



## LUSH VALLEY

### Food Access and Local Food Systems- COVID19 Impacts Comox Valley Briefing May 23- June 5th, 2020 (\*notes moving to bi-weekly)

#### CV Highlights:

- Emergency programs registration seems somewhat stabilized with minor fluctuations in the last couple weeks around 1200-1400.
- Some emergency programs and others affected by Phase 3 opening, such as: loss of transportation and volunteer support.
- BC Transit use of Handy DART buses for food delivery (Wachiy, LUSH).
- After-action reporting on local EOC will ask that Food Security and Food Supply be added to EOC structure and priorities.
- Provincial EOC after-action funding has been put on hold. Concerns that opportunities for learning and prep for a potential 'second wave' will be missed.
- City of Courtenay passes Urban Agriculture resolution unanimously through council (staff report will be compiled before returning to council for adoption).
- LUSH and Mid Island Farmers Institute presented to the Select Standing Committee regarding the 2021 Provincial budget. Requests for funding for: Island Food Hubs, Farmer's Institutes, Emergency Food Planning, and Local Food for Social Service programs and backyard food growing, labour and farmer supports.

#### Emergency Food Programs:

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

- **HOT MEAL PROGRAM:** Approx. # clients registered = **463**. **Total meals served in last two weeks: 1836**. Total meals served since program start: **7140**
- **GOOD FOOD BOX (GFB):** Approx # households registered **490** **Approx GFB last two weeks: 709** (to 472 households) Approx # GFB since program start: **2633** **LUSH purchases 25% local food** for GFB.
- June 5th announcement: 7 Canada Summer Jobs to support LUSH programs.
- **Grow Food Everywhere:** Seed library for local growers launched- Continued weekly on-line food growing tutorials with local experts <https://lushvalley.org/events/> Weekly Podcast- <https://lushvalley.org/podcast/>. Ep #7 inequity in food systems.

#### Cumberland Food Share:

- May 28 - 31 Healthy Food Boxes delivered to 98 individuals.
- June 4 - 33 Healthy Food Boxes delivered to 104 individuals.
- Recipients surveyed: 70% of respondents anticipate that in the next 6 months their financial situation will either stay the same or worsen, only 30% think their situation will improve. - 70% of respondents think that there is a need for this program to continue after the pandemic is over.



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\***Other groups** providing emergency food services in the Comox Valley (stats unavailable):  
(please send additional stats/info re these programs to: [Maurita@lushvalley.org](mailto:Maurita@lushvalley.org)).

- CV Food Bank
- Salvation Army
- K'omoks First Nation
- Black Creek Food Bank
- Denman Island Education Society
- Wachiay Friendship Centre
- Sonshine Lunch Club
- CV Family Services and others

### **Food Systems Federal and Provincial new - Food Production and Food Availability**

Last week marked the beginning of Phase 3 - from June to September. According to the Restart BC plan, this phase contains a number of measures that will support food and agriculture businesses. People can begin to travel in British Columbia, Hotels and resorts are allowed to reopen and select entertainment activities. This is good news for many of the farms, food and beverage providers that have been limited by the closure of these markets.

We continue to see a surge in interest around local food systems and local food supply. More people are growing their own gardens and baking and cooking at home There is an anticipated continued increase in demand for food services, however there is an important dynamic to highlight. Many are seeing a levelling off of demand for food services. There is anecdotal evidence that the CERB payments are providing a basic level of income that has lessened or levelled the need for food support. It will be important to monitor this dynamic and also anticipate that when the CERB payment supports end, we may need to be prepared for a new wave of demand.

Farm producers continue to see strong direct sales, and those with farm outlet stores report significant increases over last year. There are still concerns with labour shortages, especially as the berry season is upon us.

**Farmers Markets:** News from the BC Association of Farmers Markets: Roughly 80 farmers' markets are now using the platform including on Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands. Many farmers markets that were originally not going to open have changed their minds, now that crafters and vendors of non food items, who make up many of the markets vendors will be able to be part of local markets.

**Fishers:** We continue to see harvesters struggle as the vast majority of fish caught is destined to foreign and restaurant markets, which are still limited. The Canadian Independent Fish Harvester's Federation has been asked to comment on the emergency response package for harvesters. They are asking that the CERB be extended and that the government seriously consider implementing a guaranteed minimum income for all Canadians

The BC Government has launched a new [B.C. Farm, Fish and Food Job Connector](#) showcases the current job vacancies throughout the province, including those for: Crop and seafood harvesters,



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Food processing and farmworkers, Agrologists, Large machinery operators, and Marketing specialists.

**Restaurants:** After a mandatory two-month closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many restaurants adapted by working to shift to take out ordering but are welcoming the new openings offered in phase 3. They will be limited to 50 per cent capacity until further notice. Municipalities including Courtenay, are looking at how to expand outdoor dining and patios to assist with social distancing and increasing restaurant capacity. Beverage Providers: It is predicted that beverage providers like brewers, vintners and cideries have lost 1/3 of their markets over the pandemic and have only achieved about 25% of their regular sales.

### **Potential changes to the Agriculture Land Reserve:**

“Wes Shoemaker has been appointed to lead the development of an agri-industrial zone within the Agricultural Land Reserve, and a role that positions him to become “Commissioner for Agri-Industrial Lands,” The commissioner would oversee designation of 28,500 acres within the ALR for the new zone and be responsible for attracting companies to locate within the proposed zone. However, the Agricultural Land Commission and others are pushing back against the move, with ALC chair Jennifer Dyson saying, the commission “would like to be consulted before any decision is made about potentially increasing the impact of processing and retail facilities on the agricultural land base.” Lana Popham says the new zone would be minimal: “We’re just looking for ways to find a place for that to happen. It’s not necessarily on the Agricultural Land Reserve ... it’s [not] going to take away from the parts of agriculture that we believe in so much”. Island farmer, Arzeena Hamir, a long-time food and farmland activist, has expressed concerns that this measure “goes against the very findings of the ALR/ALC Revitalizations Committee. The ALR is for farming first and we certainly should not be sacrificing valuable land in the Fraser Valley for industrial processing”.

### **Resources of interest-Food and Agriculture and Covid-19:**

The BC Food Security Gateway is posting [credible resources on Covid-19](#), including [funding opportunities](#). [Growing Resilience and Equity: A food policy action plan in the context of COVID-19](#) Food Secure Canada’s policy action plan for renewing the country’s food system in response to Covid-19.

[Planning for Food Security: A Toolkit for the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)