

KOOTENAY LAKE REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS



by Paris Marshall Smith

on behalf of

**the Constituency Office of
MLA Michelle Mungall
(Nelson-Creston)**



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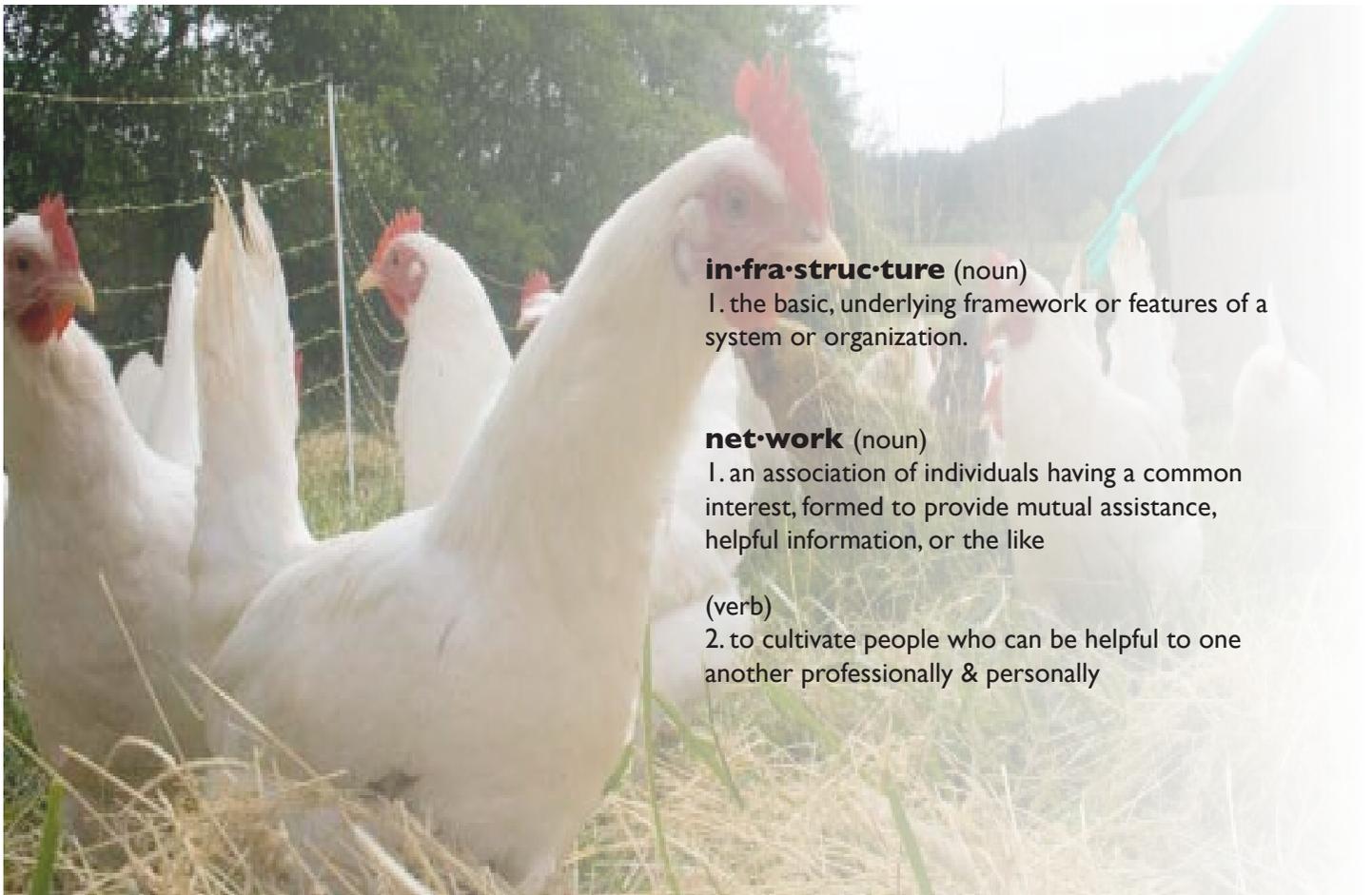


QUESTIONNAIRE & DEFINITIONS

Over the course of four months in 2010, individuals, groups and organizations of the Kootenay Lake Regional Food System were asked 5 questions:

KOOTENAY LAKE REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What opportunities exist for you on your farm as a regional producer?
2. What are the challenges you are currently facing?
3. What is the infrastructure needed to support the local food system?
4. What are the networks needed for you as a local producer?
5. What can the Provincial government do to help?



in·fra·struc·ture (noun)

1. the basic, underlying framework or features of a system or organization.

net·work (noun)

1. an association of individuals having a common interest, formed to provide mutual assistance, helpful information, or the like

(verb)

2. to cultivate people who can be helpful to one another professionally & personally



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report responds to how the Provincial Government can support and strengthen the Kootenay Lake Regional Food System through the building of infrastructure and networks.

