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## Denman Island Farm Plan - Public Consultation Brief

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Submitted by:

AEL Agroecological Consulting

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## Introduction

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In order to produce a farm plan that has wide community support it is important to engage the public in the planning process. The purpose of any farm plan is to understand the needs and desires of the community for the future of farming in their region and translate this to specific land use and community planning policies and actions. Farming on Denman Island is unique due to its size and location, so it was important to gain feedback from the stakeholders and citizens on Denman Island to map out a future for farming in this island community. We held a Community Forum to discuss a vision, challenges and opportunities for enhancing and preserving farming on Denman Island, as well as a series of Focus Group Sessions with key stakeholders to refine this vision further. A number of key topics and suggestions arose through this process, which are presented here.

## Objectives and Process

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The objectives of the farm planning public consultation process were as follows:

- Develop and refine a Vision for Agriculture on Denman Island;
- Engage a wide variety of members of the food community: farmers, restaurateurs, chefs, stores, schools, and more;
- Organize a Community Forum to engage citizens on Denman Island;
- Conduct Focus Group Sessions with key stakeholders on specific agricultural issues; and
- Engage Denman Island residents in meaningful conversations related to agricultural planning.

Our process began with a thorough review of all existing materials and identification of key stakeholders and groups in the area with the assistance of the Steering Committee. These individuals and groups were sent personal letters inviting them to participate in the forum and focus group sessions. Additionally, advertisements were placed in the Grapevine publication, the Flagstone and an article was also written for the Flagstone publication inviting wider participation from the entire Denman Island community.

## Community Forum

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The forum was held in the evening on Friday, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011 at the Denman Island Community Hall. We had a high attendance of approximately 40 individuals from various backgrounds. The evening began with an introduction of the Farm Plan project by the Islands Trust and a presentation from the Agriculture Plan Steering Committee. The consultant team then presented the objectives of the Denman Island Farm Plan and established the goals for the evening. After the presentations we divided into 4 groups for a World Café-style discussion focusing on four main questions:

- How do we make farming viable and valuable? (Marketing)
- What can **I** do to support farming and local food? (Education)
- What can **we** do to support farming and local food? (Cooperation)
- What is your vision for farming and local food 20 years from today? (Visioning)

These topics were kept very broad to allow for new ideas and input from the participants. Four tables were set up that each focused on one question. Flipcharts were used to capture the discussion, which was facilitated by the consultant team. Members of the steering committee volunteered to take notes at each table to provide a thorough account of the ideas suggested. Every fifteen minutes participants were offered an opportunity to switch tables so that they could comment on every question presented if they chose to. Through these questions we were able to gather thoughts on the vision for farming on Denman, the opportunities already present on the island, some challenges that the farming community and citizens are experiencing and potential solutions for these challenges. The discussion was very lively and many commented that the evening was fun and productive.

## Focus Group Sessions

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A series of four focus group sessions were held on Saturday, November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011, immediately following the Community Forum, in order to use input from the Forum as part of the discussion. The sessions were targeted to address specific issues facing a variety of stakeholder groups on Denman Island including: (1) produce growers; (2) orchardists, honey producers and apiarists; (3) meat and egg producers; and (4) local businesses that purchase food products. The sessions ranged from 4 to 11 participants and took approximately 2 hours each. Key topics raised at the forum were discussed, as well as any other concerns brought forward by the participants.

## Key Topics and Recommendations

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We received an enormous amount of feedback from the community during the forum and focus group sessions. After reviewing all of the transcribed notes, it was clear that the vision and proposed agricultural enhancements of the stakeholders fell into four main topic areas. These were:

- 1. Education**
- 2. Marketing**
- 3. Infrastructure**
- 4. Regulations**

Within each topic area there were a number of ideas and suggestions that were raised. Since we were unable to represent every item recorded we categorized the results and determined the number of times each item was mentioned in either the focus group or forum discussions. Items that were mentioned more than once were identified as suggestions to consider further.

## EDUCATION

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Within the topic of education we found that two subcategories of ideas developed. The community suggested that there could be more educational opportunities for both consumers (the general public) and for farmers. Many felt that it would be very valuable to have an educational institute on Denman Island where people could learn about the “real cost of food”, the importance and benefits of eating locally and seasonally and the potential contamination of bringing in products from off the island (i.e. weeds, pests, diseases, etc.). This educational institute could also provide workshops for

farmers on what products generate a high economic return, how to price your products, how to use innovative farming techniques and could serve as a resource centre.

Another item that was raised repeatedly was the possibility of augmenting the Local Food Directory with a map, online website, blog and interactive features. The existing Denman Island Local Food Directory was published by Renewable Energy Denman Island (REDI) in 2009 and has been updated annually. Despite access to this resource a number of individuals mentioned that they didn't know where they could access products or how to buy certain products such as meat. Participants also suggested that more agricultural education opportunities could be integrated into the curriculum at the community school and that the garden presently on school property could be revived.

A number of farmers mentioned their desire for enhanced extension services. They mentioned that they would really appreciate having someone they could approach for advice on products to grow or process, production methods, marketing, pricing and regulations. It was mentioned that other regional governments provide an agricultural extension officer to act as a liaison between government, health authorities and the farmers, and this idea was well-received. It was also mentioned that there is a vast amount of expertise existing on the island and it is important to share knowledge and mentor each other.

