of water around the landscape.

In 2023, the District of Metchosin commissioned a Climate Action Plan to outline goals and actions to help move the district into a climate resilient future. There are four priority actions within the Action Plan that directly impact the agriculture sector. They are as follows:

Goal	Priority Action
<b>1.1 Preserve, protect and enhance natural ecosystems</b>	a) Investigate and report to Council on development of land-use conservation and enhancement targets.
	b) Engage with partners to solicit external funding for new habitat protection and restoration projects (e.g., invasive species management).
	c) Leverage land acquisition funding to buy and convert additional District lands into protected areas.
<b>1.2 Develop, protect and enhance agricultural lands</b>	a) Develop an Agricultural Plan that encourages and supports climate change resilience, enhanced biodiversity and low carbon agricultural practices.

## 5.0 Agriculture Supports and Services

### 5.1 Meat Processing

Each link in the local meat supply chain is vital - a local abattoir allows farmers to get their animals processed in a timely manner and cut and wrap shops (butchers) allow farmers to sell their products in cuts that are tailored to the appropriate market.

In 2007, the province amended meat processing regulations such that licensing and certification was more stringent and involved additional administrative oversight. These changes, along with other challenges in the industry such as the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy crisis, resulted in more than 300 abattoirs closing throughout BC over the last 15 years.

In 2021, the BC government updated the meat processing licensing system. The new system replaces the Class A, B, D, and E system with “Abattoir”, “Farmgate Plus” and “Farmgate” licenses. The “Abattoir” license allows for slaughtering of an unlimited number of animals (own and custom for other producers) with sales to retail or direct to customer. “Farmgate Plus” allows for slaughter of own animals and limited custom slaughter for other producers with sales to the retail market or direct-to-customer. The “Farmgate” Licenses only allow for slaughter of one’s own animals and are restricted to direct-to-consumer sales. Further meat processing, including cut and wrap requires a Food Premises Permit obtained from a health authority for all levels of licensing. Metchosin is fortunate to have an abattoir located in the community. Table 15 summarizes the licensed meat processing facilities in and near Metchosin.

Table 15. Abattoirs in and around Metchosin (Google).

Name	Location	Service	Livestock Processed
<b>Metchosin Meats</b>	Metchosin	Abattoir	Goats, hogs, sheep
<b>Kildonan Farms</b>	North Saanich	Abattoir	Chicken, turkeys
<b>Glenwood Meats</b>	Langford	Butcher	Lamb, beef, pork, poultry

In addition to these processing facilities, there are also 8 seafood processing facilities in Langford, Victoria and Saanich.

## 5.2 Distribution and Sales

The agri-food sector in Metchosin is made up of small scale and mixed producers. Farms in Metchosin are often producing a variety of products, with only a few focusing on one or two crops/ animals. Many mixed farming producers have difficulty accessing conventional distribution systems that supply grocery stores and export markets because they are too small to meet year-round minimum supply requirements. Challenges around labelling, quality control, traceability, and food safety are other hurdles to integrating into grocery stores. As a result, many small-scale mixed producers are focused on selling directly to consumers. Table 16 summarizes the number of farms in Juan de Fuca CCS who are engaging in direct-to-consumer sales. The high number of direct deliveries in 2021 may be attributed to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 16. Farms selling direct to consumers in Juan de Fuca CCS. (Census of Agriculture 2016 & 2021<sup>31</sup>).

Year	Number of Farms	
	2016	2021
<b>Farms Selling Direct to Consumers</b>	121	112
Sales of Unprocessed Agricultural Products	121	112
Using Farm Gate, Stands, Kiosks, U-pick	107	71
Using Farmers' Markets	29	24
Sales of Value-added Products	12	18
Community Supported Agriculture	11	10
Direct deliveries to consumers	x	65

Local producers and vendors are creating opportunities for local food sales into the community market through some creative platforms such as the Metchosin Grown Map<sup>32</sup>, which highlights 13 local producers with points on a map, and 8 producers without a marked location. The resource includes an overview of each of the 21 producers including information on what is produced, when it is sold, and social media and website links. The District of Metchosin also provides a *Farmer Directory*<sup>33</sup> on the website, listing 28 local food producers, their products, locations and contact information.

### 5.2.1 Farmers Markets

Metchosin is also home to the Metchosin Farmers Market<sup>34</sup> which is governed by the Metchosin Producers Association. The market is open once a week on Sundays from 11am – 2pm beginning in spring and running until the end of October. The market also holds one Christmas market in December. In addition to the Metchosin Farmers Market, the CRD is home to a number of markets which Metchosin producers may sell at. Table 17 summarizes some of the markets in southern Vancouver Island.

<sup>31</sup> Statistics Canada. Census of Agriculture. Direct Sales of Agricultural Products to Consumers. [2016](#) & [2021](#).

<sup>32</sup> Metchosin Agricultural Committee. [Metchosin Grown Map](#). Accessed October 2023.

<sup>33</sup> District of Metchosin. [Metchosin Farms](#). 2022.

<sup>34</sup> District of Metchosin. [Metchosin Farmers Market](#). Accessed October 2023.

Table 17. Farmers Markets in southern Vancouver Island (Google).

Market	Location	Season	Days
Metchosin Farmers Market	Metchosin	May – October	Sundays 11:00 – 2:00
Victoria Farmers Market	Victoria	May – September	Sundays 11:00 – 4:00
Westcoast Outdoor Market	Sidney	June – August	Sundays: 10:00 – 2:00 Thursdays 5:30 – 8:30
Market	Location	Season	Days
Esquimalt Farmers Market	Esquimalt	June- September	Mondays 4:30 – 7:30
		April – September	Thursdays 4:30 – 7:30
		September – December	Thursdays 4:30 – 7:30
Oaklands Sunset Market	Victoria	July – August	Wednesdays 4:00 – 7:30
James Bay Market	Victoria	May – September	Saturdays 9:00 – 3:00
Goldstream Farmers Market	Langford	May – November	Saturdays 10:00 – 2:00
Moss Street Market	Victoria	May – October	Saturdays 10:00 – 2:00
North Saanich Farmers Market	North Saanich	June – October	Saturdays 9:30 – 12:00
Peninsula Country Market	Saanichton	June – October	Saturdays 9:00 – 1:00
Sooke Country Market	Sooke	April – October	Saturdays 10:00 – 2:00

### 5.2.2 Local Food Box

The Local Food Box<sup>35</sup> is a marketing partnership between farmers in Metchosin and an example of Community Supported Agriculture. Participants pay ahead of the farming season to participate in a weekly or bi-weekly installment of fresh local foods for a total of 20 weeks. The box may include organic fruits and vegetables, mushrooms, seasonal flowers, honey, fresh milled flour or meats (pork, chicken, lamb). The local food box provides producers with a dedicated customer base for the season who pay upfront in the winter or spring when farmers need money to invest in the season’s production. There are 10 farms represented in the Local Food Box.

## 5.3 Agritourism

Agritourism allows for an alternative stream of income on-farm which can help offset some of the costs of farming. Often agritourism endeavors provide critical income to farmers allowing customers to have experiences and explore the farm landscapes and products in innovative ways. Metchosin is in close

<sup>35</sup> The Local Food Box. [About](#). Accessed November 2023.

proximity to Victoria which opens a lot of potential for agritourism activities such as U-Picks, farmstands, special events, and accommodation. Any farm engaging in agritourism endeavours on ALR land will need to comply with ALC regulations which limit the amount of retail space on farmland, the number and use of buildings as well as the number of special events.

The Metchosin Grown Map<sup>36</sup> provides a map of 13 farms in Metchosin, many of which offer a form of agritourism including workshops or events, farm tours, U-Picks and on-farm dining opportunities.

## 5.4 Extension and Support Services

The agriculture sector encompasses many different types of services and organizations which support agriculture. The following is a list of examples of organizations providing extension and support services to Metchosin producers:

### **Metchosin 4-H Club**

4-H BC builds awareness of agriculture, inspiring, educating and supporting youth by empowering them with skills and knowledge necessary to excel in the agriculture industry and make positive change in the communities. Metchosin has its own 4-H club with four sub groups: Poultry, Foods, Cavy, and Cloverbuds. Learn more: <https://www.4hbc.ca/clubs/vancouver-island>

### **Ministry of Agriculture Food Regional Agrologist (AF)**

AF provides extension support through a Regional Agrologist.

### **Southern Vancouver Island Direct Farm Marketing Association**

The Southern Vancouver Island Direct Farm Marketing Association works with farmers across the southern island to assist in marketing their products. One initiative from the association is the Island Farm Fresh website which links consumers to farmers through their “Find a Farm” tool and with a farmers market directory. Learn more: <https://islandfarmfresh.com/>

### **The District of Metchosin**

The District of Metchosin is a partner to agriculture by supporting the sector with links to online resources as well as providing information to the public about where and how to acquire local foods on their agriculture landing page. Learn more: <https://www.metchosin.ca/community/agriculture>

### **Island Flower Growers Co-operative**

Island Flower Growers is a producer-owned co-operative of cut-flower growers on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. The cooperative operates an online wholesale market, helps local growers in business development and advocates for flower farming’s contribution to ecological health and community wellbeing. Learn more: <https://www.islandflowergrowers.ca/>

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<sup>36</sup> Metchosin Agricultural Committee. [Metchosin Grown Map](#). Accessed October 2023.

### **Metchosin Invasive Species Cooperative (MISC)**

Metchosin Invasive Species Cooperative was formed in 2019 with the intention of mobilizing a volunteer force to help mitigate invasive species threatening the native ecology and the agricultural capacity of Metchosin. MISC provides resources on their website which help to identify invasive and native species, and tools to use in removal of invasive species. Learn more: <https://www.metchosininvasives.ca/>

### **Young Agrarians (YA)**

Young Agrarians is a farmer-to-farmer education and resource network aimed at supporting new and aspiring young farmers in building their business, production knowledge and skills and community. YA operates their land matching program as well as some farmer mixers and education activities in the Cariboo Region. Learn more: <https://youngagrarians.org/>

### **Peninsula and Area Agricultural Commission (PAAC)**

PAAC is an advisory committee to the municipalities of Central Saanich, Metchosin, North Saanich, and Saanich on matters involving agriculture and to facilitate the development of programs for implementation of the Agriculture and Food Security Plan. Learn more: [Peninsula and Area Agricultural Commission](#)

### **South Vancouver Island Farmers Institute (SVIFI)**

The South Vancouver Island Farmers Institute is a dynamic group of food, fuel, fibre and floral producers, friends and supporters. The group was founded and is governed by farmers - for farmers and community members who support agriculture and growing. The SVIFI's activities are membership driven with a goal to work to improve agricultural land stewardship and food security. The Institute promotes farming in the region through research, education, cooperation and outreach.