Michelle Mungall, Member of Legislated Assembly (MLA) for Nelson-Creston, commissioned this report in response to community feedback identifying that while the Kootenay Regional Food movement is strong and diverse, there is still work to be done, particularly with building networks and infrastructure. In the Kootenay Lake Region, includes the Creston Valley in the south, and In the north Kaslo & Lardeau Valley and at the mid-point Nelson and Salmo, in the center of commerce and services for the region. Yet, despite the potential, the connectivity and productivity of the region's food systems is limited.

The recommendations identified in this report focus on infrastructure and network development. They are structured around 7 areas of a localized food system – people; policy and education; land and housing; storage, processing and distribution points; transportation and circulation; marketing and vending opportunities (stores, markets, CSA's); and integrated resource management.

Participants emphasized four critical areas for intervention:

1. **eat, buy and be local** education campaign for consumers: to encourage deep participation in how they purchase, eat and advocate for local producers & for entry level farmers: provide **training opportunities and extension support**

2. community owned and operated **storage, processing and distribution facilities**

3. secure productive, **affordable and accessible land** to help support succession planning for our food system

4. **diverse and affordable transportation methods** of getting food from farm to table.

Structure of this report:

The following report is built on the seven structural components of a regional food system. After an introduction of the issues and concerns identified by participants, the discussion and recommendations focus on infrastructure and networks.

Localized food systems include a mixture of infrastructure and networks, specifically:

1. people (to consume, produce and do everything in between)
2. policy and education
3. land and housing
4. storage, processing and distribution points
5. transportation routes to get food from a to b
6. marketing and vending opportunities (stores, markets, CSA's)
7. integrated resource management

“There is a great desire for this to happen, we just need the support from community to change habits and behavior to support local farmers.” - Jen Comer



INTRODUCTION

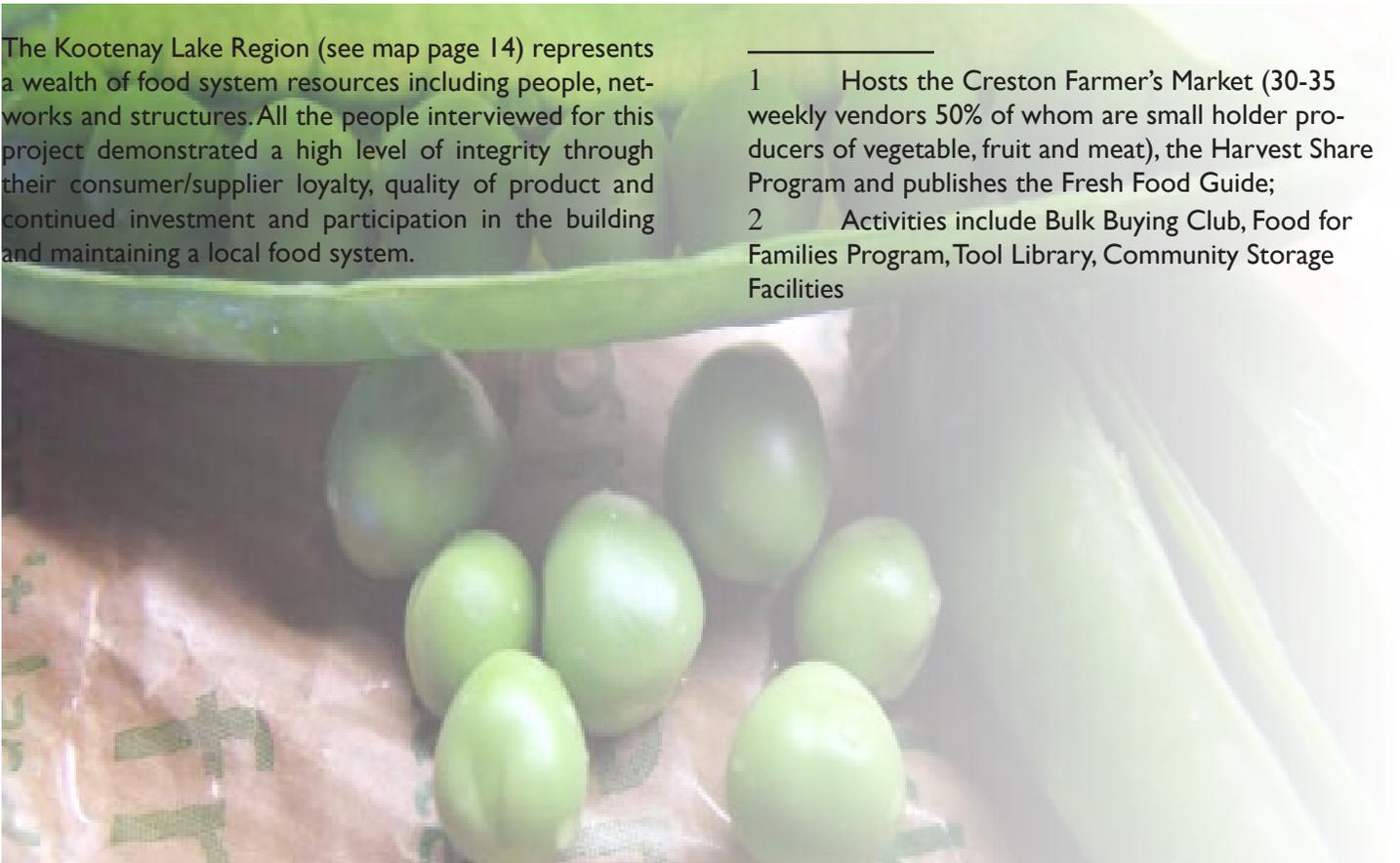
“The nature of a community’s agriculture sector profoundly influences its social and economic character. Communities dominated by smaller, family owned farms and agriculturally related business, compared to those dominated by consolidated, trans-national agribusiness, have been found to have overall higher standards of living, lower crime and poverty rates, more retail trade and independent businesses and more parks, school, churches, newspapers and citizen involvement in democratic processes.” (Condon 2009)

