

THE FOLLOWING THREE CLIMATE ADAPTATION TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS FOCUSING ON FOOD SECURITY & FOOD SELF-SUFFICIENCY WERE PRESENTED TO THE CSCA MEMBERS ON JULY 3, 2023 & RECEIVED THEIR UNANIMOUS APPROVAL.

1. WHEREAS Central Saanich council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and subsequently created the CS Climate Leadership Plan in 2020 and made a commitment to review all future decisions through a climate impact lens.

AND

1. WHEREAS with climate change accelerating around the globe, we're seeing the impacts here in Central Saanich and the effect climate change has on local ecosystems and the challenges it presents within the agricultural community. Being nimble and proactive by addressing and adapting to ongoing climatic changes within our municipality, and preparing for the threats we have yet to face, is essential to our collective well being.

1. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that a separate Climate Adaptation Plan be created outlining the potential risks we face from severe climatic events including food self-sufficiency and food security, with action items to address all of the potential risks in a timely manner. We're proposing that this resolution be among the list of objectives that the Climate Adaptation & Emergency Preparedness coordinator will include when the Climate Adaptation program gets underway.

AND

2. WHEREAS current food supply chains will be at risk of diminishing, or disappearing as climate change accelerates, it would be prudent to start working towards food self-sufficiency as a community. Central Saanich farmers are on the front lines of climate change and need our support while they work through the climatic challenges they're facing, otherwise they may find it too difficult and expensive to continue. Our recent interviews with TEN of the largest farms in Central Saanich confirmed that every farm is experiencing challenges due to unpredictable climatic changes such as;

- Very cold weather conditions in the early spring delaying planting season for several weeks, likely resulting in a shorter growing season
- Increased rainfall over very short periods causing flooding and drainage issues resulting in damage or loss of crops.
- Stronger winds are becoming more of a problem, not only damaging crops but also the plastic covers that farmers use on crops to speed up growth and allow for earlier planting and harvesting. These plastic coverings are very expensive and hard to replace on a limited budget.
- Periods of drought starting earlier in the growing season, and lasting throughout, making it harder for plants to get established and get enough water. Well water drying up on some farms with more than one farmer needed to hook up to the municipal water supply which is expensive.

- Extreme heat damaging crops or ripening everything all at once making it difficult, or impossible to harvest crops in a timely fashion
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Additionally, during the interviews many farmers mentioned that...

They would be interested in extending their growing season if winterizing their aging greenhouses was viable and supported. Three farmers had tried planting a few vegetables in greenhouses built years ago for mild winter temperatures. With temperatures regularly falling to single digits, close to 0 Celsius or below, it was only possible to heat their greenhouses up to 10 degrees C. As a result many seedlings were lost, and without the sun and warmer temperatures in the greenhouses, veggies failed to grow with the exception of carrots on one farm that were stunted when harvested in the spring.

- They had more difficulty determining when and what to plant with the inconsistency in weather patterns they're experiencing.
- They felt the need to have more communication and collaboration with council around the issues affecting them, especially when faced with the new challenges climate change is presenting on their farms. It's apparent that the Pacific & Area Agricultural Commission doesn't bridge the communication gap between local farmers and council.
- They had concerns about succession. As existing farmers retire, young farmers are not likely to have the financial means to purchase and operate a farm in Central Saanich as the cost to purchase arable land on Vancouver Island is enormous and they would likely need to consider leasing land on an existing farm.
- There are concerns about new developments near farmland and the impacts of new builds, new roads, and other infrastructure that can lead to flooding issues in nearby fields when land is covered with concrete and water has fewer places to be absorbed into the ground.
- Food security and supply chain issues were also a concern. The impact of climate change around the world creates more challenges for the agriculture industry. Importing food from other countries and provinces may be drastically reduced or completely disrupted, and transportation of food may be hampered by flooding or wildfires.
- CS residents be encouraged to support their local farms by purchasing their vegetables and fruit during growing season in lieu of purchasing produce that's being trucked in from elsewhere to the grocery store, otherwise local farmers simply won't survive. Ideally stores like Thrifty's and Red Barn should be encouraged to carry our local farmers produce especially when local produce is plentiful.

2. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Central Saanich council offer support to local farmers as they struggle to cope with unpredictable climatic changes in order to improve food self-sufficiency and ensure food security within the municipality over the long term. Offering farmers a small municipal grant would help with increasing expenditures that could include:

- Subsidizing the cost of drilling a well on fledgling farms to ensure water supply is adequate for various farming requirements.
- Subsidizing the additional cost involved to utilize the community water supply during periods of drought when farmer's wells and other water sources have dried up.

3. WHEREAS current food supply chains will be at risk of diminishing, or disappearing as climate change accelerates, it would be prudent to start working towards food self-sufficiency and food security as a community as soon as possible.

3. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that a **part time/full time Food Security Coordinator** be contracted for a one year period with funds allocated from the Climate Adaptation grant under the guidance of the Climate Adaptation & Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, with the option to renew the contract annually.

The Food Security Coordinator would act as a liaison between local farmers and the municipality in order to address communication gaps and ensure that local farmers are heard and fully supported while dealing with the ongoing challenges presented by accelerating climate change events. The Coordinators tasks could include:

- Exploring possible funding options for CS farmers at the municipal, provincial or federal level, advising farmers of any relevant agricultural grants they may qualify for and assisting them with the application process to obtain compensation for losses incurred due to accelerating climatic events including but not limited to; extreme heat waves, drought, flooding or high velocity wind storms and grants available to subsidize the cost to renovate current greenhouses to winterized standards, or to build new winterized greenhouses in order to expand the growing seasons and the number of crops grown over the winter months.
- Assisting CS farmers with succession planning by surveying local farmers to ascertain who is coming up for retirement, if they have a successor in place, or would consider leasing out a portion of their farmland.
- Conducting an audit of farmers crop yields and calculating adjustments to determine food self-sufficiency requirements for Central Saanich.

- Promoting and supporting CS farmers especially during the peak growing season by encouraging residents to visit local farms to purchase their produce rather than doing a one stop shop at a grocery store and purchasing produce being trucked in from elsewhere. Otherwise the very survival of our local farms are at threat, and by extension, local food security!

- Assisting council with the research, coordination and implementation, of a “Farmpreneur Program” in partnership with the Young Agrarians to attract keen young farmers, similar to the program currently being offered at Sandown in North Saanich at the following link: <https://www.sandowncentre.com/> or the new incubator farm proposed for Saanich by the CRD. The Sandown program has proven that there are keen young people who are interested in farming, but who cannot do so without support and mentorship.
 - In the spirit of reconciliation, once a project site has been selected within the municipality, and the application process is in place, council could introduce Tsartlip and Tsawout Nation youths to the Farmpreneur Program and if there's an interest in participating in the program, offer the youths an incubator plot, or the right of first refusal, before other applicants are considered.

 - The program would entail supporting a young “Farmpreneur” on an incubator plot that comes with a land lease, shared production amenities, support getting produce to market, farming & business mentors, guest & site visits from experts working in the field, and opportunities to participate in agri-tourism events like food festivals and farm-to-fork dinners. Further program details can be found on the Young Agrarians website at the following link: <https://youngagrarians.org/farmpreneur-program>

In conclusion:

Although we can't foresee what the future holds with increasingly severe climatic events, we have the ability to reduce the negative impacts of these events by being proactive about food self-sufficiency and food security here in Central Saanich. Approving and implementing the above-mentioned recommendations would be a proactive and positive step towards achieving that goal.