

FRESH



FROM THE ISLAND

The Rooster Tale



Winter 2009
Volume 2 Issue 1

New President's Message

By Bob Mitchell SeaBluff Farm (seabluff@shaw.ca)

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After two terms, Dr. Bill Code has stepped down as President. The IFA saw a revitalization under Bill as it has shifted towards a more consumer and food related perspective and away from its original roots as a commercial farmer-based organization. Traditional, full-scale farm operations have declined on Vancouver Island to the point that they could no longer support a significant farmer only organization. Under Bill, the IFA widened its base so that now one-third of the board members are people who do not farm for a living. There are now publishers, educators & agricultural administrators on our board as well as farmers such as myself.

I run Sea Bluff Farm just outside Victoria in Metchosin and a substantial part of my income comes from farming. I grow winter vegetables. To sell them, I have started up farmers' markets and promoted sales to restaurants as well as running a roadside stand.

Things are looking up for small-scale farming on Vancouver Island. The current economic woes can be worked to our advantage. Most people are becoming more concerned about assuring themselves of a reliable, wholesome food supply. The quickest and most direct route to establishing that is to grow your own or barter with your neighbours. Restaurant sales have fallen off as the public seeks to economize in its food budget. According to Herb Barbolet, Co-founder of FarmFolk/City Folk, local cookbook sales have doubled over last year and sales of home canning supplies have increased by fifty percent.

Many problems remain facing farmers here on the Island. The ones I am most familiar with are those posed by our three levels of government, none of which is prepared to whole-heartedly embrace the farming sector. I held elected office in the Capital Region from 1993 to 1999 and did what I could to ease the lot of farmers. But it was an uphill struggle. The prevailing public attitude is that farmers enjoy economic benefits denied to other people and that they are dog-in-the-mangers sitting on valuable land which is economically under-utilized. Very little political recognition is paid to the benefits they generate. Indeed, when farming comes up in local politics, the discussion is usually related to the nuisance bylaws.

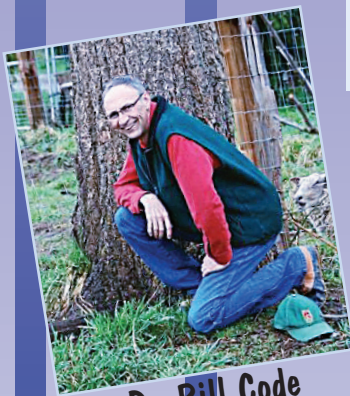
As the new IFA president, I intend to draw on my experience with government so as to reduce some of the obstacles that have been placed in the path of those who would have the temerity to perform now such illegal acts as growing a chicken and selling its carcass to their next door neighbour. Over the last generation, government policies have been written to promote multi-national agribusiness and squeeze out small producers. With NAFTA, the number of onion processors in BC dropped from 2000 to 6. The public is left wringing its hands wondering what happened to all its jobs while eating onions bagged in Mexico. Cry me a river.

Under Bill, the IFA has put together an organization that is working to change the direction of agricultural development here on the Island. We are raising our public visibility through our association with the Buy & Sell. We are promoting an adult agricultural program to be delivered through Malaspina College. We are working with the Nanaimo Heritage Food Co-op to provide processing and distribution facilities to Island Farmers. We are lobbying the BC Assessment Authority in regards to revisions to farm taxes and the Department of Lands and Agriculture over health and environmental regulations. We want to see more agricultural programs in the school districts. It is never too early to learn how to make things grow. I see my job as making it happen.



Dr Bill Code investigates the National Farmers Union

By: Sandeep Chauhan



Dr. Bill Code



Sandeep Chauhan

Dr. Bill Code attended the 39th annual National Farmers Union of Canada (NFU) Convention in Saskatoon Saskatchewan between November 20 - 22, 2008. This year's theme was Food and Community: Local to International.

Alerted to the convention by Vancouver Island Heritage Foodservice Co-op Project Manager and NFU member Sandra Mark, Code decided to attend the meeting because he "wanted to see how the Island Farmers Alliance fit in with the National Farmers Union."

Code feels that there are areas where the NFU and the Island Farmers Association can work together and promote their mutual interests. He feels there are areas where both groups can work in synergy.

"I think in reality it could happen if we had a successful chapter of the NFU," he says "they hardly have any exposure on the island and they want to change that."

