

# 2026 SCRD OCP Review Process: Food Systems

Collaborative recommendations for how the Sunshine Coast Official Community Plan can mindfully incorporate language that supports the future and sustainability of our food system.

Submitted March 2026 to:  
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# The Sunshine Coast Official Community Plan: Food Systems & Food Security

## 1. Introduction (purpose & scope)

The well-being and sustainability of our local food system - and by extension, our community members - is only possible when values, goals, incentives and restrictions are embedded in Official Community Plans, local land use policy, bylaws, infrastructure planning, community services and governance.

The food system includes all aspects of getting food onto our plates and beyond: agriculture & production, processing, preservation, distribution, access, food business, education, water, and food waste. A resilient regional food system is essential to:

- food security, food access, and public health
- climate adaptation and environmental stewardship
- economic development, resilience and local livelihoods
- cultural continuity and food sovereignty
- emergency preparedness and crisis response

The following are recommended food systems policies, plans, and considerations that should be embedded across all relevant sections of the OCP. The goal is ensuring that land use, infrastructure, social planning, policy, zoning, servicing, funding priorities, and emergency management collectively support a sustainable and resilient food system, while recognizing jurisdictional roles and the importance of partnering with First Nations, member municipalities, provincial agencies, and community organizations.

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## 2. Vision & Guiding Principles

We envision a resilient, equitable Sunshine Coast food system that protects and enhances agricultural land and water, supports diverse and viable local food production, and enables strong local processing, distribution, and markets.

To achieve this, we are working to:

- Protect and expand land and water available for food production
- Increase local food production, processing, and distribution capacity
- Strengthen the regional food economy
- Ensure dignified and equitable access to healthy, culturally appropriate food
- Reduce food waste and support circular nutrient systems
- Embed food systems into climate resilience and emergency preparedness
- Strengthen governance through collaboration and Indigenous-informed approaches, supporting long-term implementation

We are considering these important guiding principles when building policy.

1. **Food as Essential Infrastructure**  
Food systems are critical infrastructure and must be planned accordingly.
  2. **Land First**  
Protecting farmland, soil, and water resources is foundational.
  3. **Local Resilience**  
Increase regional self-reliance and reduce dependence on external supply chains.
  4. **Equity & Dignity**  
Ensure access to culturally appropriate, nutritious food for all.
  5. **Indigenous Partnership & Food Sovereignty**  
Support co-governance and Indigenous-led food systems.
  6. **Climate & Ecological Stewardship**  
Align food systems with climate adaptation, biodiversity, and water sustainability.
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### 3. Food Systems Policy Integration Across the OCP

The following policies are intended to be embedded across relevant sections of the Official Community Plan, including land use, environment, infrastructure, economic development, social planning, and emergency management.

These policies reflect best practices across British Columbia OCPs while responding to the unique geographic, ecological, and food security context of the Sunshine Coast.

#### 3.1 Land Use & Tenure

Protect and prioritize land and water for food production.

*(To be integrated into: Land Use, Agriculture, and Rural Areas sections)*

- 3.1.1. Streamline and support zoning, resources, and incentives that prioritize long-term agricultural use, farm diversification, and community food production (e.g., farmgate sales, small-scale processing, food hubs, community gardens, incubator farms, collaborative food production).
- 3.1.2. Prioritize publicly owned lands — including municipal, regional district, provincial (Crown), and institutional lands — as strategic assets for the development of shared, community-benefit food infrastructure, and explore long-term leasing and partnership models that retain public ownership while enabling community use.
- 3.1.3. Establish clear right-to-farm and edge management guidance (buffers, setbacks, screening, drainage, and nuisance mitigation) to reduce friction between farm and non-farm uses.
- 3.1.4. Identify and map Priority Foodlands, including high-value soils, productive water sources, existing food production areas, so it may directly inform zoning (permitted uses, lot sizes, processing allowances, etc.)
- 3.1.5. Protect farmland (either Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) or arable non-ALR land), and prevent exploitation by land owners attempting to develop or convert arable land into tourism, commercial or any other primary use/purpose than food production. This may be done by:
  - maintaining or increasing the amount of land in Agriculture designation/zoning;
  - imposing more restrictive policy for agricultural land in local bylaws and zoning than ALR regulations, due to restrictive local geography, small farm sizes, density, and lower percentage of local food production (and food security) on the Sunshine Coast compared to provincial averages;
  - declining all zoning amendments that seek to bypass these protective regulations in agricultural zones;

