



# AGRICULTURE

PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT STRATEGY





### **MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR**

Agriculture has played a key role in creating a vibrant, sustainable city, and we are committed to protecting our land and strengthening our farming community. One-third of Surrey is agricultural, and our city is home to close to 500 farms that generate over \$165 million in economic activity.

Surrey's new agriculture strategy will enhance our land base, encourage innovation, improve sustainability, and maximize productivity. Working in collaboration with our community partners we will ensure Surrey's agricultural industry continues to thrive.

Sincerely,  
Mayor Dianne Watts



### **MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR**

Surrey's new Agricultural Protection and Enhancement Strategy focuses on specific steps that we can take to preserve our land, enhance food security and remain competitive in today's marketplace.

It's important that we take steps to support this sector, which is vital to our economy and way of life.

Sincerely,  
Councillor Linda Hepner



# SECTOR PROFILE

Agriculture has always been a key component of Surrey's economy and community life. Over one third of the City is designated for agriculture in the Official Community Plan, most falling within the Provincial Agricultural Land Reserve. Surrey farms produce a wide diversity of crops including dairy products, poultry, berries and grapes, cut flowers and landscape materials, and a range of field-grown and greenhouse vegetables. Surrey's greenhouses contain nearly 450,000 sq. m. of production capacity. Surrey farms support over 3,300 jobs and produce over \$167 million in sales.

Surrey's favourable climate with mild winters, warm dry summers, fertile valley soils and excellent access to markets, suppliers and transportation networks have resulted in a thriving agri-food sector. Surrey farms enjoy competitive advantages in key areas including dairy, poultry, berry, horticulture, and greenhouse and market-garden vegetables produced for both local and global markets. Advances in technology and emerging consumer food trends open new opportunities for innovation on high-value food crops, value-added products, "high-tech" and "high touch" production methods and allow for targeted marketing to diverse cultural groups and promote opportunities to ensure Surrey addresses food security within its boundaries and for its residents. A new generation of farmers and consumers place a high value on "local production for local markets," providing an advantage for the near-urban farms in Surrey.

A changing world also poses challenges for Surrey farmers and processors. A high Canadian currency along with projected increases in transportation and fuel costs creates tighter profit margins for many producers, particularly for those who are export-oriented. Additionally, a changing climate may result in added pressure on irrigation in drier summers and on flood control and drainage in wetter winters; and future sea level rises may create challenges with salt water intrusion and dike protection. These challenges require innovative responses to ensure the long-term health of a thriving agri-food sector in Surrey.

The City has consistently demonstrated support for its agricultural sector. The Agriculture and Food Security Advisory Committee (AFSAC) comprised of representatives from local agriculture and food sectors, advises Council on agricultural policy and identifies solutions for the issues facing the City. The Official Community Plan (OCP) and the Agricultural Plan contain policies to protect and enhance agriculture in Surrey. In conjunction with those documents, this Agricultural Strategy is intended to set a path toward a future that addresses many of the issues currently facing Surrey's farming community.



“ *