## MARKETING

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Marketing was a key topic that was discussed at length during the forum and focus group sessions. One item that was mentioned repeatedly was the possibility of cooperating to sell products more effectively. It was suggested that farmers could benefit from more communication and co-operation. Some specific submissions included: Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) projects, direct farm sales and off-island sales. Farmers could also co-operate in their purchasing of inputs and planting of crops to make things easier and less expensive. The possibility for local businesses to co-operate on purchasing products was also mentioned, in order to keep input costs down. In addition to the extension agent previously mentioned, it was also suggested that it could be valuable to have a marketing coordinator to help busy farmers market their products more effectively and develop links with the marketplace.

Another item that was mentioned by many individuals was the option of creating a Denman Island logo and brand. Also, many participants put forward the idea of taking an oath to buy locally on Denman. They felt that this could be made easier by enhancing the Local Food Directory with the addition of farm names and pictures. It was also proposed that a Denman Island Cookbook with local and seasonal recipes could be produced to help individuals use the products they purchase on the island.

Agritourism was another suggestion that was raised by a number of individuals. It was proposed that Denman Island create more farm tours, specifically cycle tours. There were some concerns raised about biosecurity and access to farms during the tours and that these tours would need to have a financial benefit for farmers who were opening their homes to tourists. More events to celebrate food such as harvest dinners, food festivals and work parties, were also brought up repeatedly.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

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The potential for enhanced farm infrastructure was raised during the table discussions at the forum and at each focus group session. One of the ideas that was echoed many times by the participants was the possibility of communal processing facilities that include: a juicing press, canning equipment, bottling equipment, pasteurizing equipment and a commercial kitchen. Many individuals also expressed their desire for a local abattoir and butcher, but were unsure whether Denman Island could support this infrastructure with its low population base. In addition to the processing equipment, the possibility of communal storage facilities was raised a number of times. It was proposed that a central place with a freezer, cooler, warehouse and sorting area would be highly beneficial and well-utilized. Many participants also suggested that Denman Island would benefit from a specific market store for local products to make things more convenient for shoppers. The current General Store has started offering local food options, which has been very well received, but many thought this could be expanded. There was some discussion around locating this market store or stand at the ferry terminals, either on the docks on the Denman Island side, or at the Buckley Bay terminal. Other local processing submissions included a cidery or brewery on the island and a pub where they can celebrate local beverages.

Many forms of farming infrastructure and resources were raised that individuals felt were missing Denman Island. These included: greenhouses, nurseries, composting facilities, a large animal vet and laboratory facilities. There was also some discussion around the hope for bringing new farmers to Denman Island, but that these farmers would require access to affordable land to farm as well as low cost housing.

## REGULATIONS

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The topic of regulations was discussed throughout the forum and focus group sessions. These discussions touched on local regulations and bylaws that were under the jurisdiction of Islands Trust, as well as provincial regulations that could be altered that Islands Trust could lobby for.

Many farmers felt that adapting local bylaws to allow on-farm processing to occur in all zones would be supportive. Many farmers were also interested in changing existing bylaws to allow for additional farm worker housing on a single parcel of land. Labour shortages were also mentioned as a key concern for many farmers on Denman Island, but that this could be related to a lack of low-income accommodation. Additionally, it was indicated that the rules for building setbacks from property lines tended to place buildings in the centre of the property, which has made farming cohesive parcels of land difficult and has deterred farm gate sales, marketing or production.

At the provincial level there was a lot of criticism of existing regulations and the potential for changes to make these more conducive to farming on an island and in rural communities. Many mentioned the possibility of a dairy operation on Denman Island, but the quota regulations and cost of dairy quota was cost-prohibitive for small producers. However, the idea of a goat and/or sheep dairy was brought up as a viable alternative. Also, many participants suggested that egg grading and meat slaughtering facilities would be welcome on Denman Island in order to sell eggs and meat products commercially to the local store and the restaurant. There was some concern that the size of the island may not warrant these facilities or that they may be too costly to construct. It was also raised a number of times that the ferry cost for transporting farm products is too high. Many

remarked that the Islands Trust could play a role in lobbying BC Ferries to reduce the cost or set priorities for farmers on their sailings.

There was also some concern about the erosion of the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) on Denman Island and that the Islands Trust could play a stronger role in preventing exclusion, subdivision, or non-farm use applications from reaching the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC). It was also suggested that the ALC could consider allowing conglomerations of small farms to be brought into in the ALR. Finally, it was noted numerous times that BC Assessment's current policies have a detrimental effect on small farms, and that by reducing the income levels required, smaller farms would be eligible to receive farm tax status.

There were a few additional topics that did not fit into the key areas mentioned above. One item that was raised by a number of individuals was the possibility of a gleaning program to harvest excess produce and redistribute this to those in need of healthy food. This was also connected with the concern that farmers often have increased labour demands at certain times of the year. It was proposed that there could be a communal registry for farm workers or regular advertisements in the local newspaper to link workers with farmers who need them. However, many farmers are unable to afford to pay workers, so work/trade arrangements may be more appropriate.

We also received some input from two stakeholders who were unable to make the public consultation events. They wanted to express the urgency for reduced greenhouse gas emissions through stockless agriculture and livestock-free food production. They felt that sustainable agriculture and self-sufficiency on Denman Island can only be achieved through a vegan diet and veganiculture models.