- ensuring early consultation with the Agricultural Land Commission with respect to any land use amendment requests that affect the ALR, and prioritizing food production;
  - supporting innovative land tenure models - land trusts, long-term leases
- 3.1.6. Establish a Sunshine Coast Foodlands Trust or “Farm Commons” in partnership with established reputable trusts, charities, or food systems organizations, to acquire agricultural land for permanent community ownership of critical foodlands, and collective production of food;
- 3.1.7. Enable food production in parks, institutional lands, and residential zones;
- 3.1.8. Encourage protection and reintroduction of native and culturally significant plant species, particularly in parklands and properties owned and/or managed by the SCRD or Sunshine Coast municipalities.
- 3.1.9. “Community Amenity Contributions” for developments and subdivisions prioritize community / public food growing (ie. Community Gardens, Food Forests), particularly in high density areas.

## 3.2 Agriculture & Production

Support the viability, resilience, and long-term sustainability of local food production by enabling access to land and water, promoting regenerative practices, and strengthening local supply systems.

*\* To be integrated into: Agriculture, Environment, and Climate sections*

- 3.2.1. Develop and implement an Agricultural Water Reliability & Drought Response Strategy that prioritizes water for food production, supports efficient irrigation and appropriate on-farm water storage, and establishes clear drought-stage guidance that maintains production capacity while meeting conservation objectives.
- 3.2.2. Support water access for food-producing farms by ensuring that taxation, pricing, and fee structures are equitable, sustainable for farm viability, and reflective of the essential role of local food production.
- 3.2.3. Permit and enable urban and peri-urban agriculture in appropriate zones, including community gardens, food forests, small-scale livestock, beekeeping, and edible landscapes.
- 3.2.4. Promote and incentivize soil health, water conservation, and regenerative or agroecological practices that enhance long-term productivity, biodiversity, and climate resilience.
- 3.2.5. Adopt and implement a local food procurement policy for municipal and publicly funded institutions, with measurable targets for increasing the percentage of locally sourced food over time.

### 3.3 Food Infrastructure

Ensure that planning, zoning, and partnership approaches prioritize, enable, and expedite collaborative, non-speculative, community-oriented food systems infrastructure that supports multiple interconnected uses across the food system (including school food programs, small food businesses, farms, restaurants, non-profits, food access initiatives, social enterprises, and cooperatives).

*\* To be integrated into: Infrastructure, Economic Development, and Land Use sections*

- 3.3.1. Identify and support appropriate locations (including rural industrial, village centres, agricultural lands, and institutional sites) for shared food infrastructure such as small-scale processing, commercial kitchens, food hubs, cold and dry storage, aggregation facilities, mobile distribution systems, and cottage or secondary processing.
- 3.3.2. Streamline and align permitting, zoning, and regulatory processes to reduce barriers for small- and mid-scale food infrastructure, including shared-use and multi-user facilities, while working with relevant agencies to ensure requirements are appropriate to scale.
- 3.3.3. Provide financial and policy incentives to support the development and operation of shared food infrastructure, including reduced fees, grants, tax incentives, and support for cooperative, non-profit, and social enterprise models.
- 3.3.4. Support regional coordination and shared-use models by identifying infrastructure gaps, maintaining an inventory of food infrastructure assets, and encouraging multi-user facilities that maximize access and efficiency across sectors.
- 3.3.5. Strengthen local procurement policies and institutional partnerships to create stable demand for locally processed and distributed food, improving the viability of regional infrastructure.
- 3.3.6. Support food infrastructure that reflects the Sunshine Coast's rural geography and dispersed communities, including smaller-scale, shared, and locally accessible facilities in addition to, or instead of centralized, large-scale infrastructure.
- 3.3.7. Integrate food infrastructure planning with circular food systems, including composting, food recovery, and value-added processing of surplus food.
- 3.3.8. Support access to food-producing seed through public seed libraries, seed sharing initiatives, and the development of a Sunshine Coast seed vault.

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### 3.4 Food Economy

Support a diverse, thriving and resilient local food economy by enabling direct sales, reducing barriers for food businesses, and strengthening local and regional market opportunities.