Patrick Condon of the UBC School of Landscape Architecture has worked with communities in BC attempting to reintegrate agriculture into the urban realm and speaks specifically to the value of localized agricultural communities. Studies (Feenstra (2009), Feagan (2007), Bregendahl (2006)) publications (100 Mile Diet, Long Descent) and movements (Slow food Movement, Local Food Movement) can attest to the emergent quality of life that is achieved through more localized living – small integrated communities or neighbourhoods that move more slowly, capturing the beauty of the ordinary.

The Kootenay Lake Region (see map page 14) represents a wealth of food system resources including people, networks and structures. All the people interviewed for this project demonstrated a high level of integrity through their consumer/supplier loyalty, quality of product and continued investment and participation in the building and maintaining a local food system.

Despite an abundance of smallholder producers around the Lake, there are few full time, fully viable (secure land and income producing) farmers. In Creston there are 10 full time farmers and in Kaslo, seven viable farms. In Creston, in addition to fruit, grain and vegetable growers, there are seven active family dairies producing over 23,000 liters of milk a day. There is now three grain and legume Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)’s servicing the broader Kootenay community. By 2008 three grain CSA’s were established, followed by the creation of a mill and distribution services. Similarly, there is also a full service abattoir in Creston that supports local livestock farmers. In addition, there are organizations such as the Lardeau Valley Seed Savers, Creston Valley Food Action Coalition(CVFAC)¹, the Kaslo Food Hub², LINKS of the North Lake area, Lakehead & Beyond – 3 season greenhouse and new comers to the area - Mary Ballon, Patrick Steiner both long time food system participants. Kaslo’s Front Street provides great support for local produce which can be found at the Kaslo Hotel, Cornucopia, Sunnyside Naturals and Front Street Market.

- 1 Hosts the Creston Farmer’s Market (30-35 weekly vendors 50% of whom are small holder producers of vegetable, fruit and meat), the Harvest Share Program and publishes the Fresh Food Guide;
- 2 Activities include Bulk Buying Club, Food for Families Program, Tool Library, Community Storage Facilities





PEOPLE

Questions arose about who is included in the planning and which voices are represented as decisions are being made. Participants spoke about the desire to engage and maintain space and voice for those most marginalized.

The nature of localized food system requires integration and cooperation between local, municipal, provincial and federal government. There is an opportune convergence of support growing in the Kootenays, represented by an active and vibrant grassroots movement and regional, provincial and federal interest and mobilization. Within this multi-layered support, the opportunity exists for government and civil society to come together and work cohesively.

Attention and time must be given to building and re-building the relationships. While support for local food is strong and growing in the Kootenay Lake Region, gaps exist within boarder popular support. The perception expressed by participants is that the movement is hindered by an unwillingness of consumers to pay the price of local food, an ignorance of what food products are locally available and a disconnect with the seasonal nature of food production (not understanding the cyclical nature of production). According to local producers, an increased understanding of the cost and the resultant benefits of local food can be achieved through an investment in relationships and education.

A coordinated and cooperative local food system requires an integration of knowledge and understanding from a broad expanse of society that includes:

- People with local and traditional knowledge
- Greater empowerment and advocacy of women as leaders in the local food movement
- Local champions to promote and network innovation and ideas

ACTION:

NETWORKS

Get the word out on local food via a diversity of mediums including events (Meet your Maker, Home Grown) meetings, forums, phone trees, newspapers, Internet, billboards, word of mouth, and pamphlets.

Additional community food networks opportunities include:

- Connect and work with Yagan Nukiy, Lower Kootenay Band
- Recognize the value and importance of traditional systems of food collection (hunting, fishing and gathering)
- Develop an open source community seed bank and support existing networks (Lardeau Valley Seed Savers)
- Build the capacity and relevance of the Localfooddirectory.ca for the Kootenays
- Build a network of local consumers, retailers and producers e.g. Island Chef Collaborative
- Activate the inventory of farmers and markets and keep it current

Island Chefs Collaborative:

Designed to help promote local food producers thrive, the ICC

- Actively purchases from local suppliers.
- Aids local efforts with money raised through ICC events.
- Brings chefs and farmers together as partners.
- Increases consumer awareness of locally produced foodstuffs by featuring them on restaurant menus and actively promotes them in the businesses.
- Educates the public about the ecological and economic benefits of buying locally.

www.iccbc.ca

To build resilient localized food systems, there is a need for transparent and accessible information (e.g. what seeds are most viable in this climate?) and experience (e.g. how do we save seeds?), and the skills to be able to capture and disseminate it. Participants articulated the value of building on the wealth of experience and tradition within the region while also making efforts to allow for innovation and new perspectives.

