

FRESH



FROM THE ISLAND

The Rooster Tale

Summer 2008
Volume 1 Issue 3

Quarterly Newsletter of the Island Farmers' Alliance

Local Food Movement growing on Vancouver Island

I was in the Thrifty's Mill Bay store the other day and was pleasantly surprised to discover that the English cucumbers on offer were grown in Cobble Hill! I find myself doing this more and more often these days, looking at labels and making decisions about what I will buy based on where the food is grown. And, I know I'm not alone. The local food movement is growing by leaps and bounds on Vancouver Island as evidenced by the growth of farmers markets. Read more about this and some of the benefits and issues in Bob Mitchell's article "Farmers markets, Industrial Agriculture and Tearing up your Lawn."

There's still a lot of confusion about the terminology used to describe aspects of the local food movement. Peter Mann, International Director of the World Hunger Year website (<http://www.worldhungeryear.org>) had a pretty great description of some of the lingo being used. "This local food movement has many names, some of them still new to most people. 'Food democracy' means everyone having the right to healthy and nutritious food and to be actively engaged in their food system. 'Food sovereignty' refers to communities taking back control of their food production and distribution from the grip of giant corporations. 'Food justice' means that everyone, whatever their income level or race or color, deserves a place at the table. 'Food security' refers to everyone in a community having access at all times to fresh, nutritious food that meets their cultural needs."

I don't know about you, but I find the whole food sovereignty thing pretty appealing. Maybe I'm just one to fight for the little guy but the idea of international corporations deciding what's on my grocery shelves is just unCanadian. I want to be

able to help my neighbour in Cobble Hill or Comox, Sooke or Cedar by buying their produce, meat or eggs and I'm excited to see that this is starting to happen. In a recent article on CTV.ca News, Ashleigh Patterson said the "local food movement stresses security and safety." And that "a more direct link from the farm to the fork enables families to feel more secure about what they eat."



Join the local food movement by trying one of the following ideas:

- Join a seed savers group
- Plant a veggie garden or have container gardens
- Join the IFA as a rooster booster
- Shop at Farmers Markets and get to know your local farmers

- Buy local food: even in grocery stores
- Pick food that has the shortest traveling distance
- Eat food in season. OUR season

Here's to you for any steps you can take to make Vancouver Island a sustainable food supplier for our children and grandchildren.

Kathleen Erickson,
Owner/Publisher
Buy Sell & Trade, Inc



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COMING SOON

A Food Only Market!

Sell from the back of your truck. Sunday morning to mid day, mid/late August through October.

Location:

Buy Sell & Trade parking lot.

#41 - Nicol St.,

Nanaimo.

For more info call

George 250-754-8141



Some Food for Thought

DID YOU KNOW? Food transportation accounts for 6 to 12% of every dollar spent on food consumed in the home? It's estimated that elements of a basic North American meal travel 2,400 km to get from the field to table.¹

DID YOU KNOW? That when fossil fuels related to food production and distribution are included in the calculation of calories in the modern industrialized food system then 10 to 15 calories of energy are expended for every calorie of food energy produced? Locally produced (and less processed) fruit, vegetables and grains have a much smaller environmental impact.² A fresh Okanagan peach eaten in Vancouver, for example is less damaging to the environment than a can of peaches processed and shipped thousands of miles from Georgia, USA.

These and more amazing facts about what you can do to impact the environment can be found at <http://www.davidsuzuki.org/files/wol/greenguide.pdf>

¹ Hendrickson, J.A. "Energy Use in the US food system: A summary of existing research and analysis", Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems, University of Wisconsin Maddison, 1996.

² Hendrickson, 1996.



The Canadian Federation of Independent Business: a national voice for farmers

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business is Canada's largest association of small and mid-sized businesses. With 105,000 paid memberships the CFIB is accountable to their membership, or quite simply, they're out of work. 6500 of those memberships are from agri-business with 78% of those being primary producers. Farmers and livestock producers, like any other business owner, face many of the same issues with some of the more burdensome being taxation, over regulation and a lack of qualified labour. CFIB is currently targeting the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) with over 76,000 regulatory requirements on the books, second only to Health Canada.