### **Metchosin Farmers Institute (MFI)**

The Metchosin Farmers Institute (MFI) concentrates its efforts on keeping the local community informed about agricultural heritage through traditional events such as spring and fall fairs at the Luxton Fairgrounds, as well as through the sponsorship of the Luxton Antique Farm Equipment Club, Metchosin 4H Club, and the Vancouver Island Blacksmith's Association.

### **Metchosin Producers Association (MPA)**

The Metchosin Producers Association (MPA) is the governing body of the local Metchosin Farmers' Market. The MPA keeps involved in important issues regarding farms and farmland and hold representation on the AASC. The MPA has previously received a Tourism Grant to make improvements to the market site.

### **Nootka Rose Milling Company**

Nootka Rose Milling Company processes different grains from producers in Metchosin. They utilize some fresh milled products in their off-site bakery and provide sales of grains and flours. The mill is located centrally in Metchosin and is a central component of the Metchosin food system. Learn more: <https://nootkarose.ca/>

### **Agriculture Resource Suppliers**

In addition to extension supports and educational resources, the agriculture industry requires services and supplies which allow farmers to operate their businesses, the following list includes a non-exhaustive list of agricultural suppliers which serve Metchosin:

- Tractor Time Equipment
- Willow Wind Feed & Pet Food
- Metchosin Farm Seeds
- Borden Mercantile Co.
- Integrity Sales and Distributors
- Top Shelf Feeds
- Buckerfields

## 5.5 Existing Policies and Plans

### 5.5.1 Capital Regional District Food and Agriculture Strategy

The CRD developed *Setting Our Table*, the Food and Agriculture Strategy in 2016 to help guide decision-makers in matters pertinent to food and agriculture in the region. The Strategy begins with a guiding vision:

*The Capital Region has a vibrant, valued and evolving local food and agricultural economy that is rooted in the principles of interdependence, reciprocity and respect; it recalls and re-establishes the intimate and important relationships between our land and waters, our food, and our community.*

The Strategy puts forward 10 recommendations to respond to the issues faced by the agricultural community in the region. The recommendations are as follows:

1. Support regional, cross-sector relationships, including a food and agriculture task force.
2. Improve the CRD's capacity to address regional food and agriculture issues.
3. Develop regional organic-matter recycling approaches that benefit food and agriculture.
4. Address chronic drainage issues across the region.
5. Consider establishing programs to address existing and emerging regional wildlife and invasive species issues.
6. Maintain and improve access to irrigation water for food and agricultural operations.
7. Encourage a place-based regional food culture by building relationships between Aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities.
8. Support Aboriginal food and agriculture-related activities, projects and events.
9. Increase access to agricultural and food lands.
10. Support regional economic development.

### 5.5.2 District of Metchosin Official Community Plan

The Metchosin OCP (2020) includes Section 3, which is dedicated to agriculture. It contains 11 objectives to guide decision makers and 12 policies to support the objectives. The agriculture objectives laid out in the OCP are as follows:

- To recognize and reinforce the agricultural character of Metchosin.
- To preserve and protect agricultural land for future generations.
- To encourage and provide opportunity for lifestyles based on agricultural enterprises.
- To minimize negative impacts on agriculture from non-agricultural use of land.
- To prevent reduction in parcel size of agricultural land.
- To remove obstacles to viable agricultural enterprise while addressing policies and regulations for the protection of Sensitive Environments.
- To support and encourage Federal and Provincial programs for increasing the viability of local farm enterprises.
- To encourage installation of environmentally sound irrigation and drainage systems to upgrade the productivity of agricultural land.
- To encourage wise agricultural practices including sound soil management, crop rotation, waste management and water conservation.
- To promote the use of organic farming methods wherever possible.
- To promote the use of biological control methods for pest management.

Some of the ALR within the District has been historically designated for non-agricultural uses. This is primarily on small lots within the centre of the district that have been used for commercial or institutional uses over several decades. The District works alongside the ALC when updating the OCP to ensure that the ALC is consulted on these land use designations.

### 5.5.3 District of Metchosin Zoning Bylaw

The Metchosin Zoning Bylaw contains several zones that overlay the ALR. The zoning bylaw is fairly outdated and would benefit from a significant update, particularly regarding agricultural land. The following observations were made regarding some of the issues in the zoning bylaw that may not be aligned with Provincial regulations and/or may not be overtly supportive of farming.

- Definitions of agriculture, farming, agri-tourism, and other related terms are not aligned with those used in ALC regulations, Right to Farm Act, and BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food guidelines and policies.
- AG and AG1 differences appear to be with regards to housing density, and these regulations may no longer align with provincial rules and regulations regarding dwellings in the ALR.
- AG and AG1 zones include restrictions on certain types of agricultural activities and should be revisited.
- Some permitted uses within AG and AG1 would require permission from the ALC (e.g. Agricultural Fairground).

- The minimum parcel subdivision size in zones AG and AG1 is currently 4 ha (10 acres) however this would require approval of the ALC.
- AG zone setbacks for intensive livestock production (e.g. 60m from a front lot line and 20m from side lot lines) may be limiting expansion of a productive farm base.
- There is no reference made to the Agricultural Environmental Management Code of Practice regarding any concerns about manure management, composting, fertilizer runoff and the quality of watercourses and groundwater affected by the farming property.
- Rural Residential Zone 4 (RR4) is within the ALR and the minimum parcel size of 2 acres is small, and certain types of agricultural activities are restricted.
- There are no zones where processing of livestock and poultry (slaughterhouses, abattoirs) is permitted (e.g. in Industrial zones).
- The Commercial Recreation 4 (CR4) zone, which is in the ALR, could be modified to encourage a use other than golf courses if and when property ownership changes or the current business ends.

### 5.5.3 District of Metchosin Resolution Regarding GMOs

Historically, the District may have passed resolutions regarding issues of agricultural interest. Resolutions are a formal statement of opinion on a topic, however they are not considered policy and are not enforceable. The District does not have a record of past resolutions available on its website, therefore the community must rely on the memory of those who were involved in the resolution or through historical hard copies, or through other online searches. Throughout the course of the development of the Agricultural Area Plan it was indicated by residents that a resolution was passed in 2012 by the District to indicate that it was not in support of farming practices that utilize Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs). It is not clear if additional resolutions regarding agriculture were historically passed by the District.

## 6.0 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

The following Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats table summarizes the internal (Strengths and Weaknesses), which can be controlled, and external (Opportunities and Threats) influences, which are more difficult to control, that impact the Metchosin agricultural community (Table 18). The information presented in the table has been developed using work previously undertaken by within the community as well as additional information uncovered through the development of the Background Report.

Table 18. SWOT Analysis for Metchosin agriculture.

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
Long history of agriculture in Metchosin	Lack of new entrants and/or succession planning	Favorable soils and climate for a variety of crop opportunities	High water table and low water holding capacity means drainage and irrigation required
Local food system support infrastructure (e.g. abattoir)	Few local retail opportunities, most producers need to ship out of the community	Relatively close proximity to a large market of consumers in Victoria	Cost of land and housing continues to rise so expansion of farms is difficult
Awareness of value and benefits of local food	Trespass and other conflicts with non-agricultural neighbours	Protection of farmland through the ALR	Challenging to access a consistent and reliable labour market
Small-scale mixed use farms creates resiliency	Additional cold storage options needed	Funding from government for beneficial practices	Pressure from urban development and conversion of farmland to estates
Community is supportive of local farmers	Profitability has been difficult to achieve for some farms – scale is a challenge	Healthy environment: air quality, water quality, biodiversity	Generally high and growing costs of inputs, such as livestock feed
High quality of produce and food products being grown	Lack of consistent marketing to educate consumers	Beautiful landscape and rural aesthetic contributes to high quality of life	Competition from national/global products
Strong local food system contributes to climate change resilience	Lack of shared equipment opportunities (e.g. tool library)	Collaboration and community-building across commodity groups and across farms	Consumers are feeling the impacts of inflation, less willing to purchase if prices are higher
Agricultural sector is an economic driver for the community	Lack of support services in the area (e.g. farm mechanic, extension services)	Community education opportunities through exposure to farms and growers	The majority of seeds are imported
Sense of pride, awareness, purposeful work, generosity	Need for a critical mass of support to ensure the abattoir can continue operating long-term	Regional Foodlands Trust initiative by the CRD could help open up land access	Water licensing and other regulatory requirements
Educated and skilled farmers that are consistently increasing and widening their knowledge base	Lack of affordable housing opportunities for farm labour and farm managers.	Presence of tourists during the summer indicates possible agri-tourism activities could be successful (e.g. cycling)	Local government not speaking up on behalf of farmers (e.g. advocacy to other levels of govt)
Previous Metchosin Grown campaign was	Lack of area specific and accurate agricultural data.		Challenge with pursuing regenerative practices (maintenance of forests)

positive (needs to be reinvigorated)			and natural areas) and ability to qualify for Farm Tax Status (too little arable land, too low income)
			Increasing disasters related to climate change (e.g. drought, fires, flooding)
			Invasive species and pressure from new pests
			Insufficient wildlife control
			Cost of water (especially without Farm Tax Status)





# Engagement Summary

Metchosin Agricultural Area Plan

*April 2024*

**Prepared for:**

District of Metchosin

**Prepared by:**



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## 1.0 Introduction

In September 2023, the District of Metchosin, in partnership with the Metchosin Agricultural Advisory Select Committee, embarked on the creation of an Agricultural Plan. The Agricultural Plan will serve as a guide to local government and agri-food sector stakeholders in making decisions and implementing projects which are relevant to the agriculture sector. In order to develop a robust and feasible plan which is grounded in the present-day realities of agriculture in Metchosin, comprehensive engagement with local agri-food stakeholders and the broader community was necessary. Engagement activities began in late October of 2023, and continued until February of 2024. The following document describes the objectives, methods and findings from the engagement process.

## 2.0 Engagement Objectives

The project process required comprehensive engagement with key players and stakeholders who are involved in the agriculture sector in Metchosin. Engagement activities provided an opportunity to understand the local context, including pressing issues and emerging opportunities. The following goals helped guide public engagement activities in Metchosin:

- Inform: To provide balanced and objective information to assist the community in understanding the problems, alternatives, opportunities, and/or solutions facing the agriculture sector;
- Consult: To obtain feedback and input from the community on analysis, alternatives, and/or decision through the project process;
- Involve: to work closely with the community throughout the planning process to ensure concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered; and
- Collaborate: To work with stakeholders throughout the planning process on each aspect of the project to find common ground and identify preferred solutions.

The engagement process sought to achieve the following objectives:

- Engage the community in identifying existing food and agriculture assets, gaps, challenges, and opportunities.
- Notify members of the community on ways to become involved in the creation of the plan.
- Inform the development of the Agricultural Plan, which will provide elected officials with a clear, rational set of recommendations for decision-making.
- Gain support and acceptance across Metchosin for the Agricultural Plan and its implementation.

## 3.0 Engagement Methods

A variety of engagement methods were used to ensure meaningful feedback over the fall and winter of 2023 into 2024.

