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SMALL SCALE  
FOOD PROCESSOR

Association (SSFPA)

Sound Bites

The newsletter with a vision of regional food sustainability

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## BC Farm Women's Network

### "Seeds for Survival Rural Seminar"

October 3-5, 2003, Valemout BC

Sandra Mark is the Community Economic Development Technical Assistance Provider for the Small Scale Food Processor Association (SSFPA.) Sandra was invited to share what is happening around the province with producers and processors, describe the agribusiness side of co-operatives, and facilitate an examination of what might apply to the BC Farm Women's Network and its members. Funding assistance provided by the Community Economic Development Technical Assistance Program (CEDTAP).



## BC Farm Women's Network "Seeds for Survival Rural Seminar"

**Tony Kluge** made a presentation on the BC Agri-Food Futures Fund. He indicated that there was an opportunity for the BC Farm Women's Network to be part of the steering committee that will create a strategic plan to assist women in agriculture. There is development funding up to \$30,000, and the fund to be administered is \$200,000.

The strategies in the plan that can be funded, are eligible for 50% of the project cost.

The people at the seminar had many questions about what could be funded, and how could they have a say in how the money is spent.

**Sandra Mark and Frank Moreland** followed the "Seeds for Survival" theme and facilitated a 'search' process throughout the day. It is hoped that this process can be used by the BCFWN to speak to strategic goals in the Investment Agriculture Foundation steering committee, and to assist the BCFWN members to take leadership in their own regions.

### Issues threatening Survival of the family farm

The participants at the BC Farm Women's Network seminar were asked to write down the issues that are important to them today. Each issue was written on a sticky paper, and each person had the opportunity to speak to the group about their issues as they posted them on the flipchart.

BCFWN members were very animated as they read out these issues affecting their lives and work. The following are direct quotes from people at the seminar.

- ❶ Rural vs. Urban misunderstandings on issues
- ❶ Recognition of what farm women do
- ❶ No feed for cattle
- ❶ No cattle sales, BSE closed the border
- ❶ No phone service
- ❶ Urban growth takes farm land
- ❶ Farm and Urban interface
- ❶ Industrial pressures and pollution on the quality of our air, water and food
- ❶ Access to high speed Internet
- ❶ We subsidize our farming by working off-farm
- ❶ What are the new health regulations?
- ❶ Sharing the range with other users.
- ❶ Getting a fair price for agricultural products
- ❶ Survival of the family farm
- ❶ Government waste of money
- ❶ Educating the public about agricultural issues
- ❶ Being able to learn about small-scale food processing
- ❶ Local food sustainability by growing organic
- ❶ Creating local jobs in sustainable areas
- ❶ Promoting farmers' markets
- ❶ Educating youth to stay on the farm
- ❶ Preserving farm land
- ❶ First Nations treaty lands must stay in ALR!
- ❶ As a society we are divorced from food production
- ❶ I am concerned with the distance to the market, and the US border closed to beef
- ❶ Employment opportunities and population seems to be shrinking in rural BC.

# What can we do about issues threatening Survival of the family farm?

## Introduction

As the members posted up their concerns and issues, it was clear that there was a sense of urgency and despair amongst the group. Saving the family farm and the agricultural lifestyle is facing increasing barriers and challenges. The group chose theme areas and broke into sub-groups to brain storm possible strategies and next steps.

## Our Seeds for Survival

Four themes from the issues on page 2 were picked, and four groups worked on identifying a focus for action in each case.

### The 'Rural/Urban', discussion group

Focus—We want the media to become our advocate

HOW?—Provide accurate and up to date information—have a knowledgeable and respected spokesperson—be proactive—identify media 'champions' that are telling a similar story and celebrate BC agricultural diversity.

Next steps—to contact agricultural writers we like to read, and tell them our story.

Suggestion—The Institute for Media Policy and Civil Society, [www.impact.ca](http://www.impact.ca), provides excellent training to non-profit groups seeking to improve their profile in the media.

### The 'Local Marketing', discussion group

Focus—We want to start by increasing our on-farm sales.

HOW?—Does the Agricultural tourism organization have resources? Find out the regional regulations for 'food safe' certification—do we have to set up a separate business?

Focus—We want to process our products to sell locally, and to ship it to larger markets.

HOW?—Identify what the market is demanding—create a regional HACCP shared-use processing kitchen—invest in quality product, label, and merchandising—co-operate to reduce costs.

HOW?—Try Community Shared Agriculture model.

### The 'Red Meat Slaughter biz plan,' discussion group

Focus—Lack of BC meat processing facilities.

HOW?—Do a feasibility study for reopening of slaughter houses in Salmon Arm and Lac La Hache—Look at business models where the cattle producers own the slaughter business—work with the Cattleman's Association—look at partnerships as investors. Study the 'New Gen' co-operative business model.