We'll have a full article on the CFIB's work to assist the Ag sector and farmers in our next issue in September. If you would like more information about the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, contact the District Manager, Brian DeCoteau, at 250-618-1673 or at brian.decoteau@cfib.ca.

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Island Farmers' Alliance President's Message



After the near train wreck of the Island Farmers' Alliance (IFA) in early 2007 the IFA is now back on track. Our IFA board members have worked tirelessly to complete last year's goals and have established new ones for 2008. I will outline these and then further describe how the IFA train is picking up speed and how you, a farmer or business or consumer, can get on board.

Firstly, efforts toward more Island food production and year round availability through processing are in progress. Farmers are starting to grow more. For example, my wife and I changed from ¼ acre of garden to 2 acres. I joined the Islands' Good Food Initiative as one of 27 farmers. This cooperative, based in Nanaimo, is spearheaded by another IFA board member Sandra Mark and has multiple stakeholders involved including public institutions such as the University of Victoria and Vancouver Island University (formerly Malaspina College). A similar, private food processing facility is planned for the Cowichan Valley.

Secondly, board member Dr. Jenny Horn has successfully secured over \$50,000 funding from the IFA Cowichan Agriculture Society and island Agri-Food Initiative towards researching an agriculture resource centre for Vancouver Island. Our goal is to increase the knowledge base for growing more food and vegetable as well as providing education and apprentice training for farmers and workers. Read more about this elsewhere in this newsletter.

Thirdly, board members have begun the steps in creating a "Fresh From the Island Trails" program, beginning in Spring 2009. This would emulate the very successful "Circle Farm Tours" of the Fraser Valley. Partners sought in this local regional program are farms, local business groups and Island Tourism. This is another effort to put more dollars in farmer's pockets. If farmers are successful then more local food production becomes possible.

Finally, board member and secretary, Kathleen Erickson, has rekindled the IFA's communication strategy. Our newsletter, the "Rooster Tale" is being produced in conjunction with her Buy Sell & Trade paper and is an ideal marriage. It enables our newsletter to be inserted in 10,000 copies of the Buy Sell & Trade and then distributed all across Vancouver Island. Kathleen also has 3-4,000 extra copies of the newsletter printed for distribution to farm markets, retail outlets and educational events. In addition, our website (www.islandfarmersalliance.org) is being redeveloped and will soon allow us to promote Island Farmers Markets and other farm or food events across Vancouver Island. In the weeks and months to come you will see our "Fresh from the Island" logo at fairs, farmers' markets, and even restaurants. For information, please email us at info@islandfarmersalliance.org or phone us at 250 746-1593.

What is around the next bend for our IFA train? The issues of environment and land sustainability are two major items. The IFA continues to administer the Environmental Farm Plan on Vancouver Island after five successful years of doing so. This is a major step toward educating farmers and the public about the importance of land sustainability. Sustainability is about long-term land use permitting long-term farming. This means minimizing weed and insect sprays and maximizing land health through crop rotation and organic fertilizers rather than petrochemical based ones such as ammonia. Another emerging issue involves the development of Food waste recycling. It is reckoned 50% of a grocery store's products are thrown away. This occurs at the store and in our households. As a group we have become good at recycling paper, metal and plastics and now it's time we take the next step of recycling our food waste. This could include raising some chickens or pigs or composting. If we are not interested maybe our neighbor or other community member is? Rather than dumping into the landfill, we need to look for alternatives so we can use this valuable resource wisely.

The Island Farmers' Alliance is doing this and more to meet our mission: to strengthen unity among Island producers and to ensure sustainability of Island agriculture. If you haven't joined, maybe the time is now! Add your voice to the growing chorus of Islanders prepared to support local agriculture.