Building on existing networks and capacity within the Kootenay Lake Region, participants emphasized the importance of not wasting energy through uncoordinated and redundant actions.

Participants spoke of the advocacy strength of local organizations and initiatives such as CVFAC, as well as the Kaslo Food Hub. Both have been instrumental in connecting producers with consumers and building a consistent and reliable opportunities for interaction. Local resources such as the Gray Creek General Store (opened in 1913) and owner Tom Lymbery, offer the valuable service of a living memory of the Lake Region, providing the historical reference points of the area.

Importantly many participants recognize the lack of training facilities or opportunities and have to travel into Washington or to Alberta to get certification for education, citing this as a lost opportunity to develop local capacity and eventual markets.

ACTION:

Building on a multi-layered approach and the recognition that advocacy must be diverse and multi-sectoral, participants identified the following opportunities for increasing the producer/consumer interface for education and understanding:

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Redesign the program offerings and facilities of local institutions (schools, colleges, and churches) to responsively serve the needs of food community.

- Maximize potential of existing facilities such as College of the Rockies (COTR) to participate in the food system by holding classes (continuing education & skill training), offering space to meet, providing extension to community (e.g. greenhouse & elders, artisan producers, marketing). Successful models include: Linneae farm (Cortes Island), Terra Nova Farm School (Richmond), UBC Farm (Vancouver), Intervale (Vermont)
- Invite farmers to participate in the scientific process and research, through expanded education, and research opportunities through regionally based training and extension centers such as Farmer's Institutes (see below for details)
- Reverse patent and intellectual property rights to

“Education of the consumers is one of the biggest challenges.” - Randy Meyer

allow communities to reclaim all aspects of food preservation and production.

- Work with schools and youth through meal programs, community gardens and curriculum development
- Develop computer literacy opportunities for farmers
- Host annual Meet Your Maker & Home Grown events where producers and chefs/retailers/consumers come together to tell their story and build the relationships
- Build regional taste festivals following the French tradition of terroir (see sidebar) to celebrate local food culture
- Facilitate partnerships with organizations such as The Land Conservancy (TLC), Columbia Basin Trust (CBT), Canadian Cheese Society, Farm Industry Review Board, Agricultural Innovation, Community Capacity Developers, BC Farmers Market Association (BCFMA), Farm Credit Canada, and BC Food Systems Network to encourage innovative solutions.

NETWORKS

A strong majority of participants identified education as the critical issue in enhancing the local food system. The reality of seasonal production (abundance and scarcity) cycles for meat, dairy and produce requires for many consumers a re-adaptation and re-orientation to how they eat, shop and plan their food habits. Participants see the importance of increasing popular understanding of the features of local/seasonal agriculture as a critical component of gaining the support of broader community. Participants strongly believe that the demand for local products will increase if consumers understand not only the complexity and cost of producing food locally, but also the extensive benefits that result.

- Create training and skill development opportunities for new farmers through apprenticeships and mentoring to maximize the experience of farmers
- Organize a multifaceted EAT, BUY & BE LOCAL campaign is needed to raise awareness of what it means to belong to a local food system
- Establish a Kootenay Chefs & Farm Collective (e.g. Island Chefs Collaborative – see side bar page 4)
- Engage in public education about the “fair price of food”. Promote a local fair trade campaign highlighting the true cost of growing food and the beneficial services that are offered to the environment, community and economy
- Build consumer awareness of the Kootenay Mountain Grown label for local producer recognition
- Recognize the wealth of information and experience that currently exists within the communities and make use of it through courses and workshops

“Set up an apprenticeship program for organic farming, something like the government has for carpentry, plumbing etc.” - Claudette Burton

The French tradition of terroir (literally – land) is built on the concept that:

- Each area has unique characteristics (e.g. soil composition, geography, climate) which exist in combinations found only in that area. These can be physical characteristics (such as soil acidity and mineral content), but may also be traditions (e.g. the tradition of producing a particular cheese in a particular way).
- This uniqueness is central to the quality and enjoyment of food and wine, as well as French traditions. It should be protected and preserved.

www.france-property-and-information.com

Benefits identified by participants of a localized food system include:

- Greater interaction and knowledge of how food is grown and by whom, building trust and appreciation
- Increased resilience and responsiveness to local needs
- Increased investment and economic spin-off in local community
- Greater proximity of supply, resulting in fresher, riper food that has less preservatives & processing
- Greater connection with seasonal offerings and enhanced relationship to the local productive landscape
- Increased opportunity for personal engagement with food and food system

Agricultural Land Reserve:

Historically, the existing structure of the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), has provided protection against development pressures. Now the ALR urgently needs to be augmented and strengthened by the Province to provide a foundation for increased food system resilience.

