

# Comox Valley Agri-food Product Guide

List of Buyers, Producers, Distributors and Related Policy

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## Introduction

At this point, there is no official title for this document or this project. In early discussions, it was referred to as a producer toolkit. Regardless, the purpose of the project is:

- to develop a toolkit that will:
  - help Comox Valley food producers improve their ability to access buyers, and
  - help purchasers locate and purchase food products from the Comox Valley.

The toolkit will contain three main components:

- 1) a directory of local producers and purchasers, and
- 2) a list of policies and regulations that may impact producers and purchasers, and
- 3) strategies for improving the sale of local agri-food products.

## Directory of Producers and Buyers

The directory of local producers and purchasers (local and nonlocal) has been developed, in the form of a Microsoft Access database, so it can be easily expanded and or maintained over time. As such, the directory is expected to be dynamic so it will be printed/published as needed rather than printing it as part of a regular publication.

The current lists are attached to this document as:

Appendix A – Buyers, processors and transport companies

Appendix B – Comox Valley Producers

## Regulatory Framework

Direct farm marketers, whether at the Farmers' Market or at a farm gate stand, develop a relationship with their customers. The customers get to know and trust the producer. This is one of the main reasons that consumers are buying food direct from the producer. Producers who want to sell to more distant customers will not have that direct connection. Those customers, whether they are local restaurants or large scale distributors, want to know that the food they are buying is safe and high-quality. To some extent, policy and regulation increases with the number of links in the distribution chain.

## Quality Begins at Home

With or without policy and regulation, the first step for producers is to develop or adopt systems to ensure they are producing safe, consistent, high-quality product. There are a number of well developed systems, programs that can be implemented and there is documentation and support for implementation.

### *Food Safety Systems Implementation*

In January 2010, the governments of Canada and BC announced the Food Safety Systems Implementation (FSSI) producer program to promote food safety awareness and deliver educational programs to producers. The program will reimburse 90% of eligible costs to a maximum of \$3000 per farm for approved projects.

### *Enterprise Infrastructure Traceability Program (EITP)*

The Enterprise Infrastructure Traceability Program is designed to assist primary and secondary operations in the BC agri-food sector to purchase and install traceability infrastructure/systems in their operation to demonstrate “movement of information” of their agri-food product from receiving to shipping.

### *FoodSafe/ MarketSafe*

The FoodSafe program is a comprehensive food safety training program designed for the food service industry. MarketSafe is a food safety training program for farmers and producers who make, bake or grow products to sell at farmers' markets or other types of temporary markets. MarketSafe was developed by BC FoodSafe in partnership with the BC Association of Farmers' Markets and will be introduced in late April 2010.

### *Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)*

The CFIA develops and delivers programs and services designed to protect Canadians from preventable food safety hazards. Details of these programs can be found on their website: [www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca). Among others, CFIA programs and services include:

- Food Safety Enhancement Program (FSEP) which is the CFIA's approach to encourage and support the development, implementation and maintenance of Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) systems. They have produced manuals to assist in development.
- Canadian On-Farm Food Safety Program which provides national producer organizations with the opportunity to develop strategies and tools to educate producers and implement programs.
- Biosecurity - the CFIA develops national biosecurity standards, protocols and strategies for livestock, poultry and aquaculture production in collaboration with producer organizations, provincial governments and academia.
- Manuals and hazard specific plans for reportable diseases
- Inspection services
- Programs assessing the safety of plants, animal feeds, fertilizers and pest control products, and
- Verification that imported plants and plant products meet Canadian requirements and that exported plants and plant products meet foreign requirements.

### *Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)*

Good Agricultural Practices are being developed and defined by organizations and governments globally. They are a collection of principles for on-farm production and post-production processes, resulting in safe and healthy food and non-food agricultural products, while taking into account economical, social and environmental sustainability.

The CanadaGAP Program is an on-farm food safety program for producers, Packers and storage intermediaries of horticultural crops. It is designed to help producers and Packers implement effective food safety procedures in their operation. Six commodity specific manuals have been developed.

### *Environmental Farm Planning*

Although they are not directly related to food safety, environmental farm plans will help farmers identify and mitigate environmental risks related to their farm operations.

## **Beyond the Farm Gate**

### *Purchasing Policies*

The following are key considerations for food producers who want to sell product to major retailers in BC (Source: "The Listing Process" which can be found online at: <http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/foodprocessing/documents/retailer/section3.pdf>.)