Engagement activities included:

- Fifteen (15) Stakeholder Interviews;
- A Community Survey for the general public (298 responses);
- An Agri-Food Sector Survey for the agricultural community (76 responses); and

- An Open House at Bilston Creek Farm on February 16, 2024.
- Three meetings with the Agricultural Advisory Steering Committee.

The remainder of this report contains a summary of the findings from these engagement activities.

## 4.0 Engagement Findings

### 4.1 Stakeholder Interviews

In order to develop a comprehensive understanding of the agriculture sector, including the challenges and opportunities faced by farmers, a series of stakeholder interviews were conducted with farmers and business owners in Metchosin. Interviews occurred between November 6<sup>th</sup> and December 10<sup>th</sup> of 2023. Invitations for interviews were sent to 20 stakeholders in Metchosin, and a total of 15 interview invitations were accepted. Interviewees included farmers across the spectrum of production, owners of farmland who lease to farmers, as well as representatives from Metchosin Meats, the Island Flower Growers Cooperative, Metchosin Farmers Market, and the Local Food Box. The findings from the interviews are summarized as follows:

#### 4.1.1 Top Challenges Faced by Producers in Metchosin

During interviews, several challenges that impact agricultural production were raised by producers. Identifying these key challenges can help guide the creation of recommendations that target opportunities to improve existing conditions. The identified challenges are listed in the following table with a tally of the number of mentions each challenge received.

*Table 1. Top Challenges in the Metchosin agriculture sector and the number of interviews in which it was mentioned.*

Challenge	# of mentions
Access and affordability of farmland	8
Limited resources (extension, inputs, tools, resources)	8
Effectively marketing to customers	7
Loss of farmland/ farmland conversion	5
Farm worker housing	5
Finding farm labour	4
Cost of inputs/ profitability	4
Access and affordability of water	3
Conflicts with non-farming neighbours	3
Wildlife conflicts	2
Climate change	2

#### 4.1.2 Key Themes

Throughout the interviews, 6 themes arose which help to deepen the understanding of agriculture in Metchosin, highlighting innovative efforts, and underscoring opportunities for growth and improvement in the sector, and delving into the challenges faced by producers. The following section explores each of the 6 themes identified, the themes are not listed in any particular order.

##### *Theme 1: There is a growing and significant local market for Metchosin agricultural products.*

Metchosin is uniquely positioned close to urban markets of potential customers, within a 5-20 minute drive of a new development in Royal Bay and the existing communities of Colwood, Langford and Sooke. Getting locally grown produce into the hands of these potential customers could improve with strategic marketing, and improved availability of food items. An informal survey of market attendees showed that many people shopping at the Metchosin Farmers Market were attending from these surrounding communities, however there are few farm vendors present at the market, with most stalls selling crafts and non-farmed goods. There is a hesitancy on the behalf of many farmers to sell at the market, due to the time commitment involved in preparation, and risk of having a slow sales day.

##### *Theme 2: There is an opportunity to position Metchosin as an agritourism destination.*

Some farms in Metchosin are already focusing on agritourism as a means to bring locals to their businesses, but more opportunities exist. An increasing awareness and appreciation for local foods, small-scale agriculture, as well as an abundance of cruise ships arriving at the Victoria Cruise Ship Terminal during summer months can provide an opportunity for tourists seeking agricultural experiences. Bringing people to Metchosin to visit farms may require targeted advertising campaigns, offering experiences in addition to products, and/or collaboration from local farmers and businesses such as a long table dinner or seasonal fall fair.

##### *Theme 3: Metchosin producers are keen to collaborate and support each other.*

The community of agricultural producers in Metchosin is small and familiar, with many producers already collaborating on sales methods such as the Local Food Box and the Metchosin Grown Map. Many producers mentioned that they would like to collaborate further. Some recommendations which arose during interviews included:

- Equipment co-operatives or tool libraries,
- Joining the Vancouver Island Direct Farm Market Association,
- Running Agri-tourism campaigns,
- Cooperative bulk agricultural input purchasing, and
- Securing value-added services or resources.

##### *Theme 4: There is a need to protect farmland for farming in Metchosin.*

Interviewees noted that it has been observed that Metchosin is experiencing an increase in estate acreages which are non-productive, or minimally productive (to receive farm tax status). It is felt that this activity is leading to speculation and is driving up the cost of farmland in Metchosin. With the current cost of farmland in Metchosin, it is unreasonable to expect to cover the mortgages associated with farmland purchase

through agricultural production alone, which could be reducing the attraction of buying land for farming. Leasing is a more affordable option but can be difficult to secure for newcomers or new entrants, as well as reducing land security for producers who do lease. Land matching programs have proven helpful for some producers and land holders, but there is opportunity to increase the presence of land matching initiatives in Metchosin, including collaborating with landholders outside of the agriculture community (estate acreages) to bring these lands back into production. Producers feel that more could be done to discourage non-farm use of farmland such as:

- Enforcement of fill regulations,
- Bylaws that dictate placement of housing on farmland through residential home plate criteria, so as to avoid building houses in the middle of a farmable lot, and
- Education around the value of farmland and importance of its use for farming.

*Theme 5: There is a desire to improve the availability of extension services and value-added resources.*

Producers noted that while resources such as Metchosin Meats, Tractor Time and Nootka Rose Mill are critical elements of the agriculture sector in Metchosin, there is need for additional resources and services to serve the agricultural community. Some producers had experienced difficulty in securing assistance through AF's regional agrologists, as expertise in organic vegetable production, herb production or floral production are lacking. Processing resources such as a commercial kitchen or juice press are also missing from the community, with producers in need of these resources travelling to Victoria or Saanich to access them. Producers are also finding it difficult to secure inputs such as organic compost locally, as well as straw for bedding and mulch. Furthermore, the Metchosin Meats facility requires significant upgrades as well as a reliable succession plan to remain operational in the future.

*Theme 6: Metchosin producers are contending with a number of threats to farm business viability.*

In order for farm business to remain viable, there are a number of financial factors which must align. One such factor local producers are struggling with is the limited availability and high cost of housing for farm workers and farm operators, causing some people to live elsewhere and commute into their farms. Additional financial burdens include the cost of inputs such as compost, straw, seed and water which are increasing every year and causing strain on producers profit margins. In addition to financial strains, producers are experiencing environmental pressures such as water security, which is becoming a concern with the changing climate and Aquifer 606 beginning to show signs of being over-drawn (anecdotally), with some user's wells drying up. Concerns around hydrological impacts on aquifers by the new development in Royal Bay were also raised. Furthermore, predatory animals such as cougars and bears prey on livestock, government response to this predation is slow and resource intensive. Resident geese are also frequently eating field crops and are costing farmers thousands of dollars per year.

## **4.2 Community Survey**

The community survey was available online through Survey Monkey between November 25<sup>th</sup> - December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023. The purpose of the survey was to get a better understanding of the support for Metchosin farms, local purchasing patterns, and opportunities to further connect with potential customers. The survey

received 298 responses, 83% of which live full time in Metchosin, and other respondents who live in Colwood, Langford, Victoria, and Sooke.

#### 4.2.1 Local Food Purchasing Habits

Most respondents were active purveyors of local foods, either purchasing directly from farms, shopping at the Metchosin farmers market, or seeking out local products from grocery stores (Figure 1). Of those who selected “other” responses included: lease land to a farmer, grow my own food, and friend with Metchosin farmers.

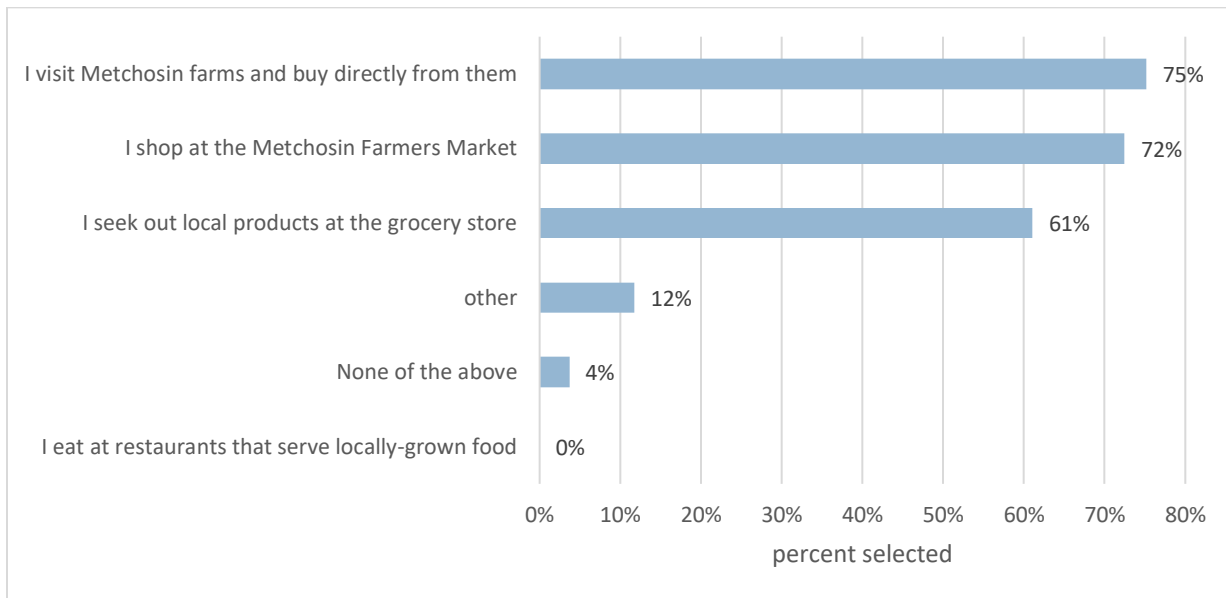


Figure 1. Respondent's relationship to the local agri-food sector.

When asked how frequently they purchased locally produced foods, 281 responses were received, half of which indicated that they often purchase locally produced food, 34% indicated that they sometimes do (Figure 2).

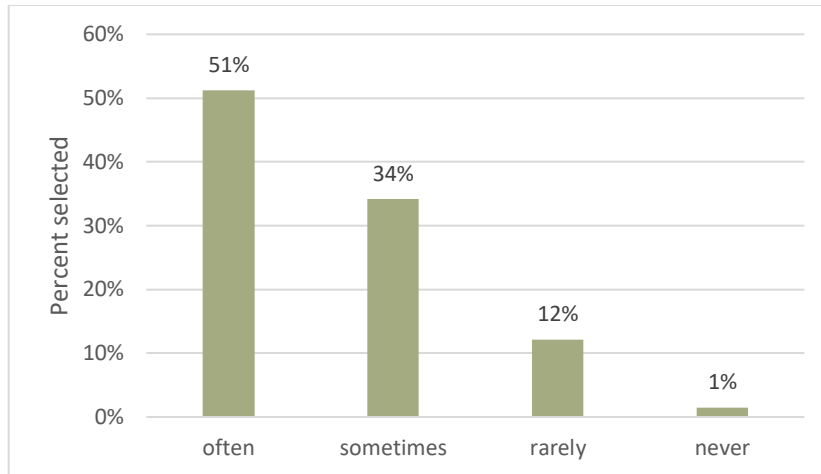


Figure 2. How often are respondents purchasing locally produced foods?