## Conclusion

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Denman Island has a wealth of knowledge and engaged citizens. We feel very privileged to have been a part of the forum and focus group sessions and receive such valuable feedback from the community on farming in this region. The next steps are to refine the vision for agriculture on Denman Island and develop clear implementation steps for the Farm Plan to guide the future of farming, eating, and planning on Denman Island. We look forward to the next stage of this journey.

## Appendix A – Notes from the Community Forum

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### Denman Island Community Forum – Discussion

November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011

#### **How do we make farming viable and valuable?**

- And VALUED!
- Value farming, not only when it is going to the market
- Values: self-sufficiency, food security, feed ourselves
- Denman brand – logo
- Block application to exclude land in ALR
- Farmer map – the DI map could include farms
- Coordinate/support WWOOFers – apparently lots that come to Denman
- Cooperative equipment and advertising
- Farm marketing coordinator
- Farm “college” apprenticeship – farmer’s institute
- Extension agent
- Revive Farmers’ Institute – or Denman/Hornby Alliance
- Experts advise on soil, water and climate characteristics – crop diversification – what is/would be profitable
- Note and address the water issue (conflict)
- Get Ministry of Ag to bring experts around to talk about advice
- Hire a full time agricultural support office through Islands Trust
- Get expert advice through Environmental Farm Plan and get help to pay for solutions to problems
- Small farms have trouble getting farm status
- Lobby BC Assessment to make them understand that Denman is a farming community – lobby for small scale farm status
- Use DI approach (Industrial ag doesn’t fit)
- Utilize local knowledge and experience (over beer!) – what works, what doesn’t
- Mentoring
- Have a marketing officer or co-op, \$ through economic enhancement, grant \$, connect with people who like to market
- Need to coordinate crops (so all is not ready at once) – less waste, more gleaning – share the harvest – market with recipes
- Economic analysis of savings when we buy on the island
- Need clarity on regulations and how to get around them
- Use the term “agriculture plan”, inclusive of more than “farms”
- Integrate farming/agriculture into our culture – use education – setting our clocks by the season
- Parties and festivals to celebrate seasons
- Farm tours – bicycle around
- Harvest fest
- Change from one-stop megastore to cooperation – fill the voids
- Agricultural/Tourism – teaching people
- Agri-marketing group – branding (GPA)
- Need to get info on storage, use/recipes how to keep

- Seasonal DI cookbook
- BC Assessment – small scale farm status
- Putting ag land into the ALR
- Bumper stickers – “I eat Denman”, “Eat the Locals”, “Local Lush”
- Make Denman a Slow Food destination – host conferences and events
- Need information on what we can grow profitably – what is already being grown so you know what to grow
- Focus on feeding ourselves so we can eat all year
- Encouraging everyone to buy here
- Farmers should include everyone on the island – no limitations – everyone should be considered (including small growers)
- A lot of food is wasted because they don’t know what to do with it – use wasted food and share the excess
- Pre-orders to help farmers know what to grow
- Farm shares – buy into these
- Make people more aware of the real cost of food – externalities included
- Analysis of food miles
- What is wellness in our society? Not related to GDP, but to how many are healthy
- Strategic planting – what will be needed?
- Give thanks to those that have broken the land and planted
- Lower ferry costs
- Equipment sharing
- Bartering
- Lobby for dairy value-added – cooperatives
- If there is demand you can afford to pay to reach VIHA requirements
- Local lending/investment – microloans. Denman Works is talking about this and working with the local credit union.
- Need more hands – larger labour force
- If local community was aware of ability to get food by volunteering on the farm they might be more willing to help out – work/trade on island amongst ourselves
- On-going produce/farm column for info on what/who is needed – what food is for sale
- Certifications for disease-free

### **What can WE do to support local food and farming?**

- Create Denman Dollar – LETS system
- More public meals with local food highlighted
- Coordinate liming fields and economize in cost and labour – equipment sharing
- Quit buying produce in Courtenay
- Legalize marijuana – Denman’s cash crop
- Become seed savers
- Start a CSA program here
- Prize for biggest loser (\$ in farming)
- Market through winter months – combine with brunch/food event
- Group greenhouse project
- Annual farm festival
- Veganiculture – farm parties
- Buy locally

- Use/feature local food at events
- Develop sticker
- Eat what we grow instead of grow what we eat
- Ask businesses if they carry local food
- Food festivals and feasts
- Work bees/farm parties/barn raising work parties
- Gleaners group
- Community composting
- Denman Island – pesticide/GMO –free zone
- Bio-security to prevent spread of weeds and pests
- Ag matters in Flagstone
- Food processing and production classes/workshops
- Sharing equipment
- Sharing farmland
- Community gardens
- Get comfortable with “real” food
- Less packages
- Protect/maintain the integrity of farmland (ALR, introduced species)
- Food sovereignty
- On-farm housing for workers and for young families
- Work with others with similar interests/concerns – affordable housing (Islands Trust Regional District)
- Agritourism
- Amendments to OCP to be more supportive of farming
- Lots of political problems, regulatory problems with making and selling products locally
- Get VIHA, Ministry of Ag, Feds together
- Cooperate to reduce processing costs (combine forces between farms) and pay for slaughtering, etc.
- Island communities can apply as an “isolated” community to get abattoir licensing. GPA helped a farmer on Hornby apply.
- Need to educate people (expand food directory, put it on the web, add maps to it)
- Campaign to get people to take an oath to buy local food and use local business (café, general store) – take the “Denman Oath”
- Badge: “I took the Denman Oath”
- Hesitant to communicate with farmers if they aren’t publicly listed
- Match what restaurants need with what farmers are growing – confidence to farmer as well
- Spring/winter forum for farmers so that everyone knows what they should plant
- U-Pick at different farmers’ places
- Need logo/card/ID for DI products on menus
- Value-added business so that excess and seconds could be used and transformed into products
- Pricing is challenging – farmers have a hard time putting a price to their products for selling locally
- Opportunity to connect with new store opening in Buckley Bay
- Water education
- Tours of water systems
- Take advantage of Environmental Farm Plan and grants – find out what funding is available
- Dirty carrots – ask stores to source locally