Recent recommendations from the BC Auditor General states that in order to effectively preserve and protect farming in BC, the Agricultural Land Commission (those overseeing the ALR) must be more actively involved in the evaluation, cataloging and review process (Auditor General 2010). Such expansion requires increasing the ALC budget, and improving resources and capacity; maps, people and extension servicing. Further legislative revisions and funding is needed to ensure that ALR land is kept affordable (e.g. prohibit speculative purchasing), for food production only, available (e.g. limit the building footprint constructed on ALR land) and not bound by potentially conflicting interests (e.g. new residential developments next to processing facilities or livestock farms).

Land & Housing:

The Provincial government's current strategy on agriculture and food security is laid out in the BC Agriculture Plan. (MOA 2008) The 21st strategy of the Plan states the proposal of "preserving agricultural land for future generations of farm and ranch families" but fails to adequately respond to concerns for a coordinated affordable land protection program. Although the Plan presents progressive agricultural policy, particularly towards strengthening regional food systems, no funding has been available despite repeated promises. To date none of the recommendations have been implemented.

Land and its increasing inaccessibility is a central concern to all producers and activists in the Region.

Participants define inaccessibility as:

- a. Transfer of land from the ALR for development,
- b. Lack of succession program for aging/retiring farmers
- c. Prohibitive cost of land (a mortgage for 500 thousand is unfeasible for new farmers in initial start up years)
- d. Escalating costs of taxes as land value increases
- e. Lack of secure tenure on leaseholds
- f. Threats and pressure from edge developments
- g. Insecurity of water/irrigation rights
- h. Lack of network connecting young farmers to land and producers

ACTION:

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Secure productive lands of usable size (5-40 acres parcels) providing progressive leasing and purchasing arrangements that give consideration to the economic reality of entry level farmers (i.e. the difficulty of learning new skills and starting a business while maintaining mortgage payments)
- Offer incentives (tax breaks, grants and student debt forgiveness) to small holder farmers & young people wanting to grow and learn the trade
- Redistribute taxes to support regional procurement of land and the establishment of public land endowments
- Build partnerships with Regional and Federal governments (CMHC - No mortgage for first 3 years, support debt payments, & land rehabilitation)
- Prioritize best use of water licensing, limit industrial and development competition for water for agricultural use
- Develop and improve agriculture/residential edges through smart-growth agricultural planning practices (ALR protection buffer zones) to avoid conflicts of smells, sounds, sights that marginalize and isolate farm activities
- Establish and enforce agricultural 'green' belts around urban areas to reduce carbon consumption and increase activity of local farmers

NETWORKS

- Maintain an effective land bank database that identifies, grades and catalogues viable parcels in close proximity to markets and distribution points
- Create incubator farm programs (see sidebar) to support emerging farmers (young people, new immigrants, those in transition) learn skills
- Create graduated leasing programs funded by the Provincial government and coordinated by Regional authorities that allow farmers 3 years to prove viability, on 10 year leases with 30+ acres

FARMER'S INSTITUTES – BUILDING A HUB FOR LOCAL FOOD

Farmer's Institutes are not a new to the Kootenay Lake Region. They were once a standard feature in every community. As we re-localize our food systems in this region, we will need centers to gather, learn, exchange and engage. And we have a model to work with –the Kaslo Food Hub (operated by the North Kootenay Lake Community Services Society) successfully offers 12 different services to the community, bringing consumers and producers closer together.

Regional hubs could include:

- Regional access and information
- Agricultural Extension services
- Bulk purchasing opportunities
- Education & training courses
- Marketing & vending support
- Funding funnel – land acquisition, business & admin support, marketers
- Community kitchens
- Commercial kitchen/processing facilities (e.g. Lardeau Hall – Meadow Creek)
- Tool and resource libraries
- Distribution & storage point

4

STORAGE, PROCESSING & DISTRIBUTION POINTS

Participants are concerned about the lack of small scale, community storage and processing facilities throughout the Kootenay Lake Region. The cost of building food safe certified facilities is prohibitive to most small farmers, forcing them to either consolidate with large industrial producers often at a financial loss or sell out their stock. For those interested in experimenting with value added products (sauces, jams, cheeses, etc..), there are limited opportunities to enter into the industry without considerable financial risk.

Beyond commercial operations, there is an additional need for community facilities that can service individuals and households. There are notable exceptions: With the establishment of the Kootenay Grain CSA, Jennie Truscott opened a mill to service the raw grain that was coming off the farms, she now mills and distributes grain for households all around the lake. Following Provincial legislation changes to meat processing regulations in 2007, Tom Tarzwell invested hundreds of thousands of dollars to build a certified abattoir and waste management facility on his farm in Creston. He now services farmers from as far away as Winlaw and Salmo. There are historical and current precedents of community root cellars in Argenta and Kaslo respectively, offering people space at minimal cost (\$10/month for 50lbs of food) to store bulk orders. The Kaslo Food Hub also operates as a distribution, meeting and coordination point for farmers and consumers, re-establishing the services of a regional Farmer's Institute. In addition to centralized points for distribution within Nelson (Organic Matters is partially serving this need), there is also need for small-scale operations within each community along the Lake.