Bill Code, MD, President IFA

Fall Fairs on Vancouver Island

Covering Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands & the Sunshine Coast

MAKE IT A PRIORITY TO VISIT YOUR LOCAL FALL FAIR

AUGUST FAIRS

Coombs Fair www.coombsfair.com (Arrowsmith) August 9 - 10, 2008 Janet Boley (250) 752-9757
Vancouver Island Exhibition www.viex.ca (Nanaimo) August 15 - 17, 2008 Stephen Kass (250) 758-3247
Mayne Island Fall Fair August 16, 2008 Karen Ramlo (250) 539-5914
Cobble Hill Fall Fair August 23, 2008 Roger Painter (250) 743-2521
Pender Island Fall Fair August 23, 2008 Ellen Willingham (250) 629-6700
Comox Valley Exhibition www.CowEx.ca (Courtenay) August 23 - 24, 2008 Leah Hryko (250) 338-8177
Saanich Fair www.saanichfair.ca (Saanich Peninsula) August 30 - 31 & September 1, 2008
Rob MacGregor (250) 652-3314

SEPTEMBER FAIRS

Alberni District Fall Fair www.albernifair.com/fair/index.php September 4 - 7, 2008 Ann Siddall (250) 723-9313
Cowichan Exhibition www.CowEx.ca (Duncan) September 5 - 7, 2008 Michelle Harrington (250) 748-0822
Sooke Fall Fair September 6 - 7, 2008 Ida McDonald (250) 642-4110
Luxton Fall Fair www.luxtonfair.ca September 12 - 14, 2008 Larry West (250) 478-2759
Salt Spring Island Fall Fair www.ssifi.org September 13 - 14, 2008 Rick Vipond (250) 537-4755
Powell River Fall Fair September 28, 2008 Jennifer Herron (604) 414-5974

Rooster Logo Stickers and Farmgate Signs

By becoming a member of the Island Farmers' Alliance, you earn the right to proudly display the rooster logo on your products or at your farmgate.

Here's how to get yours:

Labels~ Barbara Grimmer: 250 629-3819 Signs (\$50)~ David Pollock: 250-743-4859
\$8.00/roll of 500 labels



Eat Fresh...
Buy Local!



I.F.A. ~
we're growing
for you!



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FROM THE ISLAND

For more information on any aspect of the Agricultural Resource Centre, please call Dr. Jenny Horn, V.I. University 250-746-3532 or email: jennifer.horn@viu.ca



Farmgate Stand at Springcrest Farm, 6090 Old West Saanich Road



Purebred Romney sheep, Firhill Farm, Pender Island

ISLAND FARMERS

LET'S GET BACK



An Agriculture Resource and Innovation Centre for the Island...A seed planted

The profile of Vancouver Island agriculture is changing and limited opportunities for education, research and innovation are constraining the Island's economic and social development potential. Investment in the development and sustainability of agriculture is vital to many Vancouver Island communities, and there is a growing need for capacity-building through the formation of partnerships and alliances as well as a strategy for sharing information and resources pertinent to Vancouver Island agriculture. With all this in mind, community leaders are moving ahead with an exciting new plan.

With support from the **Island Farmers' Alliance** and others, the Vancouver Island Agriculture Resource and Innovation Center (VIARIC) is one step closer to becoming a reality, thanks to funding provided through the Islands Agri-Food Initiative. The Initiative is supporting a feasibility study by Vancouver Island University (formerly Malaspina University-College) to explore the potential for such a centre to serve the needs of agriculture throughout the Island region. It is envisioned that the Resource and Innovation Centre will partner with industry, government and other educators to offer education, training, research and innovation support to agriculturalists on Vancouver



Island, the Gulf Islands and Powell River.