- Tourist brochure – Denmanwise (similar to Qceanwise) or Denman-Born
- Include Denman in Comox Valley Growers Guide – but make it free for farmers to be included
- Link the Local Food Directory with a map
- Traditional Co-op – each farmer works one day per month – everything people need in one spot
- Farm shop right at the ferry
- Encourage local store to carry more local food
- Need to buy in bulk to keep cost down – Food Buying Club/CSA Modeals
- Zoning (R2) – needs to be changed to allow farming to encourage growing – should be no barriers to selling local food
- Regulations – cannot have more than one accommodation on site
- Co-op classes to educate community on eating, growing, preparing
- Food Hub – place where everyone can learn and educate about local food
- Lots of WWOOFers coming on and off the island – where can they stay? How many are there? How can we support them? WWOOFery!

### **What can I do to support local food and farming?**

- Need to know what food is wasted
- Community canning and juicing – stainless steel table
- Need production kitchen – a place to process food with a manager (or less formal)
- Sharing food
- Giving lessons on canning at home
- Coordinate untapped labour
- Community gleaning
- Collectively grow staple crops – grow a variety for year-round eating
- Make websites for trade
- Wear badge with local food slogan
- Oath to buy local food
- Social worker – willing to provide counseling to those who break oath, or for farmers
- Lawyer – willing to provide legal advice (leases)
- Commit to growing own food
- Food maps in local food directory
- As a producer – making people aware as possible about what we grow and how we grow it (open and transparent) – have a website that updates continually
- Stump farm that was clear cut a few years ago – could be further improved and the land opened up for farming. Interested to know if there is government support to help pay for this.
- Those with land who aren't farming could lease their land – but farmer needs someplace to live
- People who don't own land have a hard time investing in the land
- Tax implications (favourable vs. unfavourable)
- 3-year lease max. is very problematic, not enforceable after 3-year mark
- Lobbying government for change – lots of regulations that conspire against farming (illegal eggs on DI) – tax benefit (farm status)
- Need education on local regulations regarding farming

- Lazy, local buyers – don't buy local enough – need to make yourself conscious of your neighbours – neighbours need to identify themselves: "I'm a Denman Island Farmer" signs (i.e. Bob Parsons farm gate sign (broccoli, carrots, eggs))
- Year-round market – one central place to buy local, more than a farmers market, an info-place too
- Don't know who has turkeys
- Newspapers can advertise local food
- Make individual commitments to buy on-island
- Farmers get busy and aren't good at marketing - How can I make it easy for the farmers?
- Overall organization who is a go-between (GPA?) need more people involved who aren't farmers
- Untapped community resources. Self-employed businesses willing to do pro-bono or bartering
- General Store owner is a marketer! Darryl has innovative ideas for relationships between retailers and farmers – commissions
- Farmers are producing more than what can be sold at the store
- Street market at Buckley Bay side – one person to be the marketer, business opportunity
- Promote buy local and talk to friends, get bumper stickers
- Workshops – Depth and range of expertise in Denman community – how can we share our knowledge?
- Local food buyer for business – will introduce herself more to local farmers and encourage more local eating
- "Crop Tastings" – similar to wine tastings
- Harvest dinner
- Share ideas of cooking and preparing foods - recipes
- Plant more berries for bistro
- Would buy more meat on island if she could buy smaller quantities
- Input substitution – what can we grow here that we buy off-island
- Easier to go through Thrifty's and buy everything they want – cost is too high on Denman, food needs to be priced competitively
- More aware of how we personally can contaminate by bringing stuff on farm off-island
- Eating seasonally – self-education
- More engaged in eating things – eat a real carrot! Menu items at store promote this.
- Work with Hornby (i.e. self-sufficiency)
- Crop sharing – grow what we are good at!
- Food sovereignty – make it much easier to grow (anarchy and break the rules – i.e. sell home canning)
- Plant more blueberries
- "e-farm-ony" – matchmaking
- More farming jokes
- "Denman-stration" farms
- Teach children about farming
- Bring farm to school – expand garden
- Year-round store for local food
- One building for store/farm institute
- Source local meat
- Clear more land
- Provide psc food co-op

- Learn more about how to farm and share knowledge
- Write Denman cookbook/processing guide
- Tap into local knowledge
- Dig out more broom
- Create market for daphne
- Promote broom in flower arrangements
- Share and trade food we grow more
- Weed – 5 x 1000 plants x 8 oz. x \$200/oz = \$8-16 million per year
- Certified organic weed – brand Denman
- Make effort to go to food events
- Save more seeds - Share more seeds - Denman Seed Bank
- I can volunteer to help a farmer - Farm work parties
- Make sure local businesses know I want to eat /buy local
- Find out who grows what – local food directory by product
- Gleaning
- Make time to source local food
- Change shopping habits – convenience vs. local