Respondents were then asked what would encourage them to purchase more locally produced food. Of the 270 responses received, the most common response was increased convenience, followed by affordability, and information to help them locate local foods. Of those who selected “other”, responses included increased presence of farm stands, a year-round farmers market, and more opportunities for celebration of local foods.

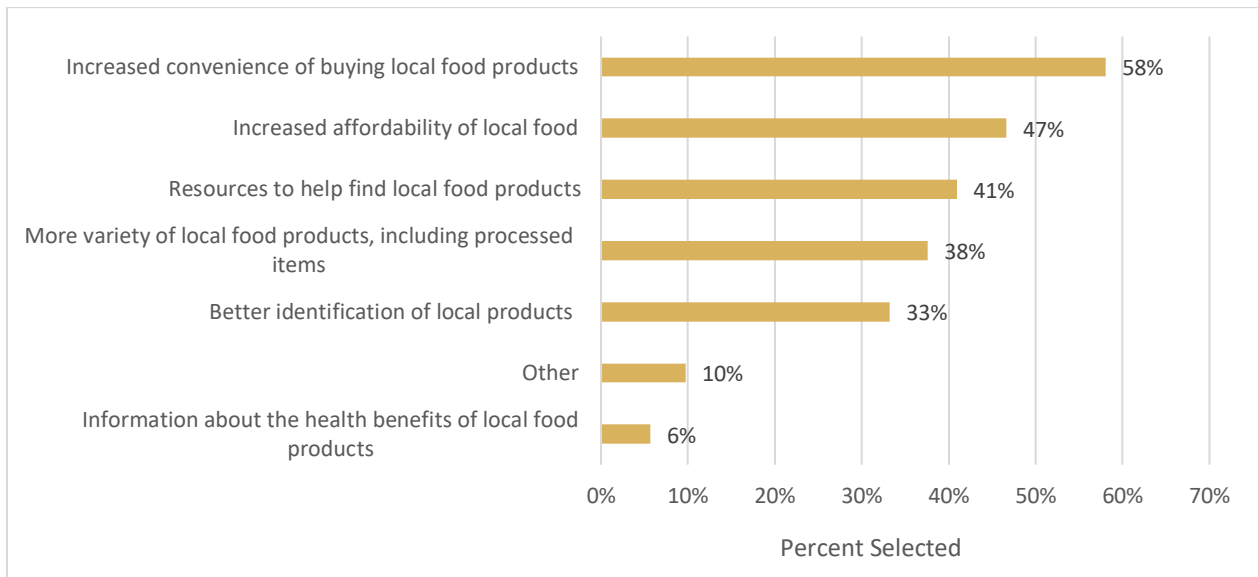


Figure 3. What would encourage respondents to purchase more locally produced foods?

#### 4.2.2 Relationship to Agriculture

Respondents were asked what benefits they experienced living in an agricultural area. 277 individuals responded, identifying many things they enjoyed about living near farmland including access to fresh produce and local foods, contributing to the local economy, and placing limitations on urban sprawl (Figure 4). Of those who selected “other”, responses included having the ability to teach kids where food comes

from, the preservation of traditional knowledge, health benefits, quality of life and getting to know farmers. Only 7% of respondents felt there were negative impacts about living near farmland, the majority of which were attributed to nuisance complaints such as odour and noise.

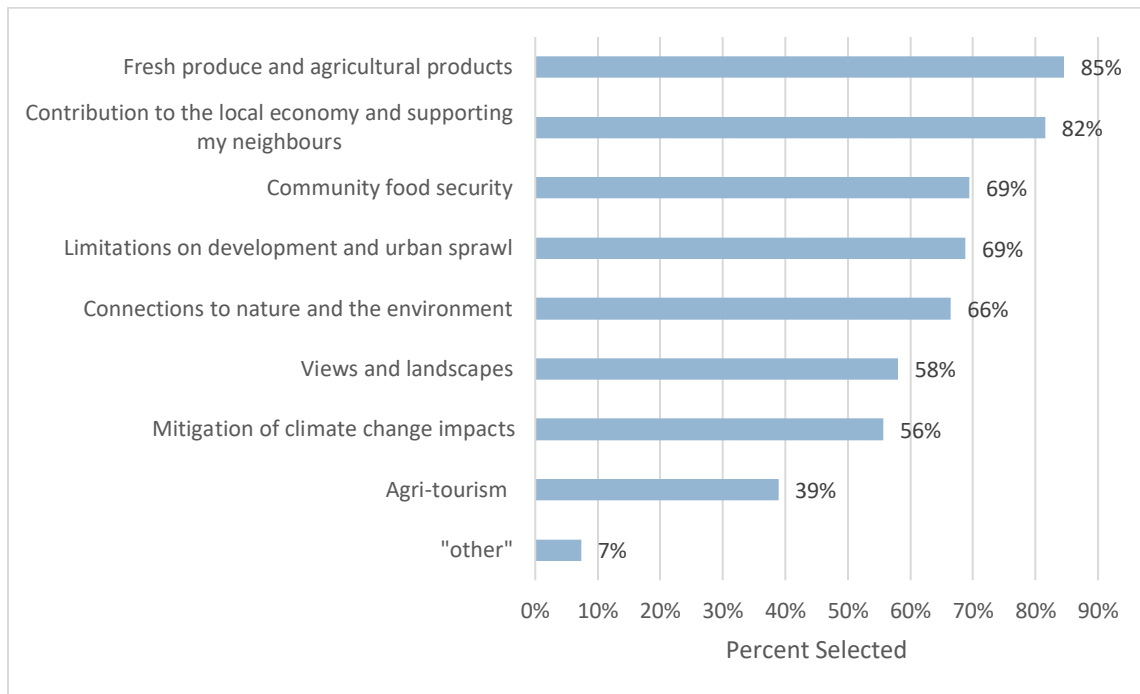


Figure 4. What benefits of living near farmland are respondents experiencing?

When asked what type of agricultural activities they were interested in participating in, 274 individuals responded and overwhelmingly indicated experiences related to buying food, including purchasing directly from farms, farm-to-table dining experiences and visiting local wineries, breweries or cideries (Figure 5). Of the 5% who selected “other”, responses included: connecting those with land to those in need of land (farmland with farmers), advocating on behalf of farmers, encouraging people to grow their own food, and incorporating Indigenous knowledge.

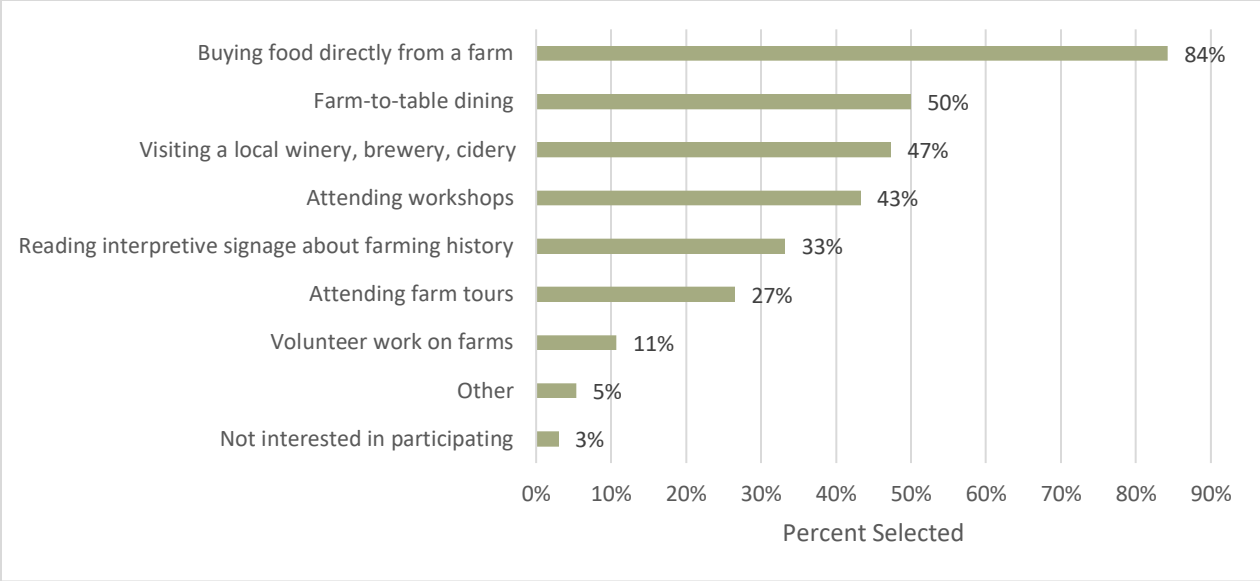


Figure 5. What farm activities are respondents interested in?

### 4.2.3 Looking Forward

When asked their opinion on how the District of Metchosin could best support agriculture, 255 individuals responded. A majority of responses pointed to the District being proactive about protecting farmland. There was also strong favour for supporting food system infrastructure through policies and zoning (Figure 6). Of the 8% who selected “other”, responses included: align with the climate action plan, support land matching initiatives, ensure adequate water access for farms, and protecting farmland for farming.

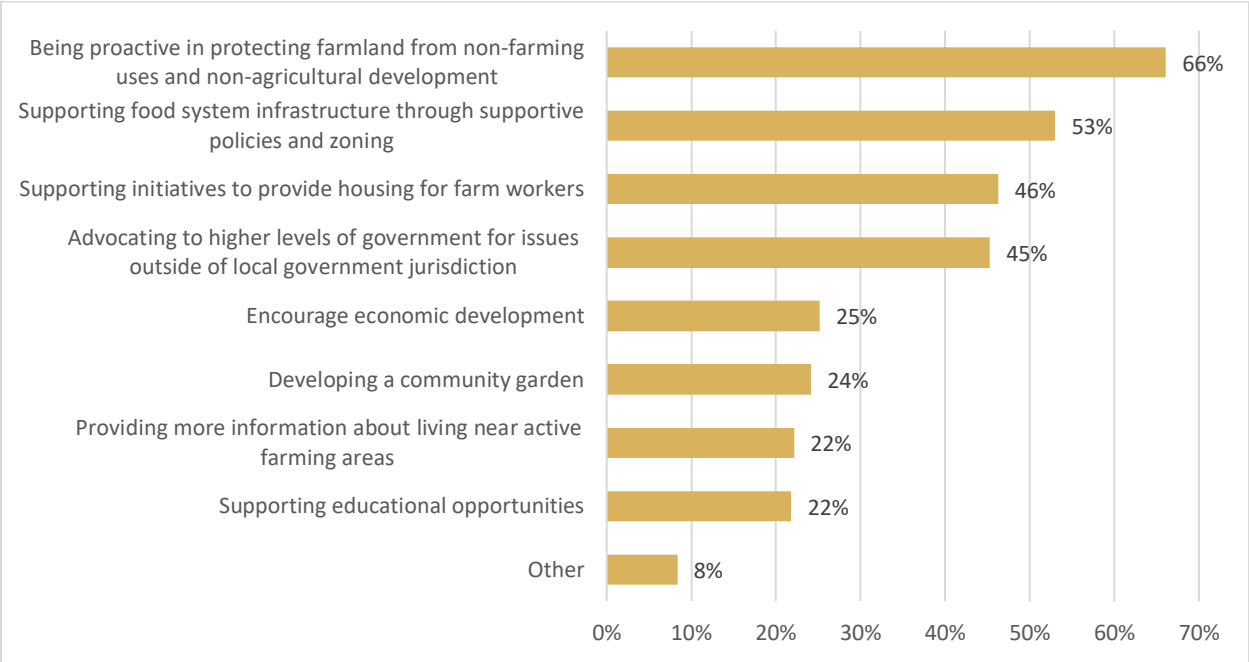


Figure 6. How can the District of Metchosin best support agriculture?

