

April 15, 2003



## Sound Bites

The newsletter with a vision of regional food sustainability

Volume 2 Issue 6

# Field to Table partnership project with the regional host—Community Futures Development Corporation of South Fraser

The **Small Scale Food Processor Association (SSFPA)** sponsored and facilitated four regional **Field to Table Partnership Projects** in January, February and March 2003. The vision of the SSFPA is to create regional food sustainability.

The purposes of the workshops were:

- 1.To document the agricultural assets in the host regions
- 2.To develop a collaborative workshop to start building



Margie Child, with the BC Association of Farmers' Markets, presents **Carved from Wood** to Mission Mayor Abe Neufeld

- 3.To introduce the concept of flexible marketing and/or manufacturing networks
- 4.To start the development of sustainable business plans specific to regional agricultural assets, that can compliment provincial plans.

Community Futures Development Corporation of South Fraser (CFDC SF) has been working with their agricultural and agri-food

sector in expanding Fraser Valley economies through community economic development.

**CFDF SF** was identified as a regional organization to officially host the Mission workshop. The SSFPA workshop, "**Fraser Valley Field to Table Partnership Project**," was held March 7-8, 2003 at the Best Western Lodge in Mission. The workshop was held in partnership with the BC Farmers' Market Association's Annual General Meeting.

### Carved from Wood

By Andreas Schroeder, reveals a food self-sufficient history for the Mission region.



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### Sound Bites:

- Day one=Issues and problems
- Day two=Strategies and action planning

## Building upon the knowledge held in the region

The first day of the workshop was focused on a situational analysis through the collaboration of participants and looking at many existing reports that indicate the following:

- 1.South Fraser Valley once was the strawberry and asparagus centre of B.C.
- 2.Large population base interested in value-added locally produced food.

- 3.Opportunities are strong for import replacement.
- 4.The BC Agricultural Tourism Association is developing regional strategies. The indicators from the reports focused discussions and action plans around the following:

- a. Marketing
- b. Information on regulations, food safety, recalls, labelling,

packaging, business plans, commercial kitchens, and liability insurance

- c. Identifying new opportunities and networking
- d. Development of the Agricultural and Value-Added Industries of the Sto:lo and other First Nations people

The second day of the workshop built upon this knowledge to move forward to identify solutions and next steps.

## The regional needs of the participants

Thirty participants were involved in the workshop, some of whom were not able to attend both days. The quotes of “I hope to learn...” collected from the people were:

“how to start?” “marketing the value added food and strategies,” “an avenue to process excess artichokes,” “information on regulations in the context of processing,” “ready and reasonable access to certified kitchen,” “network for farm marketing,” “possible products,” “labelling information,” “participate in SSFPA,” “living inventory,” “processing

regulations,” “nutritional regulations,” “new opportunities for marketing our products,” “to establish a community kitchen for the Sto:lo Nation so that the many community cooks can properly package and market their own informally produced products,” “recall handling and communication,” “education,” “when does labelling become important at farm retail level or into stores,” “networking,” “to begin a network to source ingredients,” “linking with other businesses,” “food safety and handling issues,” “understand technical regulatory needs,” “share knowledge of technical funding available,” “find a way to make diabetic friendly foods,” “business plan,” “financial assistance,” and “assistance with marketing and distribution.”



## Strengths in the Fraser Valley region

Most of the participants agreed that the Fraser Valley region has vast potential. There was discussion of the agricultural history of the region with great growing conditions. This was once a major strawberry and asparagus centre.

The proximity of this region to a high population density marketplace represents untapped market potential. There is growing interest in locally produced and value-added food, and import replacement.

South Fraser Valley was recognized as an important tourist region with strong partnerships with Direct Farmers' Markets and agri-tourism .



## Challenges in the Fraser Valley region

Participants spoke about the challenges of urban encroachment and the high cost of land. There is concern about industry pollution of water and land and the rising cost of water. Many people talked about the lack of integrated infrastructure. The food industry is not seen as a new industry and small-scale food processors are not organized. There was also concern that regulations make it difficult to do on-farm processing and it is hard to access technical assistance.

## Threats in the Fraser Valley region

There was concern about the impact of the American market and international trade. Folks are having to compete with “large volumes of cheap food”. Participants spoke of recent reductions of support from the BC government. New regulations and financial support favour large scale. Folks mentioned “labour agreements” “use of buy BC” “lab fees” “food safety” and “liability issues” that threaten the business viability of small-scale agriculture and agricultural value adding.

## Barriers to value adding in the Fraser Valley

In the Fraser Valley region, despite a growing market for locally produced niche foods, small-scale food processors are faced with considerable barriers in meeting demand and accessing the market. In this region the barriers to value adding agriculture are: “Access to Finance,” “Marketing capacity,” “business capacity,” “reduction of access to affordable land, urban encroachment,” “waning government support,” “appropriate technology hard to find,” “the regulatory environment (labelling, food safety, trade agreements, liability insurance),” “lack of regional identity,” “not organized.”

