



RDBN Agricultural Plan

What is it?

The Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako has developed an agricultural plan for the region.

An agricultural plan is a strategic planning document that will help to develop a shared vision of agriculture amongst farmers, the public, and local government within the Regional District. Upon completion, the agricultural plan will be approved by the Regional District Board of Directors and used to guide future planning activities affecting agriculture.

The agricultural plan, and the process to create it, will help to facilitate dialogue between the farming community and local government. These two groups are working together, with input from the general public, to create the agricultural plan and enhance understanding of agricultural issues in the region.

Support farming profitability and availability of local food.

Ultimately, supporting the availability of local food for residents while maintaining and improving the economic viability and profitability of agriculture are the goals of the agricultural planning process.

Retaining farmland through the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) is only the first step to protecting and promoting agriculture. Focusing on the farmland base, and the issues that are important to the agricultural community, the RDBN Agricultural Plan will establish solution oriented policies while enhancing farmers' and governments understanding of important agricultural issues.

The Agricultural Plan will help to facilitate dialogue and create a shared vision of agriculture for the region.

The Agricultural Land Reserve is a provincial zoning tool to preserve farmland and control usage of that land. The RDBN has over 365,000 hectares of ALR land, with over 40% of that being actively farmed. Working with the Provincial Government to protect this land base, while promoting the economic viability and profitability of farming, is crucial to the success of agriculture in the region and to maintaining a supply of fresh, local food. The agricultural plan will assist with all of these.

Creating the Agricultural Plan follows a similar process to an Official Community Plan. The process was overseen by a working group of agricultural producers and processors, federal, provincial, and local government representatives, and Regional District Board members. Input from the farming community and the general public was also sought through both surveys and workshops. The workshops were held in Smithers, Vanderhoof, Burns Lake, and Southbank.

Some of the possible outcomes of the agricultural planning process are:

- Improved economic viability and profitability of farming.
- Improved access to markets for farmers.
- Increased access to local food for residents.
- Improved coordination among farmers to share knowledge and coordinate efforts.
- Improved understanding of agricultural issues for government.
- Reduced conflict amongst farming and non-farming communities.

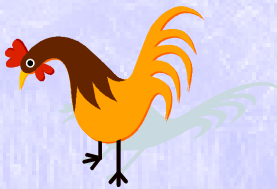
Please visit the RDBN website for more information.

The development of the Agriculture Plan focused on documenting the following

- The state of the local agricultural sector in the region.
- The opportunities and challenges that the agricultural sector is facing.
- The achievable and practical actions that can be taken by the RDBN, the Province, and others to help achieve the following:
 - ⇒ an increase in the amount of agricultural products produced in the region,
 - ⇒ an increase in the local consumption of locally produced agricultural products, and
 - ⇒ securing the long-term viability and prosperity for the agricultural sector.

Agriculture Plan is intended to serve as a resource that provides ideas, information, and a common direction to the following primary users

- Agricultural producers and processors, including their associated groups and organizations, who can use the plan to help develop ideas and recognize opportunities.
- The provincial and federal governments, who can use the plan to ensure that their resources and regulations are managed in a manner that supports agriculture.
- Educational institutions, that can use the plan to identify ways to meet the research, education, and training needs of the agricultural sector.
- Economic development agencies and organizations that can use the plan to develop ideas for projects and strategies that support agriculture.



The RDBN intends to use the plan in the following manner

- To ensure that long range planning, and the regulation of land use and development, is managed in a manner consistent with the direction provided in the plan.
- To ensure that decisions regarding the use of the RDBN's resources are made in consideration of the recommendations made in the plan.