Respondents were asked to describe their ideal vision for agriculture in Metchosin in 10 years. 183 individuals responded, and the answers varied but tended to follow common supportive threads. The responses were summarized into the following themes:

- Continuation of existing farms and increase in new farms across Metchosin.
- Increased support and opportunities for young farmers including land matching, mentorship and business coaching.
- Adoption of regenerative production methods to make Metchosin agriculture more resilient to the effects of climate change.
- The ability to purchase more local produce via a year-round farmers market, more farm stands or a local grocery store.
- Improved housing opportunities and costs for farm workers and farm managers.
- Increased production of fruits and vegetables, and more diversified production.
- Metchosin is known as a destination for local food, agritourism and rural experiences.
- farmers making an adequate income, and farming as a financially viable business.

The final question in the survey allowed respondents to provide any additional feedback pertaining to the agriculture plan. Responses included:

- Support for the plan,
- Desire to see Metchosin remain rural and not succumb to urban development,
- Re-imagine how the Farmers Market space can be utilized and by whom to allow more opportunity for local produce to be sold into the community,
- Investigate opportunities to increase land leasing, agricultural land trusts, and land cooperatives, to keep farmland in production,
- Track annual farming statistics to use as an indicator of the status of the sector,
- Concerns that agri-tourism would hinder food production,
- Concerns around addressing climate change, and suggestions to align the Agricultural Plan with the Climate Action Plan,
- Support for agriculture and the preservation of agricultural land for farming,
- Financial compensation for farmers for damage and loss to wildlife conflict,
- Support for establishing a “Metchosin Grown” brand,
- Interest in seeing an agricultural coordinator role established with the District,
- Include native and wild foods harvesting opportunities,
- Recognition of farming in Metchosin as critical to local food security, and
- Protect surface water and groundwater resources .

### 4.3 Agri-Food Sector Survey

The agri-food sector survey was available online through Survey Monkey, as well as in paper form at the District office between November 25<sup>th</sup> - December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023. The purpose of the survey was to obtain a more detailed level of input regarding challenges and opportunities related to farming in Metchosin from a wide variety of producers in the community. In this respect, respondents were able to self-define themselves as farmers. The survey received 76 responses. 91% of respondents live in Metchosin full time, 1% live in Metchosin part time, and 8% were from elsewhere. Of those not living in Metchosin, respondents were living in Colwood, Victoria and Sooke.

#### 4.3.1 Farm Tenure

Respondents were asked about their relationship to the agri-food sector, 73 individuals responded, most of which own their farmland and farm it themselves (Figure 7). Some respondents (7%) were landowners who lease their land to farmers, and 3% own farmland that is not being farmed. Of the large number (26%) who selected “other”, responses included: hobby farming, people who would like to start a farm, clients of the abattoir, people who provide services to the agriculture sector in Metchosin, and retired farmers. There were no farm workers who completed the survey.

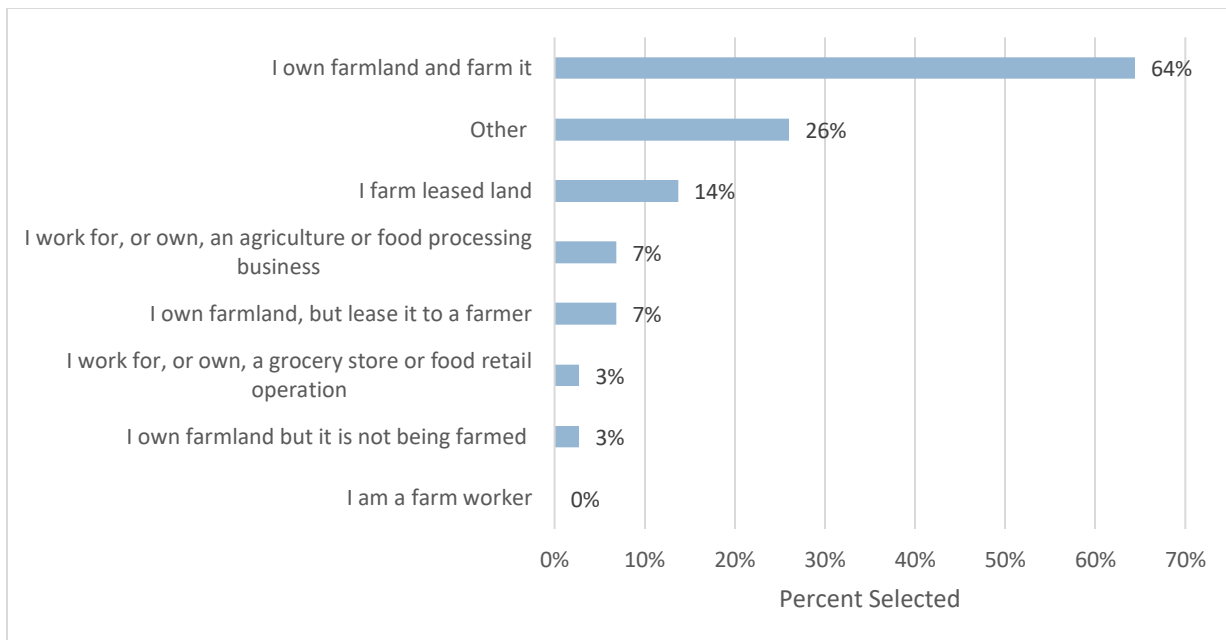


Figure 7. Respondent's connection to agriculture in Metchosin.

When asked how long they had been farming, 73 individuals responded, many of which have been farming for over 20 years, only 10% have been farming for under 10 years (Figure 8). of those who selected “other” the answers were over 40 years.

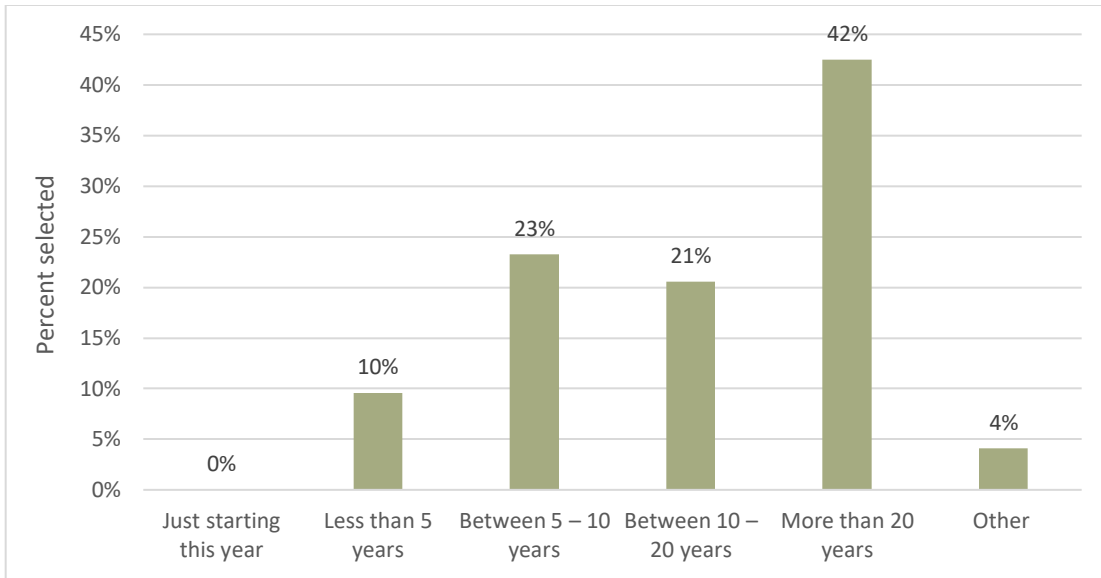


Figure 8. How long have respondents been farming in Metchosin?

73 respondents shared their age range, the most common age group of farmers in Metchosin is 61-70 years (32%), however a further 32% of farmers are between 31-50 (Figure 9).

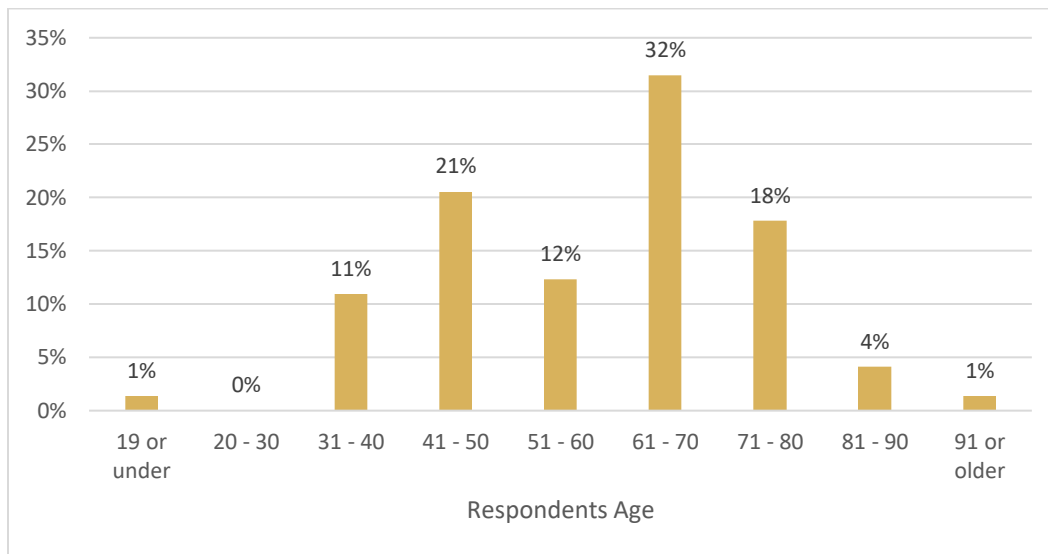


Figure 9. Age distribution of farmers in Metchosin.