### **What is your vision for local food and farming 20 years from today?**

- Big harvest barn parties all the time
- Includes shellfish farmers – oyster farmers to be part of farm plan
- Farming returns to a 1900 ideal
- Alternative energy greenhouses
- Farming in balance with island life (all life)
- No herbicides, pesticides, GMO
- Land sharing, co-op
- Collective growing circles
- Gifting – less of a focus on \$ or no \$
- Cooperative marketing – organizing
- Climate appropriate crops
- More composting integrated into community
- Appropriately scaled – quiet agriculture
- Less regulation – Fed., Prov., Islands Trust
- More tax breaks for small land holdings
- More youth and families
- Education aimed at youth “How to Grow”
- Affordable land – sane real estate prices
- More local residents who live and work here
- Anyone is able to farm and buy local food
- Get out of our cars
- Biosecurity – aware of threats
- No pesticides – healthy bees
- Diversity in what we grow – more thoughtful Ministry of Ag directives
- No Monsanto - bankrupt
- More successful farmers – making a living
- Donated land available for ag/low cost housing
- 1% tax on land purchases – use to purchase/protect ag land

- 100% sustainable farming economics (no need to work outside of island)
- More plaid!
- Dairy farm – if Denman is feeding Denman we need dairy
- Soybean farm (miso, tofu)
- Processing – need a commercial production kitchen
- U-Can – a place where you can bring items for canning
- Local brewery, wine liquors, distillery
- Child/Community education centre – where people can come to learn about local farming
- Housing for WWOOFers (hostel for WWOOFers)
- Local abbatoir
- Lots of healthy bees, mason/apiary education, honeybees
- Farm store for Denman produce
- Nursery
- Large animal veterinarian
- Less red tape and more love from the Trust
- Marketing for products that are going off-island (logo) – someone who would approach retailers to sell DI produce
- Markets farming families to move to DI
- More education (agriculture school) – Aprovecho model (Oregon) – different courses – DI as a destination/agritourism
- Value-added processing
- Creative zoning to make processing possible
- Exports because we're feeding everyone on island (don't have to leave ourselves)
- More business zoning for downtown
- Rail, lane for horse-drawn carriages
- No gasoline on island except for tractors
- Pathways to see farmland, trails, riding/walking/biking – interpretive trails
- Free ferries for farmers – or skip to the front
- Full sustainability – veg, fruits, grains, dairy – don't have to leave the island to fulfill food needs
- More grain production (quinoa, amaranth – but birds eat it)
- Preserving strains of DI seeds – finding sources of seeds that are pure/organic – seed bank
- Keeping heritage varieties and grafting (fruit/berries)
- Garden regime A to B – Lacon Road is zone 9 because of the slope – take advantage of microclimate
- Cold frames and greenhouses to extend season
- Can we grow olives, peaches, nectarines, almonds, lemons, limes, pomegranates? Are we already? Need advice on how to utilize microclimate and what we can grow. Coordinated growing to increase diversity.
- Support for specialization
- WWOOFers and local labour forces – some don't have land – lots of underutilized land and need to link land and farmers
- Land and labour sharing
- Market area or fairground to accommodate growth for farming
- Co-op/CSA program – for seniors (Meals on Wheels program to keep elderly in their homes)
- Need second level storage and processing – able to grow enough food , but need a centralized storage and processing facility
- Mobile abbatoir – need a docking facility

- Brewery/Cidery/Pub
- Garden Club to talk about food products (what and how to grow) – garden expertise workshops and forums
- Expanded programs at the community school
- Maple syrup evaporator
- Harvest fish around island in a sustainable way – community fish pond (tilapia, carp)
- Food directory should be a website – will help with menu planning
- Post about surplus products – blog, farmer facebook page
- Central location to take goods – delivery service to housebound (people are currently buying veg bins off the island)
- Preserving guild – community steam juicer, centralized freezer/locker, dehydrator
- Denman has worldwide recognition
- Network of large greenhouses
- Co-op equipment network – barns
- Mobile abattoir
- Aquaculture ownership – terrestrial also
- Recognized Denman trademark
- Becomes part of our everyday activities
- No erosion of ag land
- Education – mecca to learn (i.e. Hollyhock)
- Secondary industry – value-added, cottage industries
- Slow roads, chickens on road!
- Direct route to Hornby
- Have a creative way to live with deer
- Supplying our own energy
- Community hunt
- On island chips, animal fertilizer, additives – community chipper
- Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) – to support farmers
- Humanure education – demonstrations
- Cow/goat share – community herds
- Cheesery
- Bull/goat stud share
- Compost area – community compost centre (rat avoidance techniques needed)
- Local hay, nurseries, products centralized
- Food forests

## Appendix B – Notes from the Focus Group Sessions

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### Notes from Denman Island Focus Group Sessions

November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011

#### **General topics to address:**

1. Education (kids, citizens, farmers)
2. Labour
3. Marketing (branding, logo, farm tour)
4. Regulations (support in the form of an ag extension officer?)
5. Cooperation and Coordination (systemizing)
6. Diversification
7. Water Availability
8. Pests and Weeds
9. Communal Infrastructure
  - Availability of Bulk Inputs (irrigation tape, equipment sourcing, peat moss, packaging materials)
  - Storage Space
  - Production Kitchen (dryer, zoning for this)

