



For Immediate Release

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An Agriculture Strategy for Haida Gwaii

Over the past year, Misty Isles Economic Development Society, the East Coast Graham Island Farmers Institute, Islands Food, and interested individuals met to discuss food security and local food production and storage issues for Haida Gwaii. The need for a clear strategy to provide direction for future local food production and markets was identified as a priority. To help to address this priority, the Misty Isles Economic Development Society (MIEDS) undertook the project and has recently received funding approval to complete an Agriculture Strategy for Haida Gwaii. We are grateful to Northern Savings Credit Union, Coast Sustainability Trust, and the Investment Agriculture Foundation for their support. [IAF funds were provided through the former federal-provincial safety nets framework.]

The Agriculture Strategy seeks to address food production and local food security with a broad-brush with the objective of informing and positioning the residents and communities of Haida Gwaii to begin taking advantage of the opportunities that Agriculture presents for a stable local economy. Ten local people and organizations have been engaged to address the various aspects of the strategy. Throughout this process the information will be reviewed by a number of local knowledge holders with respect to agriculture, mariculture, agro-forestry, forestry/soils, and the business community, to help ensure we produce the most useful product possible. We are also in discussion with the Haida Nation to collaborate on this project and determine whether it is possible to incorporate traditional local food sources into the strategy at this time.

Information is being gathered on the volume of imported produce, meat, eggs and dairy, volume of similar food produced locally, mariculture production/opportunities, and agro-forestry opportunities. Research will also investigate local agricultural product development opportunities, a freight opportunities and barriers analysis, climate data and documented sources and volume of local soil amendments. As a mechanism to help foster more local food production and promote a reduced carbon foot print, land that has good agricultural potential in close proximity to each community will be identified.

Other local organizations making significant contributions to encourage the growth of agriculture or local food production on Haida Gwaii include: Haida Gwaii Community Futures, the Farmers Institute, Islands Food, and the Haida Gwaii Local Foods Coop. Contributions include the discussions around a communal bank/peer lending program for local farmers (Community Futures), a temperature controlled storage facility (Farmers Institute), speakers and educational workshops (Farmers Institute and Islands Foods), the development of a Haida Gwaii brand of dehydrated agricultural and agro-forestry products (Coop).

The information is being gathered throughout September and October. This information will be presented to interested stakeholders within each community. These meetings will present the findings to date and seek involvement from the public in identifying what is required to promote local people participating in local food production and creating local food security for the islands.



Inquiries regarding Agriculture Strategy can be made to Mary Lou Schroeder, Project Coordinator (admin@mieds.ca or 559-8050).