



News Release

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FOOD SECURITY FOCUS OF ISLANDS TRUST REPORT

VICTORIA — The Islands Trust has released a report on food security in the Islands Trust Area that highlights the importance of food security and provides a foundation for developing model policies at the local level to help islanders to grow more food.

During the December 2010 Trust Council meeting in Victoria, Islands Trust Council endorsed and supported the recommendations in the report titled "[Exploring Food Security in the Islands Trust Area.](#)"

"Food security is a growing topic of interest among local governments world-wide," said George Ehring, Salt Spring Island Local Trustee and Chair of the Islands Trust Local Planning Committee which oversaw the project. "This report is the culmination of a year of research into how agriculture has shaped and continues to shape our communities."

The report explores how to support and strengthen the local food system, providing policy tools and resources to ensure that the food system is considered in the face of development pressures, the rising cost of land, reliance on imported foods, climate change and a whole host of other challenges identified through local, provincial and national research.

"The main message is that agricultural production plays a significant role in community development," said Ehring. "Policies to address food security, including providing housing for farm workers, must be practical and reflect the unique circumstances on each island in the Islands Trust Area."

The report describes many ways local governments can promote food security in their communities, including food system assessments, agricultural advisory committees, food charters, farm trusts and food policy councils. Food security policies can be implemented through planning tools such as official community plans, zoning, agricultural area plans and covenants.

Trust Council's strategic plan includes food security as part of the larger objective of supporting socio-economic diversity in the Islands Trust area. As one step towards this goal, Council asked staff to explore the feasibility of establishing a farm land trust in the Islands Trust Area. A farm land trust has already been established by the community on Salt Spring Island.

The Islands Trust is currently working on two other food security projects. On Denman Island, an agricultural strategy has been developed as a step towards developing an area farm plan. The project was funded in part by the Investment Agriculture Foundation of B.C. through programs it delivers on behalf of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture. The strategy is available online at <http://www.islandstrust.bc.ca/ltc/de/pdf/derptagriculturestrategy.pdf>.

A Trust Area initiative is also ongoing to develop a model for seniors-friendly gardening and food security activities as well as to identify how food security relates to seniors' housing options. Three pilot projects run by community groups were selected to participate on Denman Island, Salt Spring Island and Thetis Island. Funding for this project has been provided by the Union of BC Municipalities under the Seniors Housing and Support Initiative.

The Islands Trust Council is a federation of independent local governments that represents some 25,000 people living within the Islands Trust Area. The Islands Trust is responsible for preserving and protecting the unique environment of the Islands Trust Area through planning and regulating land use, development management, education, cooperation with other agencies, and land conservation. The area covers the islands and waters between the British Columbia mainland and southern Vancouver Island. It includes 13 major and more than 450 smaller islands covering 5200 square kilometres.

Editors please note: Sidebar Attached

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Preserving **island** communities, culture and environment

Bowen, Denman, Hornby, Gabriola, Galiano, Gambier, Lasqueti, Mayne, N. Pender, Salt Spring, Saturna, S. Pender, Thetis

Sidebar: Food Security Facts

In 2006 there were 400 farms in the Trust Area, with 245 of these operating under sole proprietorship and the majority of the rest operating under partnership (118) or Family Corporation (29).

Fifty-seven percent of farm operators are aged 55 years or more, 39% are between the ages of 35-54, and only 4% are under 35.

The average age of farmers in the Trust Area is 56.3, above the national average of 52.

Forty-one percent of farmers in the Trust Area are female; this is much higher than the national percentage of 27.8%.

Almost half of the 400 farms that completed the 2006 Census of Agriculture reported producing organic products.

It has been estimated that half a hectare is needed to produce food for one person for one year (given the technology available today). For the Trust Area's 25,000 residents, this amounts to roughly 13,100 ha. (This figure is at the high end as it is based upon a diet that includes land-based meat consumption). Currently 10,700 ha (13.5%) of the Trust Area is in the Agriculture Land Reserve, with 860 ha of this zoned agricultural. The rest of this ALR land falls under other zoning designations such as Park or another agriculture-type zoning designation.

Between 2001-2006 the Denman Island, Mayne Island, and Hornby Island Local Trust Areas saw total farm capital more than double. It almost doubled in the Gabriola Island and Salt Spring Island Local Trust Areas and in Bowen Island Municipality. The increases are primarily due to increases in the value of land and buildings. Total farm capital decreased slightly in the Galiano Island Local Trust Area. The other local trust areas do not have a big enough sample size to allow reporting under Statistics Canada confidentiality guidelines.

Farm capital figures are valuable for food security discussions because they reflect the cost to enter and maybe to continue farming. If the land is too expensive, people might not be able to start farming, while existing farmers may decide to stop farming and sell off their land for other uses.

In 2008, after two years of extensive consultation and research, Salt Spring Island became the first island in the Trust Area to complete an Area Farm Plan. The planning process included the gathering of important local information; the identification of challenges to and opportunities for local agriculture; the establishment of a guiding vision for agriculture on the Island and; the development of action oriented strategies and recommendations.