#### **Vegetable Producers**

##### Communal Infrastructure:

- Communal bulk purchasing system (GPA has a mandate to do this) – community truck and shopping club
- Increasing ferry and gas costs is a good motivator to cooperate
- Conversation in the community about shared truck buyer
- Would work for a tight-knit group – for a few people, but not everyone
- Cooperative selling – how can we make more \$ out of local farming
- Cooperative processing - Commercial juicing and canning operation (cidery, bottling, press, pasteurizer, walk-in freezer, storage/sorting area) – model on Hornby works
- Sites on Denman for commercial production kitchen (mini-factory) – need a special zone for it. Charles property where the restaurant is would be good – need a spot for trucks
- Possible location: Seniors Centre
- AGM for the GPA is on Nov. 25<sup>th</sup> – after that they will send a list of equipment that is needed on the island
- Need a spader, honey separator, flash freezer
- Need lime in large quantities, feed irrigation tape, labeling/packaging equipment. Peat, seed, remay, veterinary meds, netting, fencing
- Include a warehouse and sorting area
- Financial feasibility of upkeep.maintenance:
  - Need an employee/manager
  - Run it as a co-op or business to cover operation costs (monthly membership)
  - Portion of sales could go to building upkeep
  - Basket/CSA delivery revenue – portion directed to maintenance of building
  - Some start-up grants available
  - Is this competing with the store?

### Marketing:

- Market stand at the Denman side of the ferry terminal to sell seasonal produce at the dock (kiosk) with funding from Denman Works – GPA is working on this for 2012
- Ferry costs are a big constraint – can we lobby BC Ferries?
- Everything is ad hoc – need better systems
- GPA bought the cooler in the General Store – new paradigm shift at the store is good
- Need a planting plan so that not everyone is growing and selling the same thing
- Need a consistent system for planting, selling and pricing for the local store, market and restaurants
- A pricing structure is greatly needed – guidelines for pricing at other markets (i.e. Victoria)
- Need to get an appropriate range of prices for: farmers’ markets, farm gate, CSA, General Store, restaurant, bartering – look at a percentage below Thrifty’s prices?
- SPIN farming model: decide how much \$ you want to make and work backwards in terms of what to grow and how much to charge
- Currently holding a local contest for a logo/brand – will allow it to be known publicly on and off the island
- Two parallel streams of thinking with regard to agriculture on DI. There is the “Denman feeding Denman” mentality vs. reality of marketing and making a living for the purpose of commercial viability
- What sort of scale are we looking at? Hard to reach consensus on this. Easy to make enemies in small communities.
- There are 9 organizations involved in agriculture in a community of 1100
- Tourism is also a split issue – can get experts to do a tourism planning workshop
- Slow Food Cycle is possible trial for agritourism
- Garden tour and other events already exist – boosts economy for DI one weekend a year (Blackberry Fair, Studio Tour, Readers and Writers Fest, Soccer Tournament)
- School or educational institute to teach people how to grow food on their own plots – on-island experts (create list of human resource, potential teachers, locations) can attract people from off-island and act as second form of income – need accommodation
- Need to have a list of human resources on the island
- Need to grow a product that you can value-add/store/make non-perishable to sell year-round
- Berries have good potential for value-added – some cutting infrastructure exists on the island – make jams, candies, vinegars, fruit rolls, dried berries, frozen berries
- Perishable products are not commercially viable with transportation costs
- Cheese production, goat./sheep dairies on the island are needed
- Need a bottling plant
- Need fencing infrastructure
- Need to name farms for branding purposes
- Specialize in heritage apples, tree nuts
- Seed bank/Seed sanctuary – workshops starting this year on seed saving
- Harvest Dinner – Meet your Maker type event

### Cooperation & Coordination:

- Coordination of planting plan – GPA will hold a meeting in December to start the conversation
- Hard to trust the year – need to have a Plan B so that for every crop there are at least 2 growers

- Everyone has a specific microclimate – what is your specialty?
- Raccoons are a big nuisance for soft fruits
- Refrigerated truck and storage unit is needed – might be one on the island that could be refurbished – Steve Carballeira
- Cooperative selling at markets - Vancouver market access, Victoria permanent market in the works, also Comox Valley will be establishing a permanent year-round market, new Tofino market
- Denman feed Denman involved more than farmers – should be an agriculture plan: farm and farmers is too specific and misses out on wild foods, gardeners, entrepreneurs. Farmer is a job title.

## **Livestock Producers**

### Education and Marketing:

- Beef sales – can make as much \$ with less work by selling off-island (>\$1000 a piece for beef right now)
- Lamb prices were quite steady locally
- Can sell chicken on island, but need good cold storage – can sell at General Store, but needs to be certified, so drives price up
- There should be an Island Buying Weekend – Chicken Weekend, Beef Weekend, etc. held on long weekends - set up buying clubs
- Farm gate sales can be destructive because takes up lots of your time
- Grocery stores don't want to talk to individual growers/producers – need to cooperate
- Pre-ordering might work – or have a regular set-up for regular delivery/order – need to have storage
- People are not used to planning ahead – neither are farmers
- People expect high level of “catering to” – a lot of people on the island are from “grocery store” city mentality. Older people make up a big portion of community and buy everything off the island.
- But opportunity for selling to people who want local and fresh
- Lack of basic info for consumers
- Advertising assumes local knowledge of who is selling what in the local food directory
- Education on benefits of grass-fed vs. grain-fed marketing strategy
- Community cold storage (need to plan 3 or 4 months in advance for beef)
- Need to get islanders to have deep freezers and buy by the side – neighbours can share a side (some concern about power outages)
- Article in local paper needed to explain ins and outs of buying local meat, what's needed. This is already happening to some degree. This will happen at Easter with updates around holidays.
- Include a buying guide in the local food directory
- Farmers need to wrap their minds around selling smaller cuts of meat, selling out of the house, being available certain times of the day/week.
- Mobile abattoir could work if it's cheaper than bringing it to market and if the farmer has storage. Walk-in cooler with Bob and Sandy Ostertag?
- Need creative zoning for agri-business on farm
- Hard to know if population could sustain local business

