

4 – PA – LFA - LOCAL FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

LFA - Background

Agriculture is an important sector of the regional economy. Although there are very few large tracts of agricultural land within the City limits, the City of Williams Lake is surrounded by Agriculture Land Reserve (ALR) lands in the Cariboo Regional District and plays an important role as the agricultural service center for the region. The City supports agriculture by encouraging local and regional agricultural – related enterprises.

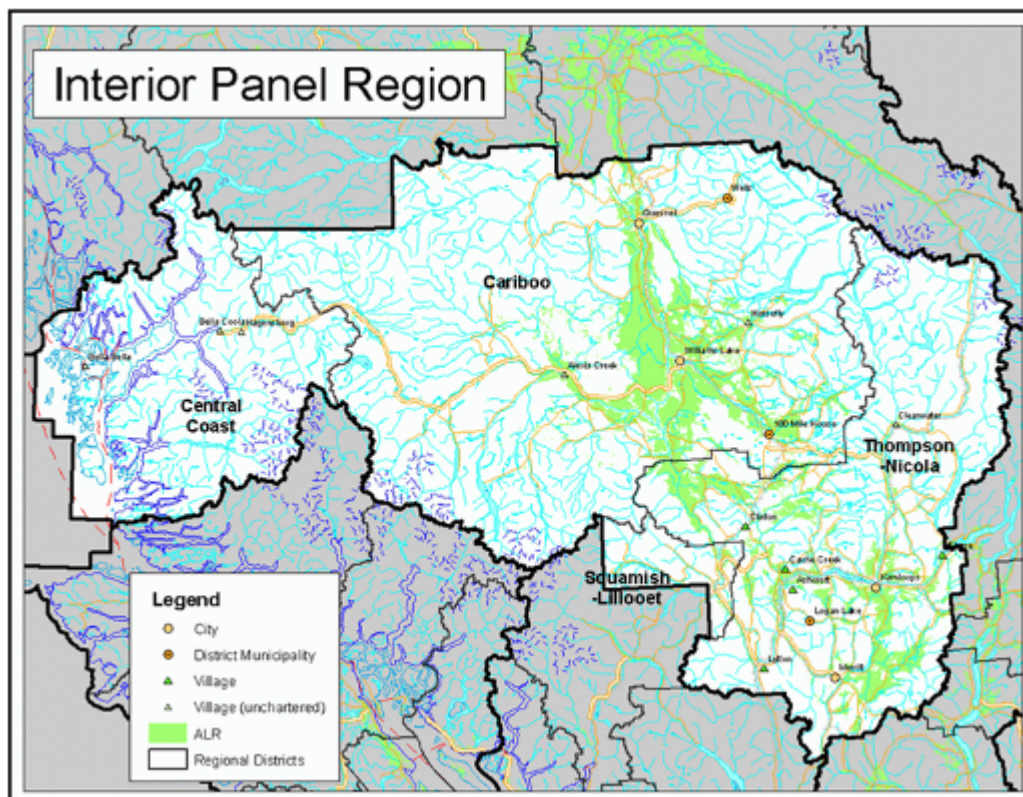


Figure LFA.1 - ALR in the Central Cariboo (2010)

Agriculture represents one of the earliest primary industries in the Cariboo Chilcotin since the Gold Rush days. The beef sector forms over 50% of the agriculture industry in the region. There are over a thousand farms in the region, totaling over a million acres, accounting for 3% of the provincial agricultural production. Farms range in size from a few acres to more than 30,000 acres. The majority of ranches in the Cariboo are highly dependent on Crown range, which provides about 40% of the annual forage requirements of the ranching industry. The Cariboo Chilcotin's beef cattle ranches account for 20% of the provincial beef cattle population and the cattle industry contributes an estimated 12,000 jobs and over \$700 million to the economy of B.C.

Most cattle are sold through the Williams Lake Stockyards, one of the largest and most modern in the province, with approximately 40,000 head of cattle sold. In addition, another 10,000 head are sold privately. Approximately a quarter of the cattle are shipped to Alberta for processing.



Cariboo Lodge Community Garden 2010

Recent years have seen some new agricultural initiatives in the area which have increased the quantity and variety of locally-produced foods. Eating local food has become more popular in Williams Lake due to the efforts of local community groups. The development of a local food strategy will help to keep resources and investment dollars in the local economy. Food security and access to nutritious food for local residents has benefited from community initiatives.

LFA - Goals and Objectives

The goal of agricultural and food policies is to support a regional food system that is resilient, locally-focused, healthy, and contributes to the overall enjoyment, development and health of our community, its individual members and our local ecosystems.

From the Imagine Our Future ICSP, in 2035, we know we will have achieved this goal when:

... **all local stores, institutions, restaurants** (e.g., schools, grocery stores, restaurants, etc.) purchase and serve food produced by local farms.

...everyone in the Williams Lake community has **dignified access** to healthy, nourishing locally produced food.

