



Importance of Farmland & Food Security in the Central Okanagan

What is Agricultural Land?

According to the *Agriculture Land Commission Act*, agricultural land means land designated as agricultural, which includes land that is in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). In general, agricultural land is the land resource upon which agriculture takes place due to its ability to grow food products.

What is Farm Use?

Farm use is an occupation or use of Agricultural Land for:

- Farming land, plants, mushrooms, truffles or animals
- A farm operation as defined in the *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act (FPPA)*
- A purpose designated as a farm use by regulation

Farm use does not include a residential use or a soil or fill use.

Farm Practices Protection & Right to Farm

Normal farm practices are generally protected by BC's *FPPA* which ensures that a farmer's operations are not liable to nuisance lawsuits if they are using "normal farm practices" and complying with legislation.

Within the ALR, the *FPPA* also protects farmers from local government nuisance bylaws, which may attempt to, directly or indirectly, prohibit farm activities. The *FPPA* provides farmers protection from unwarranted nuisance complaints, and also provides a balanced approach to resolving concerns about farm operations for people living near farms.

What is Food Security?

Community food security exists when all community residents have economic and physical access to enough healthy, safe food available through a food system that can be sustained for generations to come, and that maximizes community self-reliance and resilience.

Importance of Food Security in the Central Okanagan

It is important to continue to increase and improve food security in the Central Okanagan. In 2011-12, it was reported that 14% of households in the Okanagan experience some level of food insecurity.

Food insecurity is a public health issue that influences both physical and mental health across lifespans. The root cause of household food insecurity is a lack of income.

Importance of Farmland in the Central Okanagan

The Central Okanagan has strong agricultural roots and this sector has been important in defining the region and its growth pattern. With changes in population, increased development pressure and climate change impacts, there has been greater awareness surrounding the importance of farmland.

However, policy interventions at the provincial or federal levels that address household income can make a significant difference to improve overall food insecurity.

Central Okanagan Food Policy Council (COFPC)

The COFPC provides an opportunity for people and groups to connect and share information and resources, and a chance for people interested in food-related issues in the Central Okanagan to work together towards common goals.

The COFPC board and membership represents the non-profit, health, and business sectors and also includes people with a passion for supporting community food security and our local food system.

Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) – Our Food

One of the Regional Issue Areas identified in the Regional District's RGS is *Our Food*. The main goal of this issue is to support a regional food system that is healthy, resilient and sustainable. To attain this, the Central Okanagan regional partners developed the following policies which agree to:

- Encourage cooperation with regional partners, provincial ministries and stakeholders that consider a regional agricultural strategy to identify issues and the present and future needs of the agricultural sector that will contribute to the well-being of all residents to guide food security, economic opportunity and the protection of agricultural land
- Preserve and support sustainable agricultural activities and land base that enhances local agriculture through the strengthening of best practices, support of local and regional food systems and the expansion of local food markets and Agri-tourism
- Encourage cooperation with the Agricultural Land Commission and the Ministry of Agriculture to promote consistency among bylaws, policies, regulations, and decisions that will be made regarding agriculture
- Support appropriate water supply for the agriculture industry through the continued efforts to have efficient irrigation infrastructure and proper functioning and healthy watersheds
- Encourage cooperation that considers the potential to use public lands for community gardens and/or creation of edible landscapes to encourage grassroots civic agriculture within urban areas
- Promote the use of agriculture and ALR lands for food production and ancillary agriculture processing and retailing consistent with uses outlined in the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* and Regulation; and
- Protect the supply of agricultural land and promote agricultural viability