- The farm plan needs to be directed towards consumers, planners and producers – needs to help identify where the next priority should be – list of funding agencies that will fund more major ag infrastructure – Denman Works has a grant facilitator
- Butcher shop – cost of operation wouldn't justify (maybe market a few things?)
- Willingness at the General Store to market local and stock local meat items
- Make Denman famous for local meat and food products
- Incorporate farm stays and agritourism
- Create a sales barn – with a walk-in freezer, permanent farm market, commercial kitchen, processing facilities
- Preserve old farms and keep them intact

#### Cooperation:

- Combining products to sell on and off island (providing a consistent supply)
- Consistent pricing for products (live weight vs. cut and wrapped)– hard to hide price disparities on an island this size – Would be hard to get past the feel of a marketing board
- Sit down over coffee and just talk about costs, town prices, etc. a couple of times per year
- Cooperation around dried feed. Could try to get it in bulk closer than from Duncan (\$2 cheaper per bag there)
- Pallets of bags, totes for pig and chicken feed – organic feed in Chilliwack available
- Commitment on DI is hard to come by
- Need bulk fencing material
- Sometimes dropping off animals to Fraser Valley and come back with an empty truck – opportunity to cooperate here
- Passenger car \$15 for the ferry, but a car and trailer is \$50! Need to lobby for consistent unit pricing for vehicles with ag plates. Talk to ferry commissioner about rates and ferry structure. Needs provincial support.
- Dairy needed – cheese doesn't require a quota (Salt Spring has two great cheese makers – Salt Spring Cheeseworks and Moonstruck) – dairy quota could be divided into multiple sections
- It's illegal for stores and restaurants to buy local eggs, need to be graded. Could set up a really small grading facility – no government agency will say no 'per se'
- Dehydrating regulations – what are they? What is the cost of a large dehydrator?
- Old Swan Farm could be brought back into production
- Need storage for hay

#### Regulations:

- Islands Trust regulations haven't been a problem, but there is a concern that they will move in the direction of regulating farmers – need to allow other things to happen on ag land though (agritourism, agroforestry, seasonal farm worker housing, campsites, etc.)
- Requirements around cattle tags and inspections are very expensive – user pay costs
- Livestock manifest for transporting – used to be free, feeling nickel and dimed
- Building permits and setbacks can be restrictive
- Insurance for raising chickens and selling on-farm – costly
- Zoning for secondary processing or communal infrastructure – ALR limitations
- Illegal for store to buy eggs on the island – need a grading, washing, candling station
- No low-income housing options for seasonal farm workers
- Role of the Islands Trust to protect and preserve can be to the detriment of farming (tree protection bylaw has limited sun exposure, buffer zones off farm land)

- Agriculture and conservation need to go hand in hand
- Conglomerate of small farms to be included in the ALR
- Lobbying for farm status on small lots
- Islands Trust needs to put farming first – need quick turnaround for land use applications that have to do with farm land
- Farm building setbacks put farm buildings all in the centre of small plots, which makes farming challenging

#### Pests and water:

- Broom can be advantageous to bees, but need to control in sensitive ecosystems – learn to adapt
- Local dogs – need articles and education on keeping them under control and the need for fencing
- Transporting live rats (live trapping) has to stop – workshops on rat control
- Need to keep house cats inside
- It's possible to have disease-free bees, but would need to remove the current bee populations in order to eliminate the mites
- More inoculations to avoid disease concerns
- Deer don't have natural predators here – need to encourage hunting (can shoot deer on your own land)
- Irrigation is a necessity – drainage is most important
- Hard to create a pond on Denman
- Not a water shortage issue, but a water storage issue

#### New farmers:

- Look at alternative land ownership models (leasing, cooperatives)
- Need long term commitments from both the new farmer and from the landowner
- Intensive farming – sustainable forms

### **Orchard, Soft Fruit and Bee Producers**

- Farm status for small acreages – few grants are available for small farmers
- Want to discuss hay
- Availability of land for future farmers
- Some focus on organic growing on island
- What is limiting farming is coming from off-island (diseases, etc.) – concerns about pests and diseases
- Concerns with people understanding the cost of real food

#### Education:

- Need a resource centre so that people have information/other resources and people/paper/internet
- Labour – a central source of wwoofers and labour
- Food guide is a good existing resource
- Access to information resources – when new information comes available, farmers need to know about it (prov. and fed. Level) – need to reinvigorate ag extension
- Network with other gulf islands – lobbying and other group stuff
- Use local governments to lobby at UBCM

- Access to lab services for looking for pests and diseases on rootstock for sale (part of resource centre)
- Need education on buyer security – there is a lot of \$ in eradication, but no preventative education – a listserv on the island for these would be helpful
- Integrated pest management is hard in open environments
- Sharing rootstock on island – we are very good at spreading disease – invasives will/may prevent ability to grow (i.e. hay) – conflicts with cooperation and bartering
- Need a definition of weeds (thistle is good for bees, which are good for orchards)
- Some plants that are good for nectar are destroyed
- We could collectively bring together/forward information on farming, including a history on what grows well here (i.e. apple varieties) – history needs to be tapped into (so many heritage varieties of apples)
- What are the right products to be growing in light of climate change (diversification, multiple varieties)