ACTION:

INFRASTRUCTURE

Following on the success of a BUY/EAT Kootenay campaign, harness community purchasing power and build the facilities needed in the Region (with depots in Creston, Salmo, Kaslo, Balfour, Nelson, Crawford Bay):

Storage:

- Regionally central, provincially funded depots or storage facilities for farmers to drop off and pick

up products

- Seasonal storage facilities for communities that include freezers, cold and dry storage
- Community founded, regionally shared gene/seed banks

Processing:

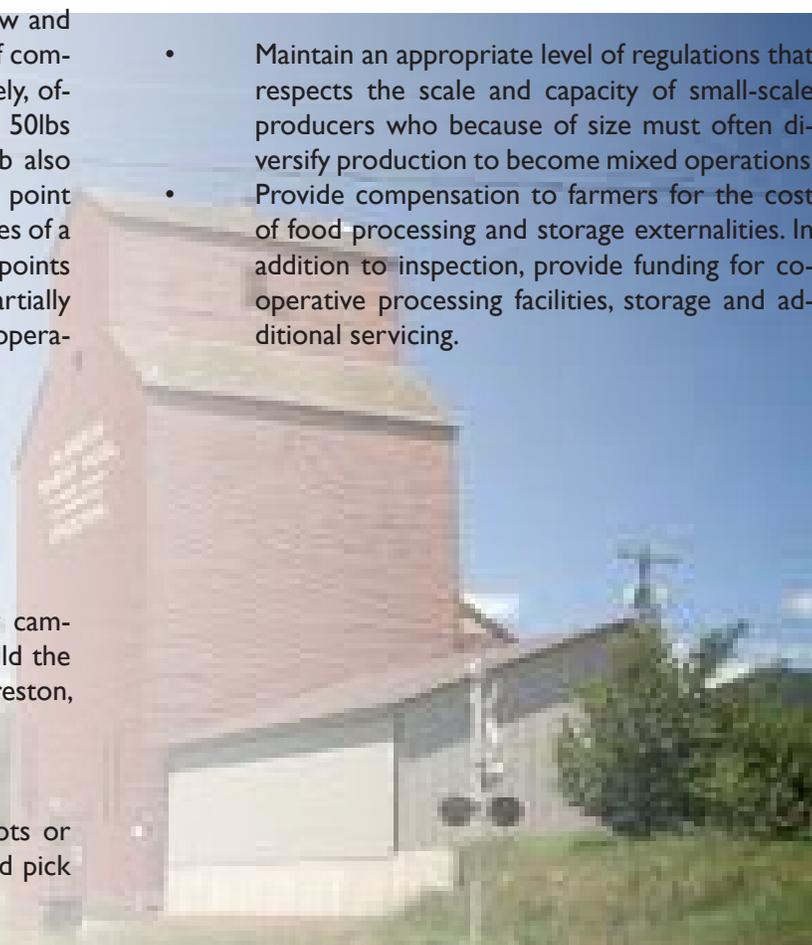
- Cooperative dairy processing plant in the Creston Valley
- Privately funded, community owned and operated mobile abattoir for chicken
- Seed mill (like the one previously operated by Sunset Seed in Creston)

Distribution:

- Establish a Kootenay Mountain Cooperative Distribution system that services merchants, restaurants and households throughout the Region

NETWORKS

- Maintain an appropriate level of regulations that respects the scale and capacity of small-scale producers who because of size must often diversify production to become mixed operations.
- Provide compensation to farmers for the cost of food processing and storage externalities. In addition to inspection, provide funding for cooperative processing facilities, storage and additional servicing.



5

TRANSPORTATION

There is strong concern from participants regarding the movement of goods because it is either impossible (infrastructure does not exist, particularly within the region) or is too expensive to be feasible for the scale of operation. The consolidation of farms across the Province has meant that most food moves either across Province or country before returning to the local store shelves (e.g. the processing of Creston milk in Abbotsford or Red Deer). This situation is both unstable and unsustainable.

Most producers move their items individually, traveling from Creston through to Salmo and Nelson and few use secondary services or shared servicing, stating their interest if such services existed. As the movement for local food has expanded, people like Jennie Truscott and Jessica Piccinin (both from Creston) have picked up on the need and offered their services to deliver and distribute food across the region, but their capacity is limited (i.e. it is not efficient and the scale prohibits significant return on costs). One example comes from the movement of goods along the west shore of the Lake, specifically from Balfour to Kaslo. The scale of distribution makes this 35 minute delivery more expensive than having products shipped from Cawston, 4 hours away. Participants repeatedly explained that the current transportation systems are limited and uncoordinated, resulting in expense, delays and major barriers to supporting the local food system.