*\* To be integrated into: Economic Development sections*

- 3.4.1. Enable farmgate sales, farmers' markets, mobile markets, food hubs, and other direct-to-consumer models through permissive zoning and streamlined approvals.
  - 3.4.2. Streamline permitting processes and expand the use of Temporary Use Permits (TUPs) to support seasonal, mobile, and emerging food-related businesses and events.
  - 3.4.3. Support and create affordable, accessible commercial spaces for food businesses — including shared-use kitchens, market spaces, and small-scale retail — to reduce displacement and foster entrepreneurship.
  - 3.4.4. Strengthen local procurement policies and programs that prioritize purchasing from local producers and processors for public institutions, events, and community programs.
  - 3.4.5. Support the development, scaling, and retention of small and mid-sized food businesses, including farms, processors, distributors, and value-added producers.
  - 3.4.6. Encourage collaboration and aggregation models (e.g., cooperatives, shared marketing, distribution networks) that improve market access and economic viability for local producers.
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### 3.5 Food Access & Affordability

Support equitable access to healthy, affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food for all residents by strengthening community-based food programs, reducing barriers, and improving coordination across the regional food system.

*\* To be integrated into: Social Planning, Health, and Community Wellbeing sections*

- 3.5.1. Prioritize support and streamlined processes for programs, food hubs, sites, and initiatives that provide subsidized or free food access in ways that uphold dignity, choice, and cultural relevance.
  - 3.5.2. Coordinate with First Nations, health authorities, schools, community organizations to expand food access programs, culturally appropriate food distribution, food literacy and skills development.
  - 3.5.3. Map regional food access gaps, food access points including transportation barriers, and existing food assets, to inform planning and investment decisions
  - 3.5.4. Support community-led initiatives such as gleaning programs, food recovery and redistribution, and community-based food networks.
  - 3.5.5. Strengthen procurement policies that prioritize local, sustainable, and culturally appropriate food for public institutions and community programs.
  - 3.5.6. Support approaches that reduce stigma and barriers to access, including low-barrier distribution models, flexible program design, and community-informed service delivery.
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### 3.6 Circular Food Systems

Support a circular food system that reduces food waste, recovers value from organic materials, and returns nutrients to local soils.

*\* To be integrated into: Solid Waste, Climate, and Infrastructure sections*

- 3.6.1. Encourage and provide incentives for composting at multiple scales, including: household and community composting, on-farm composting, regional organics processing hubs, and anaerobic digestion where appropriate.
  - 3.6.2. Support organics diversion programs and regional composting infrastructure that prioritize the return of nutrients to local agricultural lands.
  - 3.6.3. Enable and support food recovery and redistribution partnerships to reduce edible food waste and improve access to food within the community.
  - 3.6.4. Encourage value-added processing and preservation of surplus or imperfect food to extend shelf life and reduce waste across the food system.
  - 3.6.5. Support coordination between farms, processors, retailers, and community organizations to reduce food loss and improve material flows across the regional food system.
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### 3.7 Emergency Preparedness & Resilience

Ensure food system continuity during disruptions, by treating the local food system as critical infrastructure for emergency preparedness and climate resilience, and integrate food supply continuity into all relevant emergency planning and response frameworks.

*\* To be integrated into: Emergency Planning and Climate Resilience sections*

- 3.7.1. Integrate food systems into emergency response planning, including coordinated strategies for: food protection and storage, distribution networks, access for vulnerable populations, disruptions to ferry service and external supply chains
- 3.7.2. Support the development of localized and decentralized food reserves and distribution systems to improve community-level resilience during emergencies.
- 3.7.3. Strengthen year-round local food system capacity to reduce reliance on external supply chains, including: year-round production and processing; shared dry, cold, and frozen storage; local aggregation and distribution networks
- 3.7.4. Enable infrastructure that supports extended growing seasons and supply continuity, including streamlined and flexible zoning and permitting for greenhouses and season-extension systems.
- 3.7.5. Support water resilience for food production during emergencies and climate-related disruptions through: incentives and policies for rainwater collection and storage; decentralized and on-site water systems; enabling home- and farm-scale water infrastructure

- 3.7.6. Ensure that water planning and pricing structures recognize and support the essential role of food production in community resilience.
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### 3.8 Governance & Implementation

Strengthen coordination, accountability, and long-term implementation of food systems policies through collaborative governance, Indigenous partnership, and aligned policy tools.