#### Marketing:

- If agriculture is going to be encouraged, the real markets are off-island (if everyone grows here there will be no market as there are only 1100 people)
- There are many farms off ALR land – farm planning should include these
- Food focus farm tours would need to provide financial benefit for farmers (“looky-loos” are a problem) – marketable products
- Need an enhanced food guide with education
- Farm tours present a risk for disease spread
- A central place to buy products (General Store sales are doing better than farm gate sales) – a co-op or year-round market
- Shared coolers for storage – other shared equipment
- Some farms have a dedicated list of buyers on certain days – waiting list, economic buffer, pre-orders and CSAs
- The community hall kitchen is not designed for all the processing requirements
- A refrigerated truck would be great
- With kitchens and shared equipment quality control is quite difficult (would require membership dues) and requires a lot of water and chemicals
- Recognizing the small scale “underground” good system in the plan would be important (DI feeds DI model)
- Take advantage of government investments in collective alliances
- Gleaning program for unharvested apples (not undercut local producers – i.e. making alcohol or other value-added product)
- Pricing is difficult for orchardists (a price index is one option) – a fair price would give the seller confidence

#### Regulations:

- Pasteurization of dairy
- Eggs – grading (possible food coop equipment) – but egg cartons can’t be reused
- No one really knows what the regulations are
- An agricultural support officer might be helpful – planning role at the Islands Trust or through economic development in the CVRD – dedicated
- Climate change needs to be noted - very significant for bees
- Lobby for funding for greenhouses

- Need diversity to survive through climate change – we need to keep everything we can within DI, it is an advantage to be a small island
- For bees, a reduction of pesticides is needed
- Growing food crops for chickens – cooperation
- Housing for young farmers is another issue – housing legislation/regulations for farm help

#### Cooperation:

- Cooperating on bulk feed purchasing
- A farmers' institute allows for wholesale buying prices tax free – join the Comox Valley Farmers' Institute since there is strength in numbers
- Set aside small percentage of tax income to purchase land for farming (Farm Trust) – also donating/allowing unused land to be used for farming

### **Local Businesses**

#### Representatives:

- General Store
  - Caterer
  - Restaurateur
  - Owner/operator of a B&B and retreats
- Mention that I is really great to be able to source local food at the General Store – time saver for the consumer
  - Need more events to connect retailers and buyers with producers
  - B&B guests love being able to eat local
  - Hard time (not enough time) to access stuff from farm to farm
  - Assumption that everyone knows what everyone is doing
  - Lacking local milk and cheese (all types)
  - Don't know legislation around local food
  - Turn Local Food Directory into a blog with a map
  - Want to plan each season – fairly consistent as to what is ready monthly
  - A central farm infrastructure would be great
  - Torn between buying directly from farmer vs. the General Store
  - General Store cooperates with restaurant and passes along suppliers – cross-promotion
  - Culture is changing towards supporting local – mixed reviews about prices, people don't like paying more
  - Easier for the store to communicate with the GPA – avoids too much of one product and there is the ability to coordinate prices
  - Choosing a price point between Safeway and Edible Island
  - There is a disparity of wealth on Denman Island – a sense of entitlement for some – need to comply with the community to bring them in the door
  - DI products sell well at the store – particularly eggs and would love to have a grader on site
    - Sell eggs at \$4/dozen
    - Summer – restaurant 80 dozen, store 40-50 dozen
    - Winter – restaurant 40 dozen, store 20 dozen
    - Could share the costs of this facility with Hornby
  - Can't keep up with the demand for local meat at the store – sell mainly steak and hamburger – hard to get consistent cuts for plates at the restaurant – no storage to buy a full side (freezers are full!)

- Source meat mainly from Butcher's Block in Courtenay
- Expensive to buy a whole or half a cow and tricky to plan ahead and store it
- Need more refrigerated storage space on the island (3 right now)
- Membership could work for a communal farm centre to help with maintenance costs
- Successful B&Bs usually provide kitchenettes for guests
- Need to advertise who is producing what in terms of meat, even if their waiting list is full – need consistency and commitments from farmers
- Pictures of farms in the store would help for marketing
- Would love to have grain on the island such as amaranth, quinoa and red fife wheat – as part of a long term vision
- Striving for 100% sustainability between Denman Hornby and Vancouver Island
- All meat has to be processed off-island – needs to go through a fed. inspected facility – increases the price due to transportation
- Local VIHA environmental health office is a good, helpful resource partner
- Need to build better relationships between growers and local businesses and growers with growers – biggest gap is to get growers cooperatively planting
- Many growers have seen an increase in sales from the road stand to the store
- Bartering credits with growers and restaurants is an option
- Need a wider variety of products to choose from: nut trees, honey, local beer/wine/cider, grapes (expensive products that would benefit from cutting out the middleman)
- Print copy of the Local Food Directory doesn't work because it is consistently out of date. One stop shop website updated weekly – or a listserve with a map like the Sunshine Coast
- Opportunity to pay a farmer to grow for you – Cortes Shellfish Co-op is a good model – would be useful for larger items such as potatoes
- Would like to access more ingredients such as cilantro, legumes (soybeans)