- Most important step is to be listed on a retail buyer's product list. Buyer must be convinced that the product is:
  - unique, high quality and appeals to niche market segments, and
  - good enough to bump another product off the shelf, in some cases
- Don't expect the buyer to come looking for you. The process is supplier initiated.
- Buying decisions are usually made at the company's headquarters, not at the store.
- Identify the individual buyer responsible for the product type you are selling and ask for their

purchasing policies related to your product.

- Most food retail companies make buying decisions by committee.
- Suppliers must provide enough relevant information to allow informed buyer decisions
- There are purchase planning cycles for some products:
  - products for Christmas – six months advance notice
  - produce and fresh meats – 3 to 12 weeks advance
  - horticultural products – could be forward contracted up to one year
- Product presentation – supplier must consider the buyer’s needs and provide relevant information including, among others:
  - Item description
  - Package/case dimensions and weights
  - UPC codes
  - Pricing and price changes
  - Order sizes – minimum quantities
  - dates of availability
  - delivery information
  - product specifications related to HAACP, organic certification, etc.
  - samples
  - brochures

## Summary of Provincial Legislation

Note: the legislation listed below includes regulation that is considered to be relevant to food safety, marketing and distribution. There are a number of other regulations that impact agriculture in BC that are not included.

### *Food Safety Act*

The act requires that “food establishments” be licensed and allows for inspections of food establishments. Food establishments include, by definition, any place where, or any vehicle in which, in the ordinary course of business, food is grown, raised, cultivated, kept, harvested, produced, manufactured, slaughtered, processed, prepared, packaged, distributed, transported were sold, or is stored or handled for any of those purposes. An operator (the manager, owner or lessee of a food establishment – note this includes vehicles - boats, airplanes, railcars, motor vehicles, trailers and other movable structures, among others) is responsible for ensuring that the food in his or her food establishment is safe for human consumption.

### *Temporary Food Market Guidelines*

The Vancouver Island Health Authority has posted a document entitled “Temporary Food Market Guidelines” on their website ([www.viha.ca](http://www.viha.ca)). The guideline provides recommendations for preparation and display of food intended for sale at temporary food markets. These guidelines apply to farmers markets and other temporary charitable or public events. The guidelines define “lower risk foods” that are acceptable for home preparation and sale at the temporary market. They also define “high-risk foods” that are not acceptable for home preparation and sale. There are special provisions for the sale of shell eggs and other raw foods of animal origin. Generally these products require preparation in approved facilities and special handling at the market.

### *Natural Products Marketing Act*

The purpose and intent of this act is to provide for the promotion, control and regulation of the production, packing, storage and marketing of natural products in B.C., including prohibition of all or part of that production, transportation, packing, storage and marketing. Basically, this act allows for the creation of marketing boards and commissions. These entities have the ability to regulate how products are marketed.

There are a number of commodities that are affected by the act, on Vancouver Island, including but not limited to: poultry products, dairy, greenhouse tomatoes and cucumbers and peppers, potatoes.

### ***Agricultural Land Commission Act***

The Act provides a legislative framework for the preservation of land resources useful to the agricultural industry and consistent with the needs of the community. The legislation provides for the continuation of the B.C. Agricultural Land Commission and outlines its objectives and powers. Generally, the ALCA should not impact on the users of this toolkit but it may limit the types of land uses allowed, especially, with some value added activities on the farm.

### ***Agricultural Produce Grading Act***

The Act provides the legislative framework for quality control standards for specific agricultural products through the establishment of grading systems. Grading systems are established for each product by regulation under the Act. The Act may be applied to produce grown, slaughtered, produced, kept, sold or offered for sale or consumption in British Columbia. A licensing system and powers and duties of inspectors to enforce the legislation are described. Agri-food producers should be aware of the specific grading systems and requirements that may apply to the products they are growing/producing.

### ***Agri-Food Choice and Quality Act***

The purpose of the Act is to allow a person engaged in the food or agriculture industry to obtain certification that the agri-food product they produce or the practices they follow in the production and selling of agri-food products meet prescribed standards. On the issuance of a certificate, the proponent may advertise the agri-food product as meeting the prescribed standards or being produced and sold in accordance with the prescribed standards. The obvious example of certified standards are the organic standards but there have been others developed as well, i.e., locally developed and used standards for “Heritage” Dairy Production.

