



## LUSH VALLEY

### Food Access and Local Food Systems- COVID19 Impacts Comox Valley Briefing April 27th- May 10, 2020 (\*notes moving to bi-weekly)

#### Highlight of CV community needs:

- Emergency food program lists continue to grow across the region, estimations at 1311 households- while longer term funding and in-kind support for programs remains unstable. (Most emergency funding doesn't stretch past June)
- Food supply disruption planning subcommittee finds food security and food supply a 'blind spot' in official emergency response and suggests these issues become a priority for EOC and related bodies.
- The group is focused on understanding supply disruption issues and advocating for our community to plan appropriately for potential food disruptions.
- Opportunities for municipal food policy in order to ease pressure on food supply chains gaining traction among the town of Comox, and Courtenay.
- Local farmer survey results show farmers need for labour, secure markets, promotion, delivery and aggregation.

#### Comox Valley Emergency Food Programs:

**LUSH Valley-** working with over 20 agency partners

**HOT MEAL PROGRAM:** Total # clients registered 466

Total meals served last two week ( hot + frozen meals): **1676**

Total meals served since program start (hot + frozen meals): 3544

**GOOD FOOD BOX:** Approximate # households registered 475

Total Good Food Boxes Delivered last two weeks: **674**

Approximate # Good Food Boxes since program start 1254

\*SD71 approx 250 student families receiving Good Food Box. SD71 and Student First Buses assist this program with funds, deliveries and warehouse packing-concerns over what happens to the program when students return to school.

\*LUSH emergency and other programs organizations are wanting to support local farmers, LUSH purchases minimum 20% local food.

**Cumberland Food Share:** April 30th, delivered 28 hampers serving 88 individuals. May 7, delivered 31 hampers serving 104 individuals.

\***Other groups** providing emergency food services in the Comox Valley (stats unavailable): CV Food Bank, Salvation Army, Komoks First Nation, Black Creek Food Bank, Denman Island Education Society, Wachiay Friendship Center, Sonshine lunch club, CV Family Services and others (please share more info if you have access).

LUSH Valley Food Action Society

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### Comox Valley Gardens and Food Production Programs/Activities:

- **LUSH:** Grow Food Everywhere- Community gardens, food growing supplies and education.
- Weekly on-line food growing tutorials-Seed and soil distribution, mentorship.
- Share the Harvest Community garden has a waitlist, Vanier Garden (with **Mid Island Farmers Institute**) has reopened for new gardeners.
- Weekly podcast Community Food Security in a Pandemic-  
<https://lushvalley.org/podcast/> news on food supply as well as local and provincial stories of food security strategy and programs.

### Laketrail Neighbourhood Connections- supporting gardens with seeds and education

- **CV Food Policy Council (CVFPC)** created a municipal policy wishlist including urban agriculture policy and securing more land for food growing.
- Town of Comox, and City of Courtenay moving ahead with urban agriculture policies- (Town of Cumberland already has policies in place).
- Food supply disruption Subcommittee (joined by **CVEDS and CV Farmers Institute members**): met with Jill Hatfield regional Agrologist. Jill shared a list of local processors in the region. Group discussed increased wait for local meat processing at Gunter Bro and encouraged opening up more opportunities for local meat processing. Jill shared Min of Ag updates and answered questions re:

### Min of Ags update:

- Launching program to distribute Personal Protective Equipment for farm workers
- Plans for easing the cost of GAP certification (which currently is required for local farmers to sell to supermarkets.)
- Temporary foreign workers and bringing that labour safely onto farms.
- AG services BC- resource for farmers and food growers navigating Covid-19 issues. <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriservice-bc>

**CCFPC and LUSH:** Local Farmer Survey results: A couple of weeks ago we hosted a meeting to find out what support farmers might need for this season. The survey showed that 90% would produce more if they had the support 70% were looking for additional labour. About 80% were interested in selling produce to LUSH emergency programs and/or learning more about it. 90% wanted help with promotion, The majority were interested in delivery support, aggregation and a farm stand map. The next step will be to contact farmers to match them where possible with labour, markets or other supports.

- LUSH We should be learning about the CSJ in the next week, and hope that we will be able to direct some farm labour through that program.

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**CV Farmers Market:** Locally farmers continue to see large increase in direct sales with farmers selling on-line at farm stands and the farmers market.

### **Provincial and Federal news:**

The idea of surplus food to emergency food programs has gained traction- Gord Johns advocates and PM announcement of 50 million to purchase surplus food to go to emergency programs. PM announcement- \$252 million to address food supply issues. Canadian Federation of Agriculture has stated the industry had suggested 2.6 billion was needed to maintain food security and food supply and warn of food supply disruptions “ \$252million like a bucket of water on a burning house” <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/agri-food-covid-liberals-1.5555591>  
PM announcement of raising minimum wage for front line workers- no mention of farm and food producers- provinces to decided who is “front line”

### **Food Production and Availability**

We continue to see impacts of the pandemic on global and national and local supply chains. Agricultural producers are worried about the labour shortages brought about by the pandemic, as Temporary Foreign Workers are subjected to increased scrutiny and monitoring at ports of entry to prevent the spread of disease.

The federal government recently asked Members of Parliament to help identify organizations that could benefit from additional CSJ (Canada Summer Jobs) funding during this extraordinary year. In addition to our agricultural producers, there are many food banks and food delivery groups providing essential services who can use the CSJ platform to help subsidize wages”.

News predicts continued processing plant closures and decreases in production that project reductions in certain types of meats and produce over the next period, especially from US sources who are seeing increasing impacts. Reports from producers in the US predict we will see at least a 30% reduction in fresh produce imports from California. Meat processing plants continue to see limited processing and closures due to COVID-19 outbreaks.

The chicken board decided to reduce the total amount of chickens to be grown from May to July by 12.6 percent, to 249 million kilograms from 285 million kilograms. They stressed the decision is meant to address the issue of having too much unsold chicken because of the food-service shutdown.

<https://business.financialpost.com/news/retail-marketing/chicken-farmers-to-shrink-national-flock-by-12-as-coronavirus-takes-toll-on-canadas-food-supply-chain>

Most recent news: United Nations Food and Agriculture re global food systems

<http://www.fao.org/2019-ncov/q-and-a/impact-on-food-and-agriculture/en/>

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