...our local food system provides opportunities for **community interaction**.

...**local ecological and indigenous knowledge** is preserved and integrated into our overall food production, marketing and purchasing practices for Williams Lake, including the integrity of plants and seeds.

...all farms in the region conform to the highest international standards for **sustainable farming** (e.g., biodiversity, pesticide use, water use, etc.)

...local farms are **economically successful** with sales in the local market.

LFA - Specific Policy Directions

Local Food and Agriculture policies have been grouped into four policy directions being:

- [Support the ALR and Agricultural Production in the City and Region;](#)
- [Promote Value-Added Agricultural Industries and Food Processing;](#)
- [Provide Access to Food that is Affordable, Healthy, Local, and Secure;](#)
and
- [Promote Sustainable Growing Practices.](#)



LFA - Support the ALR and Agricultural Production in the City and Region

The following policies support the preservation of the ALR lands and economic impact of agricultural production in the city and region.



- LFA.1** Recognize and support the importance of agricultural activities to the economy of Williams Lake and the surrounding area.
- LFA.2** Support the implementation of applicable recommendations from the 2007 Cariboo-Chilcotin Agriculture Sector Strategy.
- LFA.3** Recognize that land located in the ALR designation is subject to the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*.
- LFA.4** Preserve lands which have agricultural capability for farming.
- LFA.5** Encourage active farming on lands in the ALR.
- LFA.6** Permit agriculture in areas within the Airport Industrial Designation.
- LFA.7** Consider the following evaluation criteria in all applications to exclude land from the ALR or to use ALR land for non-agricultural uses within the city:
- a. Support from the Agricultural Land Commission;
 - b. The soil capability of the land for agricultural purposes. Generally, exclusions from Class 1, 2, 3, and 4 land will not be considered;
 - c. The compatibility of any proposed use with adjacent agricultural land;
 - d. Demonstrated need, meaning that the land use or service is considered necessary and is not available in or near the city; and
 - e. The lack of a suitable alternative location for the proposed use, meaning that there are no other viable sites in or near the city for the proposed non-agricultural use.

LFA - Promote Value-Added Agricultural Industries and Food Processing

There is significant economic activity in the production of crops and livestock, however there is relatively little value-added processing. Many raw food products are exported from the region for processing, taking away jobs and investment opportunities. To encourage local value-added agricultural industries, the following policies will support the development of food processing.



- LFA.8** Identify and support opportunities to increase production and local food processing.
- LFA.9** Work with community partners to establish a regional “Buy Local” marketing campaign and branding program.
- LFA.10** Collaborate with local tourism associations to promote local food production and products as destination attractions.
- LFA.11** Support community groups assisting producers to increase the shelf space for local products at commercial food retailers.
- LFA.12** Support the continued development of the Cariboo Growers Food Cooperative.
- LFA.13** Work with community groups to make local expertise available to those who wish to learn food production and processing.
- LFA.14** Support the Food Policy Council in the identification of community facilities for public education and food processing.
- LFA.15** Support the development of strategies to extend the growing season and establish food storage facilities.
- LFA.16** Support the creation of a network of local food production in the region to ensure local food availability.
- LFA.17** Establish a policy so that all City-sponsored community fairs, festivals and events would incorporate local food and agriculture produce in their food services plan.

LFA - Provide Access to Food that is Affordable, Healthy, Local and Secure

The following policies are intended to support initiatives to expand the distribution of local foods.

- LFA.18** Support the removal of unnecessary barriers and allow for increased local food production.
- LFA.19** Identify potential sites for the development and operation of community gardens on public land or on private property.
- LFA.20** Support an expanded local farmers market.

- LFA.21** Support the expansion of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs.
- LFA.22** Support the development and implementation of a Local Food Strategy in partnership with the Food Policy Council.
- LFA.23** Support low-cost healthy food programs that include fresh local agricultural products and cater to low income residents.
- LFA.24** Invite residents to “plant an extra row for the community” which can be donated.
- LFA.25** Support local schools, Interior Health and the Food Policy Council to expand the school garden network and partnerships.
- LFA.26** Support, in partnership with the Food Policy Council and other community partners, the development and implementation of a public awareness education campaign of the health and economic benefits of local and seasonal eating.

LFA - Promote Sustainable Growing Practices

The following policies promote low-impact farming and gardening methods and encourage the exploration of sustainable practices.

- LFA.27** Support efforts to minimize the negative environmental impacts of agricultural operations, including odours, noise, and soil and water impacts, while respecting the right of the agricultural community to use local best practices under provincial Right to Farm legislation.
- LFA.28** Continue to explore diverting City grey water to irrigate local gardens.
- LFA.29** Encourage the use of residential water storage and capture technologies for irrigating gardens.
- LFA.30** Work with the Canadian Cancer Society to educate City residents around the health effects of cosmetic pesticides and herbicides within City limits.
- LFA.31** Promote the use of residential composting within the city and explore the creation of a municipal composting program.