ACTION:

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Invest and support a locally coordinated & cooperative food distribution system that is independent and decentralized
- Build Boats - Reactivate the tradition and servicing of sternwheelers along the Lake: use water as the point of connection (see map page 13)
- Trains and Trails - reactivate former CPR rail lines and designate cargo space through cooperative management for local food pick up and distribution
- Focus on improving access within region, building in redundancy (multiple avenues to a single point) to support small holder distribution and improve

regional food security

NETWORKS

- Ensure that through coordinated cooperative efforts, producers are not the solely responsible for cost of transport and delivery
- Establish distribution cooperatives for animals & produce recognizing that size of group increases purchasing power, with sufficient networking can have instant distribution to solve need of restaurant supply

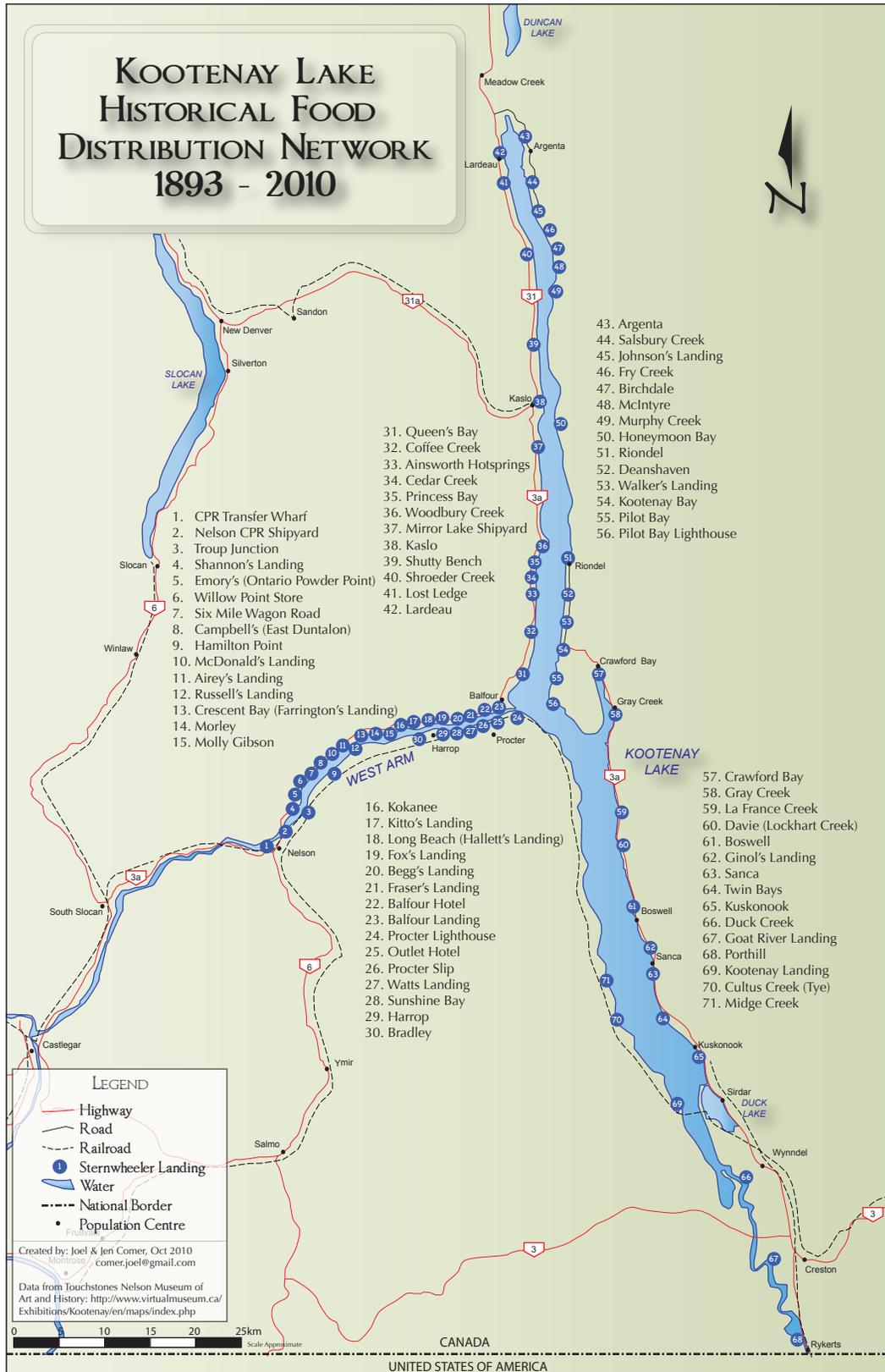
The New Farms Incubator Program supports new farm enterprises by offering access to land, equipment and infrastructure at reasonable rates, along with business planning support, technical training, mentorship and experience with ecological and emerging farming methods. The New Farms Incubator Program is based on the successful Intervale Farms Program near Burlington, Vermont.

www.farmstart.ca





KOOTENAY LAKE DISTRIBUTION



6

MARKETING & VENDING

The perception from producers, confirmed by consumers, is that local food is expensive in the Kootenay Lake region. While comparatively this may be true, the reality is that the costs of small-scale producers are significantly higher than those of subsidized industrial operation. The true cost of food includes the social and environmental costs externalized in an industrial food system.

Participants recognized the problem as 2-fold, first, as Gail Sutherland points out, consumers use price as the primary determinant in choosing what to eat. Society as a whole has de-prioritized the qualities and values of taste, experience, nutrition, and community building in lieu of price points.

The second constraint limiting consumers' willingness to pay the true cost of food is attributed to an overall disconnection from local systems resulting in a lack of knowledge about costs for energy, labor and time to grow and produce food at a small scale.