### ***Animal Disease Control Act***

The Act, administered by the Provincial Veterinarian, provides a statutory authority to limit the spread of contagious diseases in animals, including aquatic animals. It allows for the control of animals infected or thought to be infected and establishes criteria for preventing health risks. The Act also covers the duties and powers of inspectors appointed under the Act, quarantine procedures, and the obligations of animal owners.

### ***British Columbia Wine Act***

The purpose of this Act is to establish the British Columbia Wine Institute which may establish standards for wines manufactured from grapes grown in British Columbia.

### ***Commercial Transport Act***

This Act covers the registration, licensing and operation of commercial vehicles. Its goal is to ensure public safety. Provisions under the act cover vehicle and load size, weight, projections and overhangs. Under the Act, the police and appointed inspectors can prohibit the operation of any vehicle they feel is unsafe.

### ***Drinking Water Protection Act***

This Act has requirements for protecting British Columbia’s drinking water supplies. The Drinking Water Regulation will require water purveyors to prepare a source-to-tap assessment of their water supply system to determine potential risks to water quality, and to prepare an assessment response plan in the event that potential hazards to water quality are identified in the assessment. For purposes of conducting these assessments a water purveyor will be considered to be an individual or group of persons that is operating a water supply system that supplies drinking water to more than one property, or where water is provided for consumption by others.

Provincial standards for drinking or potable water can be obtained from Provincial Health Authorities.

### ***Fish Inspection Act***

The Act ensures quality and wholesomeness in the fish industry by providing the authority to regulate activities concerning the handling, processing, storing, grading, packaging, marking, transporting, marketing and inspection of fish and fish products. The regulations ensure that fish processed and sold within British Columbia have met specified requirements.

### ***Fisheries Act***

The British Columbia Fisheries Act provides for licensing and regulatory control of activities associated with commercial fisheries and aquaculture operations. The primary concerns are the licensing of: fish processing plants; fish buying establishments; fishers selling their own catch; wild oyster and marine plant harvesting; and aquaculture operations with the province of British Columbia.

### ***Food Products Standards Act***

This Act allows the Province to establish compositional and quality standards for processed foods by:

- a) adopting federal standards if they exist under the Food and Drugs Act (Canada); or
- b) by establishing provincial standards by regulation if federal standards do not exist; or
- c) if federal or provincial standards have already been established under the first parts, by establishing premium product standards that are more rigorous than the federal or provincial standards.

### ***Game Farm Act***

This Act enables the orderly development and production of the game farming industry. It allows for specific types of game to be raised for agricultural purposes, conditional on a Game Farm License being issued.

### ***Health Act***

The Act provides the legislative framework which permits the health of British Columbians to be monitored and safeguarded. Included in the Act are provisions aimed at preventing disease, removing health hazards, and permitting appropriate actions when problems arise.

Specific regulations cover the reporting and control of infectious, contagious and communicable diseases, the prevention and removal of health hazards, sanitation standards in private dwellings and public buildings, ventilation, sewage handling, and water and food safety.

Restaurants, bakeries, slaughterhouses, canneries, dairies, market gardens and farms handling manure are bound by specific regulations included in the Act. Regulations also cover dead animal disposal, on-farm washroom facilities and workplace conditions.

The Act regulates farm practices that may result in a health hazard. Such hazards can occur when nutrients, contaminants or pathogens are discharged into or on to land, water or air. Refuse, unpurified sewage, and other substances may not be discharged to the environment.

Inspections and enforcement are carried out by public health inspectors and local boards of health or may be assigned to community health councils. Inspection personnel have the authority to order that a hazard be eliminated.

### ***Highway Act***

The Act governs all public highways and roads. Its purposes are to ensure travel on these routes is safe and to protect B.C.'s transportation infrastructure. Provisions in the Act prohibit a variety of activities which may damage public highways and roads.

*Signs and mail boxes cannot be erected without a permit from the B.C. Ministry of Transportation and Highways. To obtain a fruit stand sign, a roadside vendor must provide safe access and sufficient parking. Lights which distract motorists are forbidden.*

### ***Liquor Control and Licensing Act***

This Act provides for the establishment of British Columbia's Liquor Control and Licensing Branch and outlines its duties and powers. These include the right to sell liquor for immediate consumption in public places, grant licenses and permits, impose terms and conditions concerning the type of liquor sold, hours of operation, seating capacity, whether food must be served, whether entertainment is permitted, supervise the conduct and operation of licensed establishments, and license and oversee the production and storage of liquor and wine. Specific regulations cover license types, fees, and terms and conditions including hours of operation, employees' and customers' age, staff training, advertising, price lists, entertainment, food sales, off sales, etc.

