

The New Provence

EDS markets the Valley to attract agriculture investment

By Mary Anne Ocol
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The Comox Valley Economic Development Society (CVEDS) is embarking on a new marketing campaign to attract new investment into the region by focusing on an available and underutilized resource in the area - agricultural land.

With over 40,000 hectares of land available for agricultural use, economic development officer John Watson said the CVEDS is focusing its efforts in attracting new investment in the agrifood sector by labeling the Comox Valley as "The New Provence".

The consensus was that this sector is important to the economy, with probably the greatest potential to expand, said Watson.

As part of its marketing campaign, the CVEDS produced a brochure which profiles a mix of farmers who give their rationale for farming in the area.

Neil Havers of Havers Design undertook the design of the publication, interviewing and photographing a number of

different farmers at their farm site.

"The editorial content is driven by the interviews rather than the stats, making it more real," said Havers.

He said the concept of the Comox Valley as The New Provence literally came out of these interviews.

Likening the valley to the Tuscan Provence region which boasts high quality fertile land, Watson said the difference lies in the valley's ability to produce and process a wider range of quality products in a natural setting.

From a non-economic perspective, Watson said the final decision to go ahead with the marketing of agrifood opportunities was influenced in part by the community's need to keep agricultural land in nature.

"It's a fantastic opportunity for the valley," said local farmer Patrick Evans.

Evans, who sits as a board director on the CVEDS, said emerging opportunities exist especially in the secondary value-added processing for agricultural products.

The main run of the publication is expected to be out sometime next month.

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Lijon and Sherlene Hsu huddle in their organic wasabi garden. Photo submitted by Neil Havers

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