Vancouver Island University, working with North Island College and numerous community partners, will spend the next year assessing the need for a Resource and Innovation Centre to support the economic and ecological sustainability of agriculture on the Islands. Much of this project will involve meeting with agri-food industry organizations, educational institutions and other related governing bodies as well as with community organizations such as the Island Farmers' Alliance. Initial activities include setting up an Island Agriculture Advisory Board to provide feedback regarding the role, mandate and key priorities of the Centre. The project will also evaluate the current ability of industry and/or educational institutions to meet those needs in the short- and long-term and will determine how Vancouver Island University and its partners could address priorities for agriculture education, training and innovation service.

Watch for more information about this exciting development as the project unfolds. Initial contact can be made through the Continuing Education Department of Vancouver Island University, 250-746-3532 or email Jenny Horn: Jennifer.Horn@viu.ca



Matching funds for VIARIC were generously provided by:

Vancouver Island Health Authority - Regional Food Security Program

<http://www.viha.ca/mho/food/Food+Security.htm>

Cowichan Agricultural Society

Island Farmers Alliance

District A Farmers' Institute & Community Agriculture Ass'ns of BC's Coast Islands Region

Ministry of Agriculture and Lands <http://www.gov.bc.ca/al>

Comox Valley Economic Development Society <http://www.investcomoxvalley.com>

Cowichan Economic Development Commission <http://www.cvrld.bc.ca/edc>

Vancouver Island Economic Alliance <http://www.viea.ca>

Additional community support was generously provided by:

Arrowsmith Agricultural Association <http://www.coombsfair.com>

Coombs Farmers' Institute

Comox Valley Farmers' Market Association <http://www.comoxvalleyfarmersmarket.com>

North and South Saanich Agricultural Society <http://www.saanichfair.ca>

Small Potatoes Urban Delivery (SPUD) <https://www.spud.ca/index.cfm>

Nanaimo Cedar Farmers Institute <http://www.ncfarmersinst.org>

Cowichan Green Community <http://www.cowichangreencommunity.org>



Farmers Markets, Industrial Agriculture

A visit to the local farm market enables you to meet growers in your area. Not only are they pretty nice people, but they want to meet you as well. Flitting about in the back of their mind is the thought, "What does the public want now?" Public tastes change and your local producers want to keep abreast of those changes.

Local growers feel that they have a bit of an edge in meeting public demand by meeting the public. In contrast, large industrial agriculture doesn't really get that opportunity. Its decisions have to be channeled through legions of market analysts, management consultants, and other professionals who view their function in life to be that of determining public taste--and then communicating their findings to an industrial farmer, often one located on the other end of the earth. By visiting your market, you can express your taste right where it counts the most.

Local producers in search of niche markets are constantly experimenting with new crops. We trade off information and seeds amongst ourselves and are coming up with innovative ways of meeting the

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FARMERS' ALLIANCE TO OUR ROOTS



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The Islands Good Food Initiative – Another step to sustainability

The Islands Good Food Initiative is a partnership aimed at increasing the sustainability of the local food system in the Vancouver Island/Coastal region. The lead organizations include the **Island Farmers' Alliance**, Nanaimo Foodshare, the Nanaimo Association for Community Living, Edible Strategies Enterprises and many others. These groups are concerned that **only 5% of the food we eat on the Island is grown here**—they want to increase production but make sure that farmers are properly paid and recognized for their work. Consumers want more local food, but meet this demand, we need to rebuild a lot of supports to make it possible.

SOME CURRENT ACTIVITIES:

Institutional Food Purchasing:

A recent conference entitled "Harnessing Food Purchasing Power" resulted in a series of agreements between institutional purchasers, farmers and other partners to move toward increasing local food purchasing by publicly funded institutions and agencies in our area. Rosie Blackburn, from Sustain UK who is working on a similar project "Local Food on the Public Plate," and Donovan Woollard, the Chief Operating Officer for Offsetters Carbon Neutral Society, participated with farmers, food activists and food purchasers to plan for increased purchasing of local food. The partners agreed to work together to create a carbon accounting system for local food products so that a full carbon cost comparison between local foods and imported foods can be made.