### ***Liquor Distribution Act***

The Act governs the wholesale and retail sale of liquor in British Columbia. Permission may be granted under the Act to establish a liquor store at a manufacturing premise, such as a winery or brewery, to sell products to the general public.

### ***Livestock Identification Act***

The Act establishes a system for the registration of brands in the province, for brand inspection and for the transfer of brands. The Act describes inspectors' powers. The Act stipulates that records of cattle, beef and hides purchased must be kept. Regulations under the Act address the shipment of livestock and provide terms and conditions for the licensing of hide dealers, slaughterhouses and livestock dealers.

### ***Local Government Act***

The Act provides the legislative framework which enables municipal governments to operate, as well as regional districts and improvement districts. It covers such things as the creation of new municipalities, the definition of boundaries, the election of a council, the assessment and collection of taxes, administration, property management, and spending.

The Act also determines municipal governments' powers concerning the licensing and regulation of local businesses, community planning, zoning, public works and utilities, highways, waterways, waste disposal, public health and welfare, justice, fire protection, heritage conservation, parks, recreation and community services.

Under the Act certain provisions address farming such as those covering: (1) community planning, (2) zoning, (3) nuisance regulations, (4) the removal and deposit of soil, (5) weed and pest control, and (6) water use and drainage.

Amendments to the Municipal Act address planning for agriculture. Changes to this Act state that community plans may include policies that help maintain and enhance farming and may now designate development permit areas to protect farming (e.g. buffering to separate farming and residential areas).

Of particular importance is a new division, added to Part 29 titled Division (4.1) - Farm Standards and Bylaws. This new division:

- requires the approval of the minister responsible for FPPA for rural land use bylaws and zoning bylaws of local governments that would restrict the farm use of land in farming areas. Farming areas are defined as land within the Agricultural Land reserve or under an aquaculture license.
- allows for the creation "farm bylaws" that will give more flexibility in specific planning standards for agricultural operations.
- allows the minister to establish agricultural standards for the guidance of local governments in the preparation of the various bylaws affecting agriculture.
- enables the regional implementation of a three-year process to review zoning and rural land-use bylaws to meet the minister's standards.

### ***Meat Inspection Act***

The Act establishes a framework for the regulation of animal slaughter and the sale of meat and meat byproducts in British Columbia. The Act provides for the appointment of inspectors and outlines their powers and responsibilities. It also outlines meat slaughterers' duties. Regulations cover facility and

equipment requirements, slaughtering procedures, sanitation standards and the disposal of condemned carcasses and byproducts. The slaughter of meat for one's own consumption is also covered in the Act.

### ***Milk Industry Act***

The Act describes the requirements to operate a dairy farm. On proof of compliance, the Ministry issues a certificate that the farm is an approved dairy farm for the purpose stated in the certificate. Under the Act, every dairy farmer is required to maintain suitable milk houses, provide housing for cattle and an adequate supply of water, and use safe and clean methods of milk production. The Act provides for an inspection system to ensure that standards of sanitation are adequate and places certain restrictions on milk vendors.

### ***Natural Products Marketing (BC) Act***

The Act provides for a system of schemes that enable the producers of agricultural commodities to control and regulate the production, transportation, packing, storage and marketing of natural products in the province.

The Act provides for the constitution of marketing boards and commissions under these schemes and gives them certain powers. A supervisory and appellate Board, the B.C. Marketing Board, is also created under the Act.

Under the Act, marketing boards and commissions may promote the commodities their members produce. They may also restrict or prohibit the production, transportation, packing storage and marketing of those products in whole or in part.

### ***Plant Protection Act***

The Act provides for the prevention of the spread of pests destructive to plants in British Columbia. It gives inspectors the power to enforce provisions in the Act, including the establishment of quarantine areas. This Act is the provincial counterpart to the federal Plant Protection Act. The B.C. Plant Protection Advisory Council helps enforce the Act by advising provincial and federal officials of potential insect, plant disease, weed and other hazards.

### ***Power Engineers and Boiler and Pressure Vessel Safety Act***

The purpose of this Act is to ensure boiler and pressure vessel safety in British Columbia. The Act provides for the appointment of inspectors and outlines their powers. The Act outlines the responsibilities of boiler, pressure vessel and refrigeration equipment owners and qualifications needed by personnel operating it. Specific regulations cover the design, construction, installation, inspection, operation, condition, alteration maintenance, transportation, repair, testing, sale and exchange of boilers, pressure vessels, pressure piping, fittings and refrigeration equipment.

### ***Waste Management Act***

The Act gives the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection responsibility for waste management throughout the Province. The Waste Management Act regulates....waste discharge...confinement, storage, disposal and transportation of special wastes...spill prevention and reporting activities....contaminated site remediation activities; provides authority to regional waste managers to issues pollution abatement orders and pollution prevention orders; includes enforcement provisions and provides for an appeal to the Environmental Appeal Board.

Regulations pursuant to the Waste Management Act address specific issues including agricultural waste control, open burning smoke control, compost production and use, petroleum storage, antisapstain chemical waste control, and spill reporting.

## **Strategies**

Part of the overall strategy is to clearly identify the potential participants, or target groups who can clearly make good use of this information. On the sellers side, it is suggested that the information should be

promoted to farmers, aquaculture producers, fishers and small-scale value added producers of all of these products.

Another important link in the chain that seems to be overlooked is delivery services. Ultimately, this group would be confined to businesses with vehicles that have been approved for food delivery although requirements vary depending on products. Local transport of small volumes of food products is probably the most expensive component, i.e. the biggest challenge, related to distribution of local foods. It is somewhat difficult to identify these businesses; they are not specifically listed in the Yellow Pages. Many of them seem to drive around with near empty trucks!

### Strategy 1 – “Producer Toolkit” – Hardcopy and Online Version

The interviews, discussion and research conducted in this project indicate that there is a strong demand for local product but producers will need to change the way they do things if they want to sell beyond the Farmers’ Market. Some of these changes may be needed just to maintain or increase sales at the Farmers’ Market.

The toolkit needs to emphasize something like a “top 10 list” of things to do to make it easier for your customer to purchase from you, including:

- 1) Plan and prepare in advance – even for sales at the Farmers’ Market, it pays to plan and grow or produce products that fit with the mix of other products at the market. Beyond that, distributors, stores, and restaurants have access to long lists of products and producers. These lists are developed well in advance of when the product is needed. A producer can’t expect to just “show up with a great product” and get an order that day.
- 2) Get on a list – easier said than done in some cases but buyers buy from a product list of some kind. Some are simple and basic. Others contain thousands of one-line listings, backed by product specification sheets. Either way, orders come from lists.
- 3) Know the customer – this should be on every business’s top 10 list. It is critical to understand the customer’s needs and wants. Price is not the most important factor for those who want to buy local. For some, it is quality. For others it is freshness and shelf life or packaging or delivery time or preparation, consistency, trust....there are so many factors that may be important.
- 4) Communicate – buyers tell stories about farmers who drop off product for them to try out and don’t even leave their name and phone number. If you want to sell to these customers, you must be aware of their needs. There has to be open communications. It is suggested that e-mail is one of the better tools available for this because the buyer and seller can work on their own schedules and still stay in touch, however, e-mail must be checked regularly – each day, not once a week. Buyers probably don’t want to spend time on the phone. Everyone is busy and both buyer and seller need to respect that.
- 5) Develop systems -- use the technology that’s available to develop efficient systems for accepting and processing orders, advising customers of product availability and prices and, generally providing the level of service that the buyer expects or requires. Fax orders may still work but the fax machine is quickly becoming obsolete. Phone orders take time for both buyer and seller. Online order processing is probably the way of the future. For buyers, the preferred system varies. Some restaurants still like to maintain personal contact with producers so they order by phone or face to face. Knowing your customer will help to identify the right system.
  - a. Traceability – this is another area of concern for customers. Food safety problems can destroy businesses at every level of the supply chain. Producers must be able to protect their buyers from liabilities that could arise from contaminated food.
- 6) Establish and maintain consistent product quality – as noted above, these buyers have access to product lists and ordering processes that allow them to purchase, very easily, products that are very consistent and readily available. This is essentially what a local producer is competing with and it is what the buyer expects and needs to produce the product they sell on a daily basis.
- 7) Deliver – the seller needs to provide service and the consistent quality product when it is needed. No excuses. The buyers understand that farmers deal with nature and that there is uncertainty in timing and

yields, however, it is still up to the farmer to deliver as promised or that buyer will be going back to the product list that he can rely on. The seller also needs to realize that the timing of delivery may be very critical to the purchaser's market. Weekends are busy for restaurants and they want fresh product so they will likely demand delivery on a specific day, and not during meal time, with enough time to prep for weekend meals.

8) Develop marketing materials and information – Marketing and distributing beyond the Farmers' Market inherently means that the producer no longer has direct contact with the end consumer. Some purchasers/distributors deal with thousands of products. Each product is described, on their list, in six or eight words or less. If an individual producer wants to get product on the shelf, they must get the attention of the buyers in the chain.

9) Branding product and developing a reputation that customers will ask for by name is another step in the process – probably best left until the product and systems are all fine tuned.

10) Think outside the box - monitor, measure, manage – collect information and use that information to stay in the market. One local retailer commented that he doesn't buy a lot of local produce because the shelf life isn't great. Picking varieties with better shelf life might help get product into that store. Another commented that he will gladly pay more for seasonal produce when it is out of season but there is far too much when it is in season.

### Strategy 2 – Workshop “How to Sell to Restaurants and Retailers”

These comments are based on interviews with people who want to buy more local product:

Producer or product uncertainty – restaurateurs and other potential buyers recognize that producers are faced with uncertainty caused by weather, etc. Even so, these buyers have commitments. They need product when it is ordered and they can't turn away business because they don't have the ingredients that they have ordered. One potential purchaser noted that there was an apathetic attitude amongst some producers. This is the beginning of an argument that “if you are going to be in business, act like you are in business”.

Adopt a business philosophy and develop business practices including some of the following (if not all):

- Make it easy for the customer to do business with you
- Quality and uniform consistency. Certainly, restaurant owners require uniform quality product because they need to produce consistent meals for their customers. They have noted that if you want to sell to them you will need to provide:
  - sample product
  - references
  - perhaps, payment terms
  - service, including on-time delivery
  - a proper paper trail

### Strategy 3 – Develop Island Standards – VIP

There has been plenty of discussion, over the years, about what to call that middle ground between organic and conventional. It really is the typical system used by Vancouver Island farmers. It is not organic but it is not conventional either. Recently, it has been referred to as it “near organic”. It is basically a production system that uses chemical fertilizers (quite diligently because of the cost), but does not use pesticides and growth hormones. Livestock producers may use antibiotics but only for the humane care of their animals. What is this system called?

Natural Pastures Cheese tried to brand their product as “natural” when they first started but they were told that this was illegal. In the US, the term LISA (low input sustainable agriculture) was used but it never seemed to catch on. Perhaps, it could be adopted as the code of practice for Vancouver Island producers and branded as VIP – or “Certified VIP” under the Natural Product Marketing Act?

## Strategy 4 – Promote/Support More Cooperative Efforts

There are a number of opportunities to develop businesses that would improve marketing and distribution systems for agri-food producers on Vancouver Island. However, to make these work requires the support of a huge percentage of producers. Potential opportunities include:

- **Broker/distributor** – there is the potential for a business to represent and distribute Vancouver Island product to various types of vendors on the island. Ultimately, a broker could partner with an existing delivery service that has extra capacity. To develop a business that would perform both functions would require consistent, significant volumes that are probably not available. If an existing broker could increase his volume and an existing delivery service could increase its volume, it could be a win-win business opportunity.
- **Local deliveries** – there seems to be a number of small operations that are selling and delivering small volumes of product or need to deliver small volumes on a regular basis. Because of the volume, the unit cost of delivery is very high. In many cases, one farmer is driving past another farm to deliver product. Cooperation would allow both farmers to cut their marketing costs.
- **Outlets dedicated to sale of local product** - There are businesses that are dedicated to the sale of local product – some will only sell local product. These businesses require volume to justify staying open enough hours to cover their overhead costs and to compete with larger outlets. Farms who have excess product or the capacity/resources to produce more (without increasing their costs) could provide product to these businesses. The increased sales would help the retailer and the farmer. Many, many consumers purchase all of their groceries at larger outlets because of convenience. If the smaller independents can provide more selection, and more local product, perhaps more consumers will move their business.
- **Value adding** – the idea of developing a community kitchen or shared use processing facility has been discussed in the Comox Valley for at least two decades. These facilities are relatively capital intensive and, to be viable, must be well used and well managed. Again, it would take high levels of cooperation, amongst local producers, to justify developing this type of operation locally.