When asked how long they planned to continue farming, 63 individuals responded, the most common answer was 10-20 years. Few indicated less than one year (Figure 10). Farmers were also asked if they had a succession plan for their farms, 66% indicated that they did not, only 17% indicated that they had some sort of succession plan developed (Figure 11). Of those who answered “other” the respondents said they intended to leave their land to their kids.

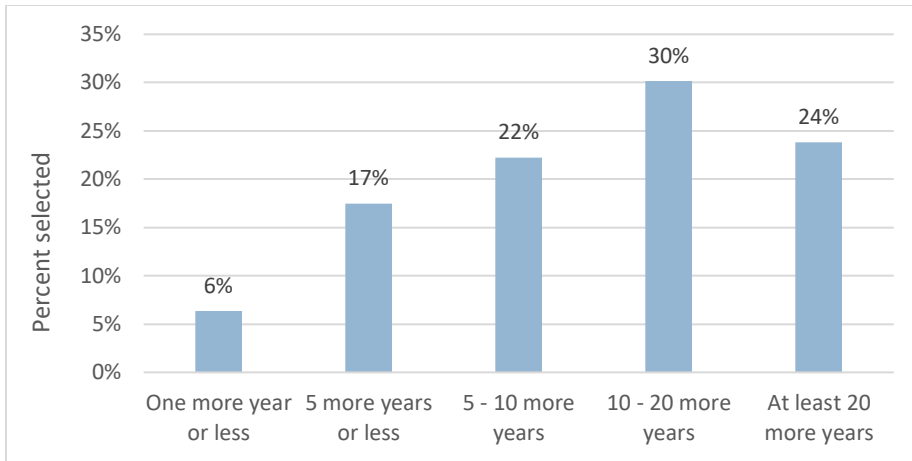


Figure 10. How many more years Metchosin farmers plan to continue farming.

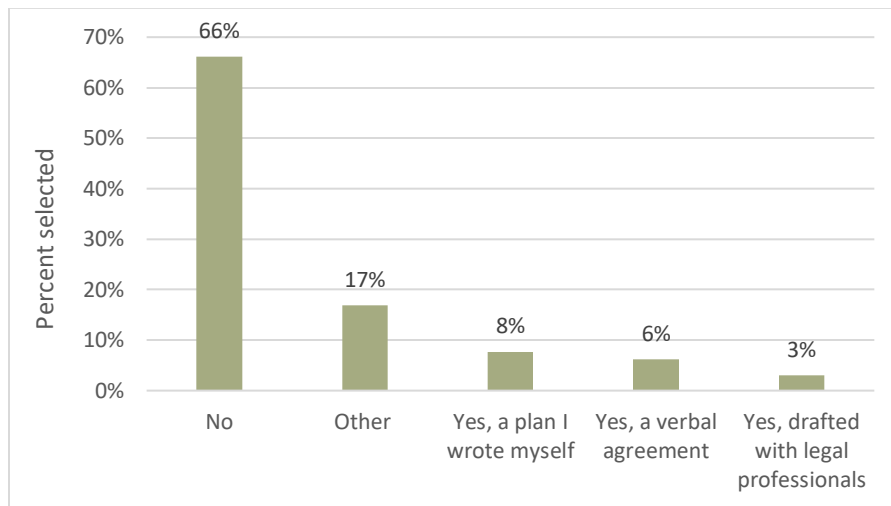


Figure 11. Succession plans for Metchosin farms.

#### 4.3.2 Farm Products

Respondents were asked to indicate all agri-food products that they produce on their farms, 74 individuals responded. The most common crop produced was field vegetables, followed by tree fruits and chicken eggs (Figure 12). Of those who selected “Other” responses included: wool, taxes, aquaponics, seed production, and natural decorations.

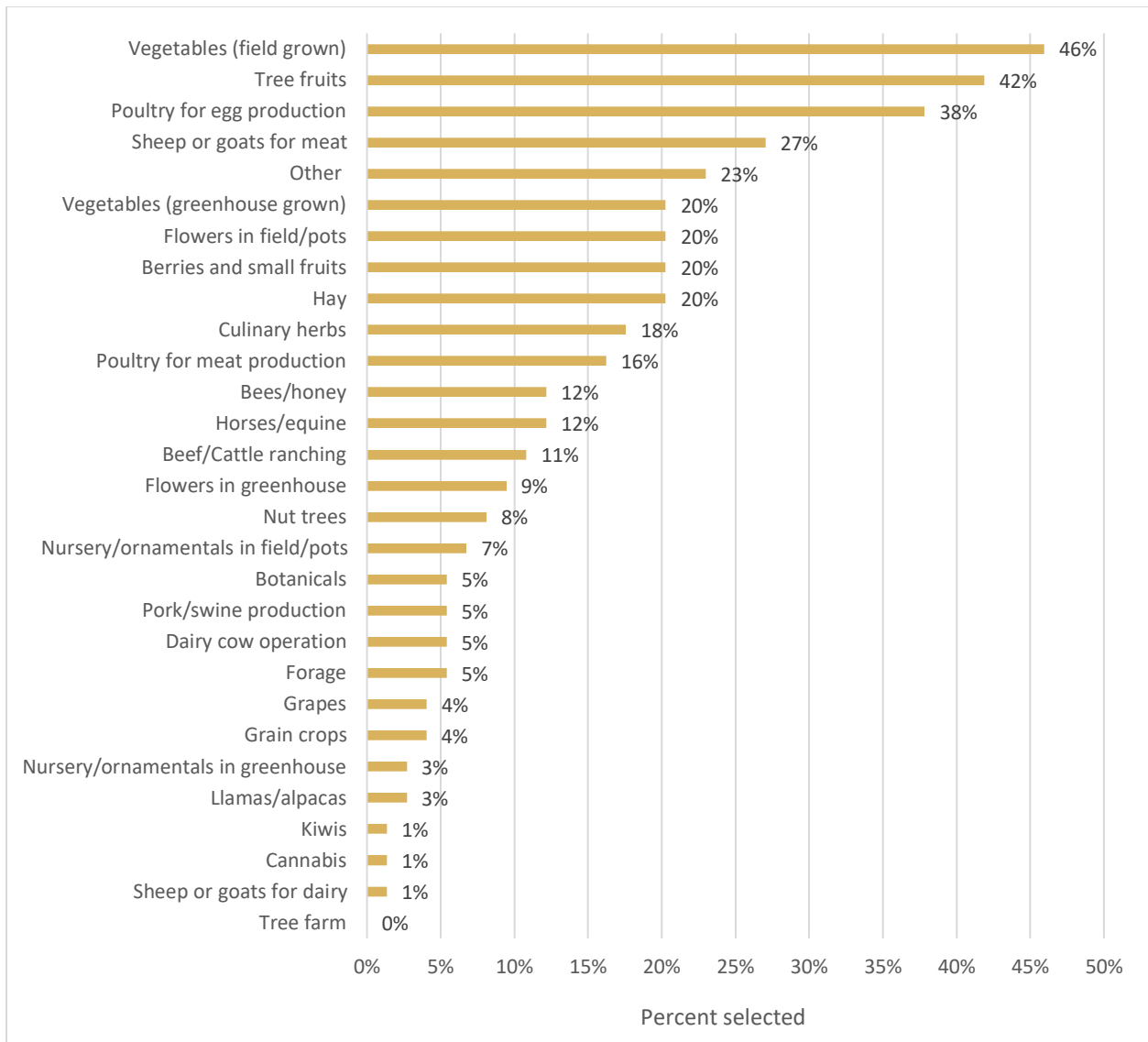


Figure 12. What is being produced in Metchosin?

Farmers were asked if they were involved in farm product processing to create value added products, as covered in the ALC Policy L-01. 72 individuals responded, most of them (60%) indicated that they were not, though nearly 1/3 indicated that they process their products themselves (Figure 13).

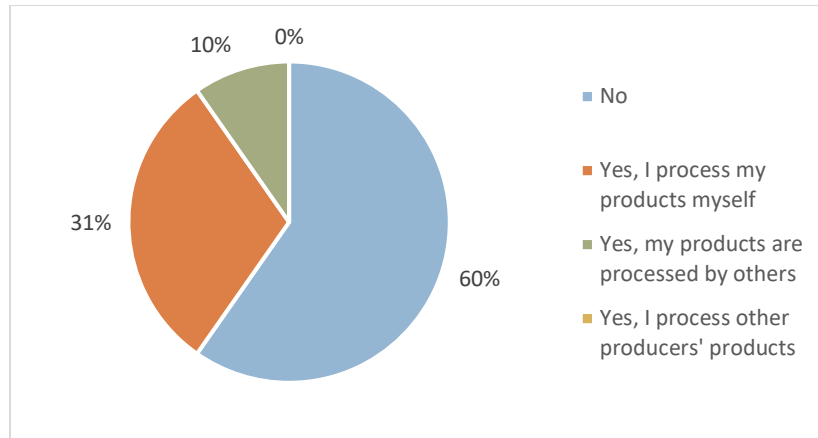


Figure 13. Adoption of farm product processing to create value added products.

Those who selected a variation of yes were asked what percentage of their product is processed into value added products, the responses were well distributed across the spectrum. The most common answer was 1-9%.

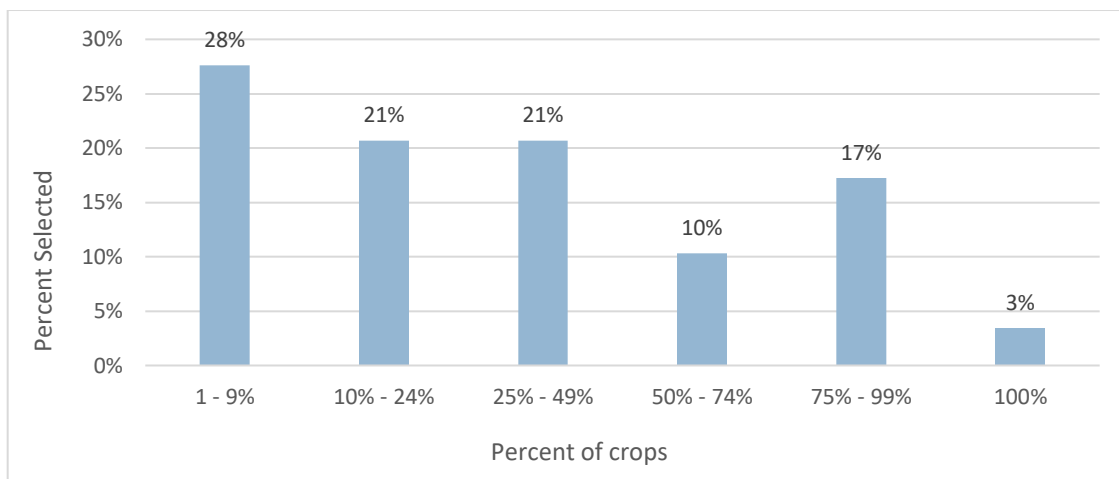


Figure 14. Percentage of product processed into value added items.