The purchasers felt that this will help them increase their local food purchases, as

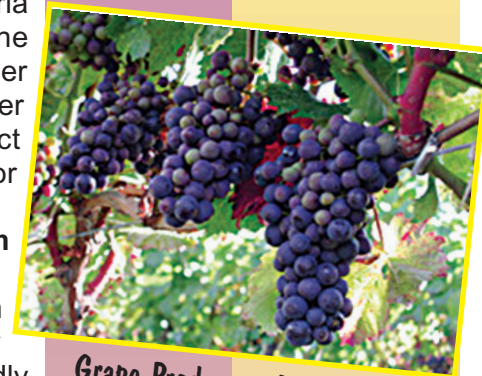
they are now required to reduce their 'carbon footprint'. The globalized food system contributes up to 33% of greenhouse gas emissions, so re-localizing the food system will be a very important way to reduce our climatic impact. This is good news for farmers! To view the conference proceedings go to www.heritagefoodservice.coop

Another result is that the University of Victoria Purchasing Department is working with the Vancouver Island Heritage Foodservice Co-op in order to get more local food into their system. Any farmer interested in participating please contact Frank Moreland (frank@ediblestrategies.com or 250-335-3001)

Access to Finance for Sustainable Food System Development:

Nanaimo Foodshare has received funding from the Vancouver Foundation and the VanCity Community Foundation to build a case for BC 'friendly funders/financers' to create investment and funding tools to assist farmers and local food system businesses to increase their capacity. Farmers on Vancouver Island may have valuable land but few resources to invest in needed facilities and services such as cash flow loans, food handling and processing facilities or local food distribution and marketing systems.

For more information on any aspect of the Islands Good Food Initiative, please call Sandra Mark, Project Manager, 250-335-3001 or email sandra@ediblestrategies.com.



Grape Producers Abound on Vancouver Island



Agriculture Tourism:

Are you ready to harvest the benefits?

Agriculture tourism is a growing consumer market and the Cowichan Valley is uniquely located to take full advantage of these opportunities. To help you prepare for the 2009 Tourism season, The Island Farmers' Alliance and the Vancouver Island University (formerly Malaspina U) are planning two Agri-tourism 'field days' on Oct. 17 at Yellow Point Cranberries and McNabs Corn Maze, and on Feb. 21st, 2009 at Providence Farm. In the Fall, we will explore rural tourism patterns on Vancouver island, learn what to expect when the cars start pulling up the driveway, and discuss the rules and regulations that apply when inviting visitors to your farm (especially when it comes time to feed them some of your local wares!!). In the Spring, we will focus on developing customer service and consumer education skills in order to help establish regular visitors to your farm and to encourage word-of-mouth advertising-the best kind there is.'

For more information and how to sign up for these workshops contact:

Dr. Jenny Horn, Director, IFA hornofplenty@telus.net



Ravenstone Farm, Qualicum Beach Navajo Churro Sheep. Brought to the 'new world' by the Spanish, these heritage sheep can have 2, 3, 4, or even 5 horns.

Culture and tearing out your lawn!

needs of the eating public. And the public is invited to join in, too. With so many local small markets, it is becoming increasingly common for ordinary homeowners to tear up their lawns and plant vegetables. A surprising amount of produce can come out of a relatively small area and the local farm market is an ideal venue for turning it into cash. So, not only can you meet your local farmers at the market, you can explore the possibility of joining in and becoming one yourself. Why, with the cost of food steadily on the rise, the prospect of profit selling vegetable is becoming better and better with every passing day.

The situation on the Lower Island is changing rapidly. This season we are faced with rapid growth in the number of markets and practically no growth in the number of farmers. We have too many markets chasing too few farmers. In other words, it's a farmer's market! Perhaps it's time to rethink so much lawn?

Bob Mitchell, Vice President, IFA seabluff@shaw.ca



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