"I think to some degree I will help spearhead a local chapter," he says.

The convention's theme of food and community dealt a lot with the issue of food sovereignty. Some

topics included declining energy sources, rebuilding local food systems, and health and safety issues.

Of particular interest to Code was Bob Kingston's presentation Agriculture Quality and Food Safety. Kingston is currently President of the Agriculture Union of the Public Service and spent many years with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA).

Code felt the presentation was informative and that it was "good to hear CFIA's side of the story. They are really hamstrung by government cutbacks, and have lost about one third of their workforce," he says.

Code also felt that keynote speaker Raj Patel's presentation was also worthwhile. His presentation, Stuffed and Starved: Markets, Power and the Hidden Battle for the World Food System is based on his 2008 book of the same name and examines the inequalities of the global food system.

"I made a couple of key contacts who want to help here and nationally," he says of his first trip to an NFU convention.

"I was so impressed by the convention that I decided to join," he says.



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FROM THE ISLAND

ISLAND FARMERS' ALLIANCE

CLOSER IS BETTER ~ The Best on the Market is Locally Grown!

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FROM THE ISLAND

The Island's Good Food Initiative

Sustainable Institutional Food Purchasing Community Based Research Project

By: Sandra Mark (sandmark@shaw.ca)

Increasing Food Production on Vancouver Island

The partners in the Island Good Food Initiative have been working with publicly funded island institutions and agencies to encourage them to buy more local food. This work has been very successful. 2009 will see purchasers favouring island food. Some, led by the University of Victoria, are planning specific Requests for Proposal for island foods early in the year!

These institutions and agencies spend millions of dollars on food—local producers have only been able to fulfill a tiny proportion of this in the past, mostly because of the past emphasis only on price. Our research has shown that farmers were very interested in this market 'in theory'. Many partners have been working to make it possible for island farmers to actually be able to reach this market at price advantage to island producers. Now the crunch is upon us. Are island farmers ready to take advantage of this new market by increasing production in 2009?

Furthermore, the rationale that has helped open up these new markets is based upon the increasing awareness about the need for public purchasing to promote sustainable practices. As well, there is increasing pressure on them to reduce the 'carbon footprint' of their purchases. So the purchasers will be requiring information about sustainable practices of the producers—economically, environmentally and socially. Don't worry, partners in the Island Good Food Initiative are working on how to

'measure' and 'track' these variables in a straightforward fashion to make it as easy as possible for you to get involved.

If you are interested in participating and being interviewed, please contact Dr. Bill Code. Bill@drbillcode.com or 250-746-1593 by the end of January, 2009.

This research project is under the ethical supervision of the Vancouver Foundation so your identity will not be revealed either directly or indirectly. The final report will summarise the responses of the interviewees and will be circulated to all participants and to the stakeholders and funders in the Islands Good Food Initiative.

For further info go to <http://www.heritagefoodservice.coop/aboutislandsgoodfoodinitiative.htm>

When interviewed, Bill will refer you to others if you have further questions. **For further information you may also contact**

Sandra Mark, Principal Researcher, Project Manager, Island Good Food Initiative
260-335-3001 sandra@ediblestrategies.com

Chefs ...can taste the difference. Ideal Island Cuisine Product Sample Pilot

It was an exciting day. After two years of business planning the Heritage Foodservice Co-op farmers provided products for chefs to prepare and compare in a small Product Sample Pilot in Nanaimo on November 17, 2008. The product line Heritage Foodservice Co-op is developing will be marketed as Ideal Island Cuisine. This tasting event was set up to show the chefs that Vancouver Island-produced products taste is superior and must be recognized as premium product from a gastronomic region, Vancouver Island.

Chefs Val Barbour and Paul Beggs heard back from interested chef participants and they also coordinated product from the farmers. (A BIG thanks goes out to Val and Paul for their amazing effort.) The food was prepared and served at the Basque restaurant in Nanaimo and Daniel Critchley from Ilios, Michelle Barkay from Mermaid's Mug, Alex Berlingette from 24 Carrot Catering, David Lang, and Kelly from Wesley Street Café attended as chefs.