There is the need to build the trust and awareness between consumer and producer, finding opportunities for engagement and education. Furthermore, there is a need to build localized economies of scale where farmers can share servicing and supplies, one example comes from Harrop-Proctor where local producers want to build local comparative capacity for blueberry production to become a 'destination' point for consumers and tourists.

ACTION:

NETWORKS

- Build cooperative marketing and purchasing programs that use collective buying power to support local production and distribution
- Acknowledge and work with restaurants' and retailers' need for sustainable supply to meet consumer demand. This can involve educating the public about seasonal cycles as well as educating chefs about using the whole product
- Diversify supply opportunities beyond farmers

markets

- Promote and market the Kootenay Mountain Grown regional label embracing Fair-trade, Green and Local
- Reinstate the Buy BC program
- Recognize the potential economic limitations of the local economy and collectively seek additional marketing opportunities in neighboring regions.
- Celebrate, promote and strengthen existing networks such as Kootenay Local Agriculture System (KLAS), Creston Valley Food Action Coalition, Creston Valley Beef Growers Association
- Support the development of shared risk programs like CSA and Cow Share & Herd Share
- Invest in diverse economic opportunities such as off-season growing (e.g. Valley Growers), soft cheeses and yogurt.

Invest Kootenay:

Jon Steinman of Kootenay Coop Radio encourages producers and consumers to "Harness the power of the consumer", education is needed to bring the consumer actively into the local food movement and build the foundation for long-term change. He sees his choice for local food not as a cost, but as an investment in community building. In choosing the name for their company, Denise Harris of Kootenay Alpine Cheese understood that the Kootenays are a recognized brand with appeal to consumers – how else can this identity be mobilized?

Agriculture, like all systems, must increase its ability to serve multiple purposes; it must be viewed as multi-functional. The bi-products of the food system – bio-solids (manure and food scraps), grey and black water are mostly treated as waste to be collected and discarded. A re-consideration of these products as important sources of nutrients creates an opportunity to redesign the system to capture ‘waste’ and re-integrated it into the cycle.

At the Provincial government level there is a need for adequate policy and legal frameworks, sufficient planning, training and support staff, room for public participation and education, and mechanisms to capture cost recovery initiatives.

At a structural level, waste management facilities must be upgraded and developed to offer sophisticated and de-centralized source separation, collection, transportation and re-sourcing and recovery. But most importantly the underlying goal of an integrated food system is to promote an over arching systemic change that localizes resource management and reconnects the community (i.e. consumers) with the cyclical nature of consumption. This is particularly relevant for small scale producers who do not have on-site animals and therefore must secure access to inputs such as manure. Many participants expressed the increasing difficulty of finding manure with the new meat regulations and subsequent erosion of small scale animal ownership.

Participants articulated a failure of the current system in the region to connect the resource cycle - food is hoarded and ineffectively distributed and ‘waste’ is exported, depleting local production from important inputs.

ACTION:

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Support small scale animal husbandry, thereby sustaining local sources for manure and compost
- Enforce institutional standards that require cyclical processing of materials and full life cycle accountability

NETWORKS

- Develop an integrated network of producers that can share and distribute excess to those in need
- Review existing waste management standards within a framework of integrated resource management, health, safety and localized environmental sustainability
- Develop an integrated distribution system among retailers and restaurateurs to help distribute excess food and waste



ADDITIONAL WAYS THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT CAN SUPPORT REGIONAL FOOD

The Provincial government has tools available (taxation, regulation and trade policy, education) to effectively implement and maintain secure food systems. Incentives, grants and apprenticeship opportunities can further support current and future food producers. Productive and accessible agriculture must also be secured.

POLICY

PROVINCIAL FOOD POLICY:

- Recognize the important role of local and regional producers in creating a secure food system, strengthen regional governance and establish localized food charters

FAMILY FARMS:

- Recognize the distinct productive capacity of small farms: modify regulatory restrictions,
- Create the necessary support structures and networks,
- Provide funding and land.

FUNDING:

- Provide core funding for the coordination and management of local food initiatives.

INFORMATION ACCESS:

- Re-establish Provincial level agricultural extension services that link producers with government, academic research and public discourse.
- Make information accessible by using a diversity of techniques to distribute information.
- Build incubator opportunities for training and skills development for food producers

SECURITY:

- Re-configure the Provincial Emergency Program (PEP) to ensure protection and retention of agriculture land
- “Keep our farmland safe from development” Advocate for the protection and expansion of primary productive lands in the ALR. Partner with regional governments and private foundations (e.g. TLC) to

create land endowments protecting and providing land for young entry-level farmers.

- Improve the labor code so that farmers and employees are ensured worker safety, benefits, a living wage and a pension. Of particular importance to migrant workers who are given limited rights and protection under the foreign worker visa agreement.

MARKETING:

- Re-legalize farm gate sales of small scale meat production
- Re-instate the BUY BC program
- Promote organic small farmers and legally back them before agribusiness, from seed patenting, industrial subsidies and market imbalances

FARMING TASK FORCE:

- Establish a dialogue between food producers across the province and government (similar to the Ranching Task Force initiated by the BC Cattle-men’s Association)