#### 4.3.3 Product Sales

Farmers were asked what routes they use to sell their products, 65 individuals responded and indicated that most product sales are occurring through farmstands and direct-to-customer delivery. Additionally, 1/3 are selling to restaurants, and 1/4 are utilizing wholesale pathways. Only 5% of farmers reported hosting agritourism events or tours (Figure 15). Of those who selected “other” responses included online (e.g. Facebook Marketplace), family and gifting.

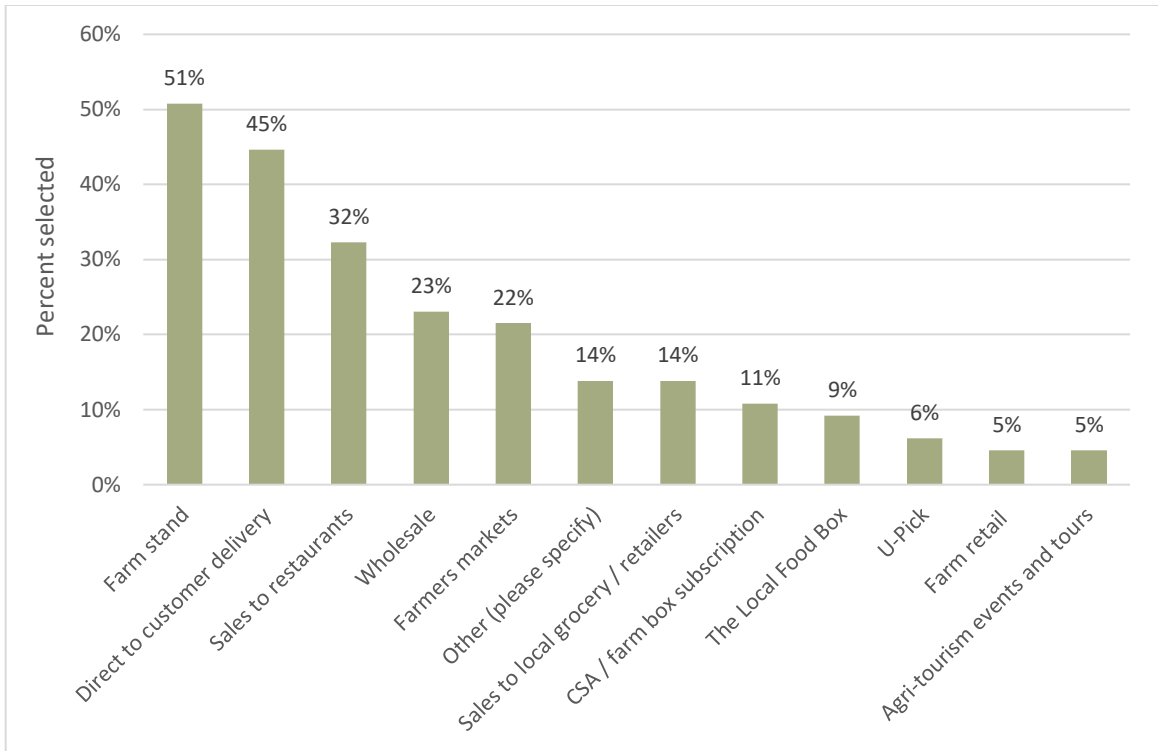


Figure 15. How farmers are getting their product to customers

Respondents were asked to estimate the annual gross income of their farm business, and 64 individuals responded. Of those 64 responses, 56% reported that they are grossing under \$10,000 annually. Of those who selected “other” responses included “nothing” and “sustenance”.

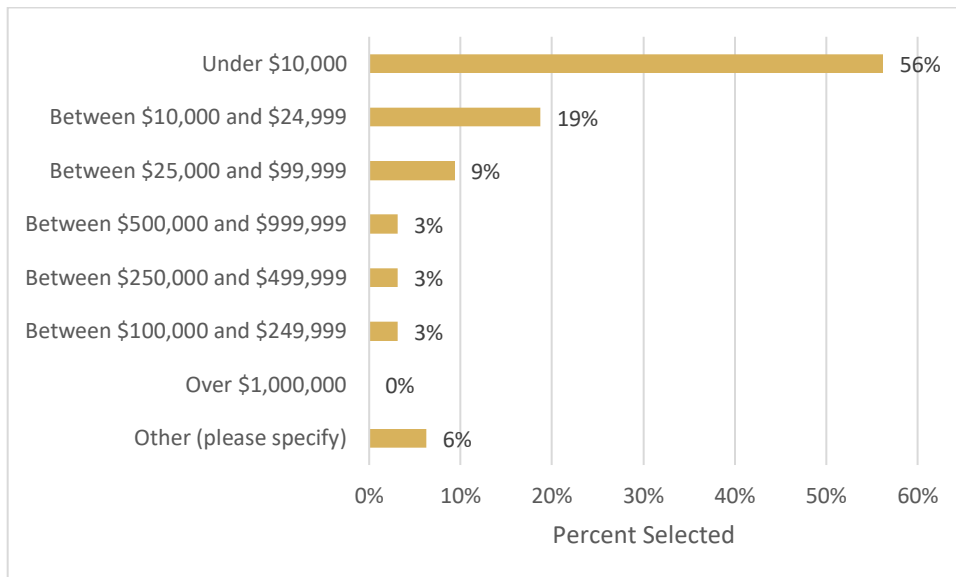


Figure 16. Income distribution across farm businesses in Metchosin

When asked about the importance of farming to their economic livelihoods, 67 individuals responded. Over 75% of respondents indicated that farming was somewhat important or not very important economically, while 73% indicated it was very important to their quality of life.

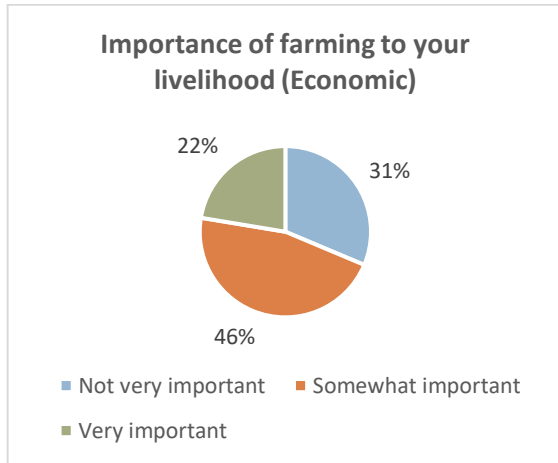


Figure 17. Importance of farming to economic livelihood



Figure 18. Importance of farming to quality of life

#### 4.3.4 Looking Forward

Respondents were asked if they saw value in creating a single, recognizable “Metchosin Grown” brand to identify products which originate in Metchosin, and 67 individuals responded. Many (60%) indicated support (Figure 19). Of those who selected “other” responses included: “uncertain” and “as long as the quality is maintained at a high standard”.

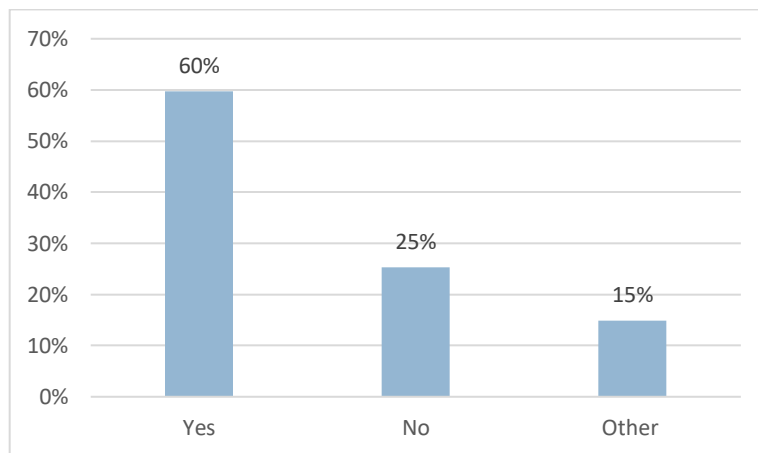


Figure 19. Preference for a single recognizable Metchosin Grown brand.

When asked what the top priorities for growth in the agri-food sector were, 67 individuals responded. The top two responses were housing for farm workers (46%) and educating the public about the importance of

farming (46%). Further opportunities included information for the public about how to support agriculture and improving farmland access. Of those who selected “other”, responses included:

- educating younger generations on the importance of farming,
- supporting local entrepreneurs to lead and inspire the sector,
- developing a local farmers institute,
- incentivizing landowners to actively produce food/ farm products,
- embark on joint marketing,
- develop a retail cooperative,
- lower barriers to farming,
- protect existing farmland,
- increase grazing animal populations, and
- irrigate pastures.

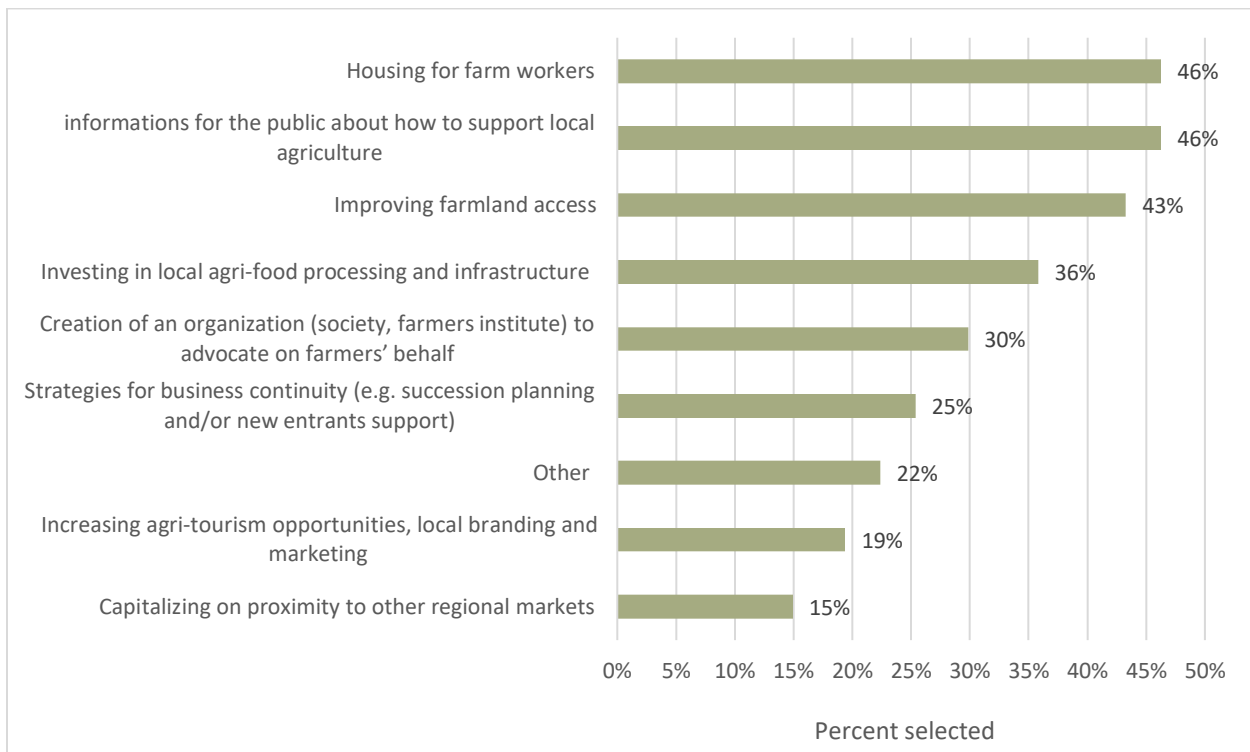


Figure 20. Top opportunities for growing the agri-food sector in Metchosin.