The Product Sample Pilot consisted of products from Heritage Foodservice Co-op's members, prepared and served beside products imported to Vancouver Island. Farmers providing product included Murray McNab, pork; George Gomerich, veal, beef, lamb and mutton and Penny Stapleton, lamb. Pastula Farm provided peeled potatoes that were served beside imported Idaho potatoes, both of which were freshly cut and French-fried. Pastula Farm beets were cooked, and their raw cut carrots were served beside imported carrots.

Heritage Foodservice Co-op currently has 28 farmer members who have been involved in planning for over a year. The goal is that as the Nanaimo area restaurants will be serviced initially with expansion to other regions on Vancouver Island being matched with supply side capacity.

At the event Dr Bill Code, Heritage Foodservice Co-op director, described his learning process with his farm in Duncan. He said, "I see the need for me to shift from a farmer to a farm business, and I see that same need for many other farms on Vancouver Island. To have a viable farm business though, I need to know who will buy my product, what products they want, and how much will be paid. If this taste sample event succeeds, we will hold more events like this, which will provide the answers we need as farmers to enable us to plan planting and breeding strategies on a year-in-advance basis."

Margaret Daskis, from Fresh Ideas and Solutions Inc, described Quality Assurances and Good Manufacturing Processes that are being built into the Heritage Foodservice Co-op's plans. These plans are being designed to ensure consistent quality in all products. A diverse proposed product line was introduced to the chefs in "A guide to serving Vancouver Island food on your menu" —a publication created about Ideal Island Cuisine just for chefs.

By: Frank Moreland (frank@heritagefoodservice.coop)

Here is a sample of what the chefs said as they sampled the products:

George Gomerich's MUTTON: "very nice"
George Gomerich's LAMB: "very tender, great flavour"
BC Mainland POTATO: "good, standard potato flavour"
Pastula Farm's POTATO: "superb, flavourful, tasty, better colour!"
George Gomerich's VEAL: "gamey-decent, typical expected"
Penny Stapleton's LAMB: "much tenderer, more flavour, looks & smells better"
NEW ZEALAND LAMB: "regular, standard" George Gomerich's GRASS FED BEEF: "flavourful—chewy"
USA PORK: "typical—standard flavour expected, decent"
Murray McNab's PORK: "tender, moist, flavourful"
Murray McNab's PORK SHANK: "moist, tender, tasty"
Pastula Farm's BEETS: "very nice" Pastula Farm's CARROT: "sweet, tender"
BC Mainland CARROT: "typical, harder"

This pilot successfully demonstrated to the chefs that buying Vancouver Island produce and meat is not only a good thing to do for the environment & for the local economy, BUT the food ALSO tastes GREAT.

Interest in a 2009 event is building up steam.
To register as a restaurant to be invited to a Product Sample event in 2009 contact frank@heritagefoodservice.coop.

British Columbia Association of Farmers' Markets (BCFMA) Market Manual Projects

By: Dr. Jenny Horn (hornof plenty@telus.net)

Farmers' Markets across the province will get a boost from a project that will provide professional development to Market managers and Market Boards of Governance.

The British Columbia Association of Farmers' Markets (BCFMA) has contracted with Vancouver Island University (VIU), Centre for Continuing Studies, to produce the two manuals and accompanying instructors' guides.

Initial activity will involve the development of manuals and teaching guides in the Spring of 2009, which will then be used to conduct one-day workshops on each manual in the Fall of 2009 (in each of the five provincial Health Regions). Once the manuals and guides are evaluated and adjusted accordingly, single copies of both manuals will be available for purchase through the BCAF in the Spring of 2010.

The key intent behind the governance training is to provide board members with information on the different types of boards, their roles, duties and responsibilities. The organization may be non-profit, for-profit or a co-operative. The materials will assist market groups to determine the best governance structure to meet the needs of their stakeholders.

The market manager training will be highly relevant to volunteers or paid employees and will include vendor selection and support, record keeping, adhering to policies and by-laws, site preparation, and special event or fundraising activities.

Funded in part by the Investment Agriculture Foundation of B.C. through the Agri-Food Futures Fund, Islands Agri-Food Initiative, a joint venture between Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Lands.