### The 'Rural Decline in population,' discussion group

Focus—We want to keep the youth in the rural areas.

HOW?—Youth need to see the value in farming—create locally organized and run opportunities for agricultural industry careers—the population in rural area needs to be agriculturally inclined or work in agriculture, we do not need an increase in population with just urban people moving in.

## The SSFPA story

An overview of the progress of the Small Scale Food Processor Association was provided by Frank Moreland. Currently the SSFPA is designing a merchandising and marketing agency that will provide the technical services needed by small-scale food processors in an affordable and accessible packages. All the feedback from over 300 processors are summarized on the document page of the SSFPA website at [www.ssfpa.net](http://www.ssfpa.net)

Anyone considering starting up a processing project is welcome to call Frank at 250-335-3001

## Further Resources

In our discussions, participants asked for further information on a variety of subjects. Contact points are provided below. You are also welcome to contact Sandra Mark [sandmark@shaw.ca](mailto:sandmark@shaw.ca)

### **Community Shared Agriculture: (CSA)**

The idea of organizing consumers to pre-purchase a farmer's crop is gaining headway as a value-added strategy that not only ensures that the farmer gets a fair price, but the consumer is provided an opportunity to become 'involved' in the farming process. This leads to increased understanding and appreciation by the consumer. Some CSA's become co-operatives and some are just operated as buying clubs privately by the farmer. For further examples and information contact

<http://www.cityfarmer.org/csa.html> A BC CSA example

[http://www.journeytoforever.org/farm\\_csa.html](http://www.journeytoforever.org/farm_csa.html) An American site with excellent links to a wide variety of CSA resources

<http://tcf.itgo.com/> "The Community Farm" an American based CSA newsletter

<http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/csa/csapubs.htm> A list of a wide variety of resources about CSA's.

### **Urban-Rural Understanding**

Farm Folk/City Folk is an organization that is working very hard to increase urban understanding of rural issues. Please become involved! <http://www.ffcf.bc.ca/details.html>

### **Agricultural Tourism:**

Another strategy that farmers are taking to add value to their farm produce is to engage in agricultural tourism, culinary tourism etc. There are funds available through the Agriculture Future Fund to assist some initiatives. Contact Karyn Locken [karyn.locken@gems8.gov.bc.ca](mailto:karyn.locken@gems8.gov.bc.ca)

### **Co-op Development:**

There is increasing interest in the benefits of co-op approaches to development in the agricultural sector. In particular, 'new gen' co-ops (where the producers of commodities get together to own and operate processing facilities ) can prove to be a smart strategy for farmers to adopt.

<http://www.producer.com/articles/20001130/news/20001130news32.html> An article on a New Gen pilot in Saskatchewan

[http://www.cedworks.com/pdf/papers/P203\\_RCJ12.pdf](http://www.cedworks.com/pdf/papers/P203_RCJ12.pdf) Some technical details about how to set up a New-Gen Co-op provided by the Community Enterprise Centre

One problem with getting started with New Gen co-ops is the need for capital from the members (and from other sources) and the need for technical assistance to get the organization into operating condition as quickly as possible. Recently the Federal Government has announced a new program to support co-operative development in Canada. The BC Cooperative Association will be able to provide assistance to groups looking to establish co-ops and funding may be available to support innovative ideas. As well, alternative sources of finance are being developed to support the agricultural sector.

<http://www.ccabc.bc.ca/> Contact the BC Co-op Association if you wish further information on co-ops or are thinking of starting a co-op. They are hiring a new worker that will be happy to hear from you.

[http://www.agr.gc.ca/policy/coop/information\\_e.phtml](http://www.agr.gc.ca/policy/coop/information_e.phtml) This site will provide you with all the information about how to get support from the Co-operative Development Initiative. If you wish to move forward on such a plan, it would be very wise to contact the BCCA above.

### **Access to Finance**

If you live within the 'reach' of VanCity Credit Union, they are gaining interest in providing access to finance for agricultural enterprises. Contact your closest branch and ask for information on the Conservation Financing Program or the Self-reliance Financing program.

If a group (such as the BCFWN) or community wishes to pursue a development plan , it is sometimes possible to get assistance from the Community Economic Development Technical Assistance Program that has assisted this small project. For further information check their web-site at [http://www.carleton.ca/cedtap/home/index\\_e.html](http://www.carleton.ca/cedtap/home/index_e.html)

To get a broad range of information about what communities all across Canada are doing to help themselves in these challenging times go to the CED 'portal' at <http://www.cedcanada.ca/>

### **BC Rural Team**

The Rural Secretariat coordinates information on government and community programs in rural Canada. They have many excellent resources. [http://www.rural.gc.ca/team/bc/bchome\\_e.phtml](http://www.rural.gc.ca/team/bc/bchome_e.phtml)

Contact Brandon Hughes at [hughes.bn@shaw.ca](mailto:hughes.bn@shaw.ca)