When asked what the most important ways the District of Metchosin could support the agri-food sector were, 68 individuals responded, 2/3 of which indicated “being proactive in protecting farmland”. A high degree of support was also shown for “supporting food system infrastructure through policies and zoning”, and “advocating to a higher level of government”. Of those who selected “other” responses included: support multi-generational farms through housing allowances, and advocate for farmers on predator issues and response.

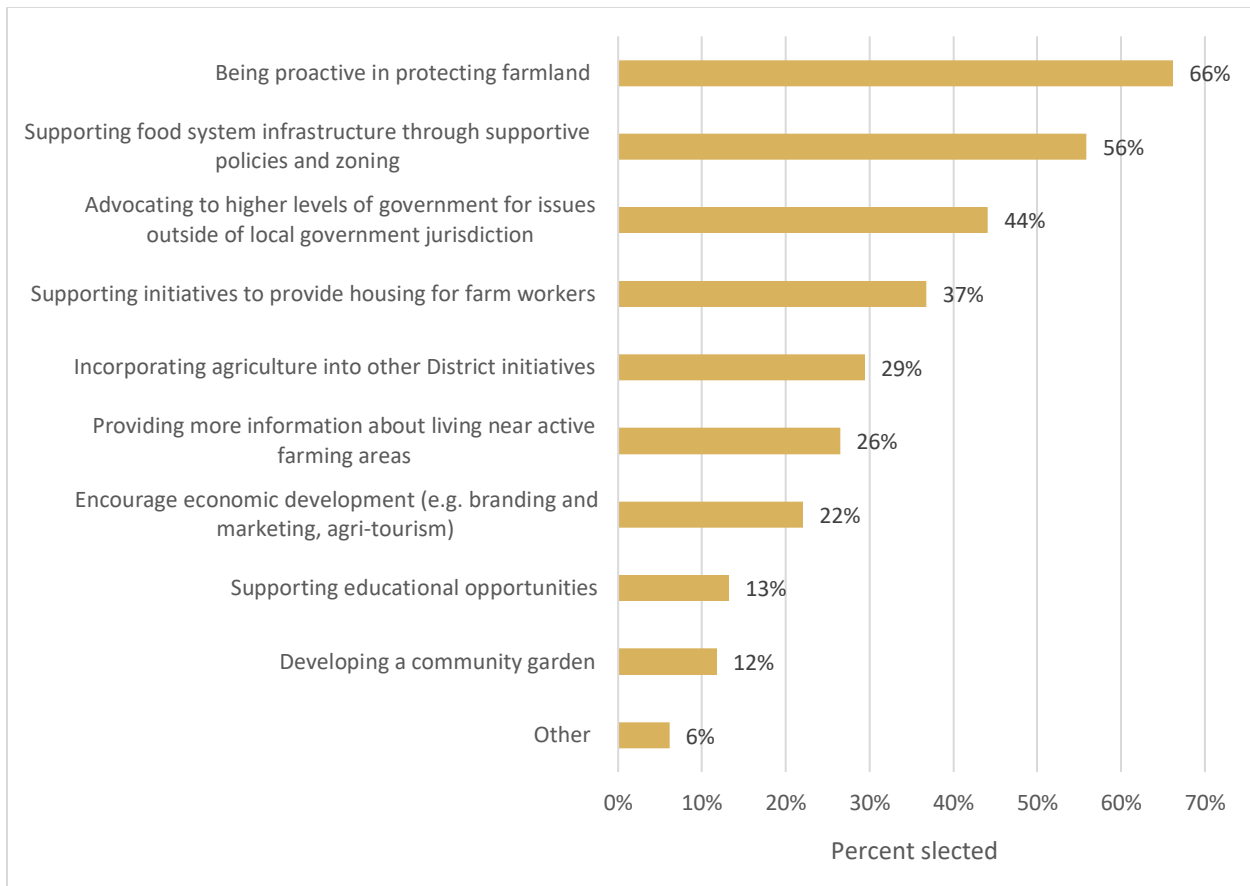


Figure 21. Best ways for the District of Metchosin to support the agri-food sector.

Respondents were asked to describe their ideal vision for agriculture in Metchosin in the next 10 years, 49 individuals left comments which covered the following topics:

- Improved response to issues regarding predatory animals.
- Farmers are collaborating through shared resources, bulk buying and sales/ marketing cooperatives (storefront, farmers market for farmers, joint farmers co-op to share marketing and branding).
- Farming in Metchosin is thriving and revered by the community.
- Diversified farm businesses (large and small, fruit and veg, grazing and market, agritourism)
- Farmland is protected for farming, and there is increased access to farmable land for those who want to grow food.
- Support for multi-generational living/ multiple generations on one piece of land.
- Farmers have access to resources such as manure, tools, information/ advice, and inputs.
- Supportive of agritourism initiatives.
- There is support for new farmers such as information resources, farm tool library and business planning.
- Metchosin is known as a source of locally produced food for surrounding communities.
- There is sufficient and affordable housing for farm workers and operators.
- Improved response on predatory animals.

Some examples of comments include:

*“A vibrant Metchosin Grown brand that brings customers from all over the CRD to Metchosin, ALR land owners leasing their land to farmers and providing housing for them at non market rates, Metchosin becoming the bread basket of the CRD”*

*“Residents and businesses would enjoy access to a rich variety of locally grown and processed products.”*

*“Increased communication, collaboration, coordination and mutual support between farms, increased access to an identified labour pool shared between farms as required. Provision of temporary hostel or small home-based lodging for seasonal farm hands and small home or cottage-based lodging for permanent new farming families as part of a succession plan. Grants for new farmers to purchase land.”*

*“Protecting small scale organic and diverse farming. Also, to do our best to rehabilitate soils and produce high quality foods that can be consumed by people”*

*“We would have a farm market where farmers can drop off their produce and someone would handle the sales. There would be a tax credit for farmers recognizing the value of our grassy fields for carbon sequestration. Farmers would be educated on the best way to farm based on what is known about climate change adaptation and mitigation.”*

The final question in the survey allowed respondents to provide any additional feedback pertaining to the agriculture plan. Responses included:

- There is value for kids to see greenspaces and learning about farming,
- Local government should be supporting farmers in pursuits to diversify the income of their farm businesses,
- There is a desire to see food security in the face of climate change incorporated into the ag plan,
- Suggestion to include an ag coordinator role in the plan to help push recommendations forward,
- Consider rotating spots at the farmers market for small farmers who can't commit to a weekly event.

#### **4.4 Open House**

An open house was hosted on February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at Bilston Creek Farm. The objective of the open house was to present the Draft Agricultural Area Plan to the public, and allow opportunity for questions and feedback.

The event was attended by 30 individuals, including local producers, residents, District of Metchosin council members and Ministry of Agriculture and Food staff. Consultants presented the draft report, including the background research, engagement findings, goals and recommendations, implementation plan and

monitoring framework. Following the presentation, 3 breakout groups were formed, and consultants facilitated discussions around 3 questions, resulting in valuable input to guide the final revisions of the Agricultural Area Plan. The 3 questions discussed and the feedback received were as follows:

### **Q1. Is the right mix of recommendations included in the plan?**

Open house attendees noted that the recommendations in the plan were helpful but identified some potential additions including:

- Engaging volunteers from the non-agricultural community to support agriculture events
- A need to support water conservation and catchment efforts on agricultural lands
- Creation of an agricultural coordinator for the community, or collaboration with other communities to establish a paid role which could serve as an agriculture coordinator.
- Addressing gaps in affordable housing which impacts availability of labour for farms.
- Inclusion of the fire department and SIFI as potential collaborators and supports to achieve some of the recommendations.

### **Q2. What are the highest priority recommendations?**

Attendees were asked to reflect on the recommendations provided and determine which ones were of highest priority to the community, the following areas were identified:

- Developing a farmers society or institution to help move the recommendations forward.
- Actions which improve economic viability of the community including marketing collectively, revamping the farmers market, and identifying new ways to sell food locally.
- Addressing wildlife concerns, specifically crop losses to resident geese, and livestock losses to cougars.
- Supporting seed and soil preservation as a route to longevity in the agriculture sector
- Addressing invasive species on farmland.

### **Q3. How and by whom, can the recommendations in the plan be best implemented?**

Each recommendation in the plan contains an identified lead and support actors. Attendees were asked to consider if these identified actors were best suited to the job, and how they could best work together to implement the plan. Responses included:

- Seek opportunities to work with the Metchosin Farmers Institute (located in Langford) to revamp the objectives of the Institute and refocus on supporting the agriculture community.
- Collaborate with existing organizations/groups who have useful infrastructure including commercial kitchens, storage space, transportation vehicles etc.
- Collaborate with neighbouring communities of Colwood, Langford and Sooke on joint interests such as food distribution and resource access.
- Improve consistency of DoM support across council changes.

## 4.5 Agricultural Advisory Select Committee Meetings

Over the course of the development of the Agricultural Area Plan, three meetings were held with members of the Agricultural Advisory Select Committee (AASC). These meetings took place in November 2023, January 2024, and February 2024 and served as an opportunity to provide a check-in regarding the progress of the project and share feedback from the engagement process. The consulting team met with the AASC twice in person and once by Zoom. The topic of conversations often centred on the themes to address in the Agricultural Area Plan, questions regarding land use regulations, zoning, and policies. At the meeting in February it was noted that a previous District resolution regarding Genetically Modified Organisms (passed in 2012) was missed, therefore the Background Report was subsequently updated to reflect this information.

## 5.0 Conclusion

Initial engagement activities such as the interviews and surveys helped to develop an in-depth understanding of agriculture and food in Metchosin. The findings from these activities ensured the background information was robust and complete as well as informing early iterations of the Vision, Goals and Recommendations. Feedback from the Open House was integral to ground truthing, and finessing the recommendations to ensure that they were as impactful and realistic as possible. The voices of the Metchosin farming community, and the residents who rely on it, were integral to the creation of the plan.