If you would like more information on this project, or want to share ideas and resources relevant to Farmers' Market development, please contact VIU researchers at:

Vancouver Island University Cowichan Campus - Centre for Continuing Studies
222 Cowichan Way, Duncan, BC V9L 6P4 **Phone: 250-746-3519 .Fax: 250-746-3581**

Sara-Jane Brocklehurst (SaraJane.Brocklehurst@viu.ca) Research Associate, Centre for Continuing Studies
Dr. Jennifer Horn Administrative Coordinator, Researcher, Centre for Continuing Studies

Renewing your membership in the Island Farmers' Alliance

Two years ago, I told our members that the IFA could not provide much more than a small return on the energy being put into it. Despite that gloomy forecast, many people voluntarily sent in their \$35 and wished us well. These loyal supporters hung on while we rebuilt ourselves during 2007 and 2008. I am pleased to witness the momentum increasing and your IFA board of directors for 2009 positively resonates with enthusiasm.

We have become a much more visible presence in the community than we ever were in the past. We have survived without government grants and are financially solvent largely through membership dues. One of our farm members donated a significant sum of money, which has given us a margin of safety and the ability to begin new ventures. The support of the Buy Sell and Trade publishers has gone a long way towards making us a voice for local agriculture. Look at the quality of The Rooster Tale which is of interest to many readers and you will see how we have progressed.

In this issue you will find a membership form. If you are a current member, we invite you to renew. If you are a past member, we understand why you may have withdrawn but will be very pleased to welcome you back. If you are contemplating membership, give us a try. \$35 is a small sum to invest in local agriculture and I won't deny that we need your support. To save money on mail outs we have moved into the electronic age. You can visit us on line at www.islandfarmersalliance.org, and thanks to staff at Buy Sell and Trade, this website will be kept up to date. **Our mailing address continues to be:**

PO Box 188, Mill Bay, BC V0R 2P0

For the past three years, membership renewals have been voluntary and most come in during January, February and March. You will receive a receipt via email. (regular mail if requested) If your corporate structure requires an invoice for membership dues please let us know and we will oblige. Let us all continue making the IFA an organization to be proud of.

Yours, David Pollock
(dnpollock@shaw.ca)

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.



Frank Moreland

IFA WEBSITE Now up & running!

www.islandfarmersalliance.org

Having a Farm Market next summer? Send your information to be included in the Farm Market Listings in the Spring/Summer Rooster Tale. email: islandfarmersalliance.org or go to the IFA Website.

Plan your Vacation at home! Experience an Agricultural Tour on Vancouver Island! Go to www.vancouverisland.travel/touring/agricultural/ for more information!

IFA Board of Directors 2009

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ISLAND FARMERS' ALLIANCE CODE OF ETHICS

As a member of the Island Farmers' Alliance, I hereby commit to the following code of ethics:

My farm business will observe the highest standards of excellence, and will produce and maintain a product of superior quality & freshness;

My farm business will rigorously manage production to assure consumer health & safety;

My farm business will conduct itself with honesty and integrity;

My farm business accepts responsibility for stewardship of the land and water;

My farm business will provide for high standards of animal welfare;

My farm business will help to create an awareness of the importance of agriculture and "Fresh from the Island" products;

My farm business will contribute to the advancement of Island agriculture.



MEMBERSHIP DRIVE 2009

The IFA was founded by farmers in 2000. Their mission is to ensure the sustainability and growth of Island agriculture. They represent and provide a voice for farmers on Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands and Powell River.

Island Farmers' Alliance Membership Application 2009

Membership Declaration (please print)

I, _____, hereby request membership in the Island Farmers' Alliance for the current calendar year. I have read, and agree to abide by, the Code of Ethics (below), and my membership fee is attached. (Cheque payable to the Island Farmers' Alliance)

Type of Membership Farm \$35/yr Associate (Business or Organization) \$35/yr Rooster Booster (Consumer) \$25/yr

RENEWAL: Farm Associate Rooster Booster

NEW: Farm Associate Rooster Booster

Name: _____ Address: _____

City/Town: _____ Postal Code: _____

Name of Farm: _____ Type of Farm: _____

Phone:Fax: _____ Email: _____

Order Farm Sign (\$50): Yes No

* As a farmers' market, association or non-farming member, I agree to uphold the principles described in the IFA Code of Ethics, as it pertains to my own business.

Signature _____

Date _____

Return by mail with your payment to: Island Farmers' Alliance, PO Box 188, Mill Bay, BC V0R 2P0