**Participants shared their hopes for results, which were used to build an action plan at the workshop and the next steps.**

# Sound Bites

- 100 People hope to develop regional branding of their products
- 100 People hope to build upon the idea of “coopetition” in working together to increase their market share
- 100 People are interested in SSFPA establishing a common distribution and marketing agency on a regional basis
- 100 People want to find out about co-operative delivery and transportation options
- 100 People want to get information about what products would allow them to gain market share by consciously doing import replacements
- 100 People want to have access to financing that understands small-scale and agricultural industry
- 100 People want to save the farmland by demonstrating the economic viability of adding value on land
- 100 People want to investigate opportunity for agricultural land trusts or provision of some kind for inactive farm land
- 100 People want to group together in getting better prices on labelling technology, liability insurance, and inputs.
- 100 People are interested in food safety kits adapted to small scale.
- 100 People want a calendar of events on the SSFPA website.
- 100 People want affordable lab services

## Opportunities in the Fraser Valley region

- 100 Extend production season through value-adding and access to labour
- 100 Regional branding and marketing
- 100 Import Replacement
- 100 Lobbying three levels of government
- 100 Development of a commercial kitchen
- 100 Developing a regional arrangement with technology assistance providers
- 100 Labour through “Contact Canada” farm stay or WOOF
- 100 High populated area, tourist destination, demand for value-added local food
- 100 BCATA / Small Lot—Portable processing financing

## Next Steps

### For the Small Scale Food Processor Association (SSFPA)

- 100 Create a finance program for small scale food processors and growers (collaborate with members)
- 100 Identify import replacements
- 100 Work with Health Canada to build services members will need for the new nutritional labelling
- 100 Develop a marketing and distribution network through SSFPA
- 100 Develop collective purchasing arrangements on a regional basis
- 100 Save farm land by showing viability of small-scale food processing
- 100 Develop a provision for inactive land to be protected with land trusts as partners
- 100 Facilitate Supplier Driven Marketing (taste sample tables in high volume retail setting)
- 100 To develop links with other organizations, community groups through website and to develop an events calendar

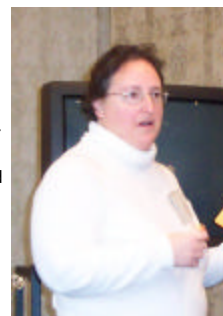
### For Community groups

- 100 Community Futures North Fraser: ongoing work with the District of Kent, proposal for community

economic development on agriculture through Farmers’ markets, shared use kitchen, agri-eco tourism, use of internet to promote/sell and share community information.

- 100 Community Futures South Fraser: provide technical assistance for business plans and access to finance
- 100 Community Futures South Fraser: working with community group to start a local farmers’ market
- 100 Sto:lo Nation to develop internal capacity to add value to products and market them. SSFPA is invited to the 2nd annual Sto:lo nation agricultural conference

Margaret Daskis, from Fresh Ideas, explains the supports her company offers to small-scale food processors, and offers to expand services across BC and Alberta.



- 100 Valley Women’s Network to share information with members
- 100 BCAFM to share information with members
- 100 The Downtown Chilliwack Business Improvement Association is to do a feasibility study on a new Farmers’ Market in Chilliwack
- 100 Chilliwack Ag Council to share SSFPA information with members



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The SSFPA thanks everyone  
who came and expressed  
themselves at the Field to  
Table workshop. Our purpose  
has been to address your  
hopes.  
Did we do this for you?

## Participants shared their products

Many participants brought samples of their products as door prizes and to share as part of the food for the workshop



The SSFPA would like to thank Community Futures Development Corporation of South Fraser and the BC Association of Farmers' Markets for the three way partnering that presented the Mission Field to Table workshop.



**BC Association of  
Farmers' Markets**



## Sound Bites

The Field to Table  
Partnership Project  
was funded in part by:



## Participatory Workshop sessions (Separate Sound Bites issues summarize the SSFPA sessions and can be found at

<https://www.ssfpa.net/DocsForms/DocsForms.htm>)

- The SSFPA presented the Living Inventory (LI). The intent of the LI is to provide a non-centralized way for small-scale growers and processors to find information, and possible regional suppliers of goods and services, and opportunities to organize distribution methods. People that were interested were encouraged to activate an account to test the system. The SSFPA has planned outreach in the summer of 2003 to activate accounts for the suppliers of the goods and services which small-scale food growers and processors are asking for.
- The SSFPA presented a graphical model for shared services that small-scale food processors could organize at regional levels. The opportunity is to design a flexible manufacturing/marketing network according to regional assets and to be maintained by regional human resources.
- The SSFPA introduced the AFIF Margins Software designed for costing ingredients and documenting recipes' costs and margins on sales. The ingredient tracking function supports food safety recall strategies. The SSFPA plans to host this business tool for small-scale food processors on its website.
- The SSFPA described work being done to create access to finance, which is specific to small-scale food growers and processors. Look for this to be reported on during the summer of 2003.
- Lifecycles spoke about the programs available for youth and their community economic development strategy vis-à-vis agriculture and value added.
- Community Futures described how its programs could fit the needs of the agricultural sector and small scale food processors in the Cowichan Valley.
- CEDCO Victoria presented information on the new Greater Victoria Community Investment Fund program. For further information see [www.cedco.bc.ca](http://www.cedco.bc.ca)
- Health Canada made a presentation of labeling requirements. A PowerPoint file will be posted on the SSFPA website.
- Community Futures South Fraser and North Fraser presented information about their community economic development activities and programs in the agricultural sector.  
<http://www.southfraser.com/>  
<http://www.northfraser.org/index.html>