*\*To be integrated into: Governance, Implementation, and Partnerships sections*

- 3.8.1. Establish a standing Sunshine Coast Food Systems Advisory Committee, including representatives from the shíshálh Nation, farmers, food security organizations, and local government, to:
- provide ongoing policy recommendations
  - advise on OCP implementation and updates
  - support coordination across sectors and jurisdictions
  - identify emerging needs and opportunities within the regional food system.
- 3.8.2. Advance Indigenous co-leadership and partnership by working meaningfully with shíshálh and Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Nations on food sovereignty, culturally significant harvesting and food practices, land stewardship and ecological knowledge, and integration of Indigenous knowledge and land-based education into planning processes.
- 3.8.3. Provide and expand the use of policy and financial incentives to support food system initiatives, including: density bonuses, tax incentives, reduced fees, and support for community-based, cooperative, and non-profit food projects
- 3.8.4. Adopt and implement the Sunshine Coast Food Charter, aligning OCP policy, zoning, and permitting pathways with Charter commitments, and building on adoption by the municipalities of Gibsons and Sechelt.
- 3.8.5. Support ongoing monitoring and evaluation of food system outcomes, including collaboration with partners to track progress, share data, and inform future planning and investment.
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## Appendix A: References & Resources

Food Systems planning and policy are integrated into the OCPs of the vast majority of communities across the province. Of note are:

- \* [BC Food Systems Policy Database](#) (KPU) - a centralized resource for planners, policy makers, community advocates, local organizations and the policy curious to search for policy precedents and to better understand how local government policy is addressing local food systems. (B.C and Alberta)
- [Roberts Creek OCP](#) (section 9 is entirely focused on Agriculture and food production)
- [Vancouver Food Strategy](#) Document
- [Vancouver ODP](#) with 70 references to “food” throughout (incredible document!)
- [Langford’s OCP Food Systems Overview](#) (built in throughout the OCP)
- [Saanich Agriculture & Food Security Plan](#)
- [Saanich OCP](#) with food, food security & food systems referenced over 100 times and entire section on Agriculture & Food Security
- [Squamish OCP](#) - section 26 dedicated to Food Systems
- [Squamish-Lilloet Regional District OCP](#) with 30+ references to food
- [Penticton Food Security Strategy](#) - 113 page document entirely focused on food systems and food security; supplements the area OCP
- [Cowichan Regional District OCP](#) - Pages 96 - 104 are focused on food & agriculture
- [Qathet / Powell River OCP](#) - food systems language throughout
- [Whistler OCP](#) - dedicated food systems chapter 8

Local sources of food systems data:

- [Sunshine Coast Food Systems Snapshot \(2022\)](#) - most comprehensive recent(ish) research on food production (farms) and some other aspects of the food system
- [Sunshine Coast Vital Signs Report \(2024\)](#) - very little data about food systems; only references to food bank use
- [SCRD Bylaw 722: Impacts of Proposed Bylaw 722 on the Food System of the Sunshine Coast](#) (One Straw Society formal recommendations)
- [Sunshine Coast Agricultural Area Plan - an 8-year Review](#) (by One Straw Society, with new recommendations)  
\* or just the [summary report here](#).
- [Sunshine Coast Agricultural Area Plan](#) (2014-2015) by Upland Consulting
- [BC CDC’s Household Food Insecurity Infosheet](#) (2024)

## Appendix B: United Nations Sustainable Food Systems

An excerpt from the [United Nations Sustainable Food Systems Document](#):

*“A sustainable food system is a food system that delivers food security and nutrition for all. The system encompasses everything from the processing, packaging and the transporting of food to consumers. Currently, these systems are not efficient or sustainable, and in 2022, about [9.2 per cent](#) of the world population was facing chronic hunger, equivalent to about 735 million people – 122 million more than in 2019. In addition, these unsustainable practices are one of the main contributors to the climate crisis – they account for a [third of greenhouse gas emissions](#) and 70 per cent of the usage of the world’s freshwater.”*

*There are three key indicators of whether a food system is sustainable or not:*

- [Economic sustainability](#) – it is profitable throughout
- [Social sustainability](#) – it has broad-based benefits for society
- [Environmental sustainability](#) – it has a positive or neutral impact on the natural environment

***Broken food systems are not inevitable. They are the result of choices we have made. There is more than enough food in the world to go around. More than enough money to fund efficient and sustainable food systems to feed the world, while supporting decent work for those who grow the food we eat.***

- [Antonio Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations](#)

## Appendix C: Collaboration & Endorsement

As a collective of organizations, advisors, and educators working within the food system, we have collaborated to share insight, concerns, expertise, and lived experience, culminating in the recommendations and policy language presented here.

We welcome working with the SCRD to discuss and advise on food systems policy to align the Sunshine Coast with best practices in sustainable food systems, informed by Government of Canada and United Nations frameworks, and grounded in Indigenous knowledge systems, food sovereignty, and land-based practices, with research from leading academics and organizations.

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