



Comox Valley Economic Development
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British Columbia, Canada
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Conditions ripe for farming in Comox

COMOX VALLEY, BRITISH COLUMBIA – The Comox Valley is betting its future on farmers and the niche products they bring with them.

With abundant farmland and a climate proven to grow some of the best product around, the Comox Valley Economic Development Society is asking farmers to check out what the Valley has to offer.

“This is an incredible opportunity,” said John Watson, the region’s economic development officer hired by four local government’s in the area to maximize the region’s economic potential.

After years of study, the office has made food and beverage processing one of their top priorities and it’s easy to see why.

Located halfway up Vancouver Island’s east coast, the Valley has easy access to 62,934 residents hungry for local product either direct from the farm or from a well-established farmer’s market.

In addition, with almost a million consumers within a three-hour drive on Vancouver Island, and millions more on the BC Lower Mainland and U.S. Pacific Northwest, the Valley is a few hours away from the region’s largest markets. The international airport – the only one on northern Vancouver Island – also allows direct access to Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver.

But you don’t have to tell local farmers that. From blueberries to barley and the spirits made from them, farms here are a shining example of what the right soil, economic environment and climate can do.

Hazelmere Farms certified organic wasabi is grown here, and sold locally at an active farmers market, as well as restaurants in Vancouver and Toronto. Beaver Meadows Farms uses their wasabi in their internationally acclaimed Wasabi Verdelaït under the Natural Pastures label.

Hamilton Farms also produces and sells two million pounds of cranberries to Ocean Spray, one of the country’s top juice producers.

The Valley also exports 20,000 pounds of sprouts to major grocery store chains and restaurants in Western Canada, grain fed pork, chicken and beef and more than half the total aquaculture in Canada.

Still, only a third of the Valley’s 40,000 hectares of land are in production, leaving plenty of room for new farms to grow. That’s rare for many B.C. communities such as the Okanagan and Lower Mainland where 95 per cent of available farmland is already in use.

“We’ve got the land,” said Watson.

Now all they need is the farmers to go with them.

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Comox Valley Growth Factors

Current Agrifood Activity	
<i>Field Crops</i>	<i>10,443 acres</i>
<i>Greenhouse Production</i>	<i>65,992 sq. m.</i>
<i>Nursery Products</i>	<i>138 acres</i>
<i>Poultry</i>	<i>33,628 livestock</i>
<i>Cattle (dairy and beef)</i>	<i>8,248 livestock</i>
<i>Pigs</i>	<i>565 livestock</i>
<i>Sheep and Lamb</i>	<i>2,094 livestock</i>
<i>Horses and Ponies</i>	<i>552 livestock</i>
<i>Shellfish (Oysters and Clams)</i>	<i>10 million lbs.</i>

General Agriculture Facts	
<i>Provincially protected agricultural land (Agriculture Land Reserve)</i>	<i>99,503 acres</i>
<i>Total Area Farmed</i>	<i>33,583 acres</i>
<i>Number of Farms</i>	<i>445</i>
<i>Average Farm Size</i>	<i>76 acres</i>
<i>Average Farm Revenue (per acre)</i>	<i>\$797 dollars</i>
<i>Total Farm Capital</i>	<i>\$259 million</i>
<i>Total Gross Farm Receipts</i>	<i>\$27 million</i>
<i>Total Cash Wages Paid</i>	<i>\$6 million</i>

Climate

<i>Mean high temperature</i>	<i>13.4 C</i>
<i>Mean Low temperature</i>	<i>5.5 C</i>
<i>Mean Daily temperature</i>	<i>9.5 C</i>
<i>July avg. high temperature</i>	<i>22.5 C</i>
<i>Jan avg. low temperature</i>	<i>.3 C</i>
<i>Average annual precipitation</i>	<i>220.1 cm</i>
<i>Average monthly rainfall (May – Sept.)</i>	<i>Less than 50 mm</i>

<i>Average annual snow</i>	<i>91 cm</i>
<i>Average sunshine hours</i>	<i>1,938.6 hours</i>

Agrifood Comox Valley Backgrounder

The Comox Valley supports a wide range of specialty and organic crops with ample clean water sources, excellent soil conditions and easy access to a large market of over two million people.

Advantages:

Situated on the protected south-eastern coast of Vancouver Island, the Comox Valley has an abundance of available land for new and expanding food and beverage processing operations. Only a third of the available agricultural land is currently in production.

There are nearly 450 operating farms in the Comox Valley contributing over \$30 million to the local economy in everything from poultry, cattle and dairy to greenhouse and field crops.

Opportunities:

The Comox Valley is encouraging processors and producers of niche products such as specialty cheeses, berries, flavoured beverages, wineries and organics to locate here.

New manufacturing, distribution and storage facilities are also needed to take full advantage of growing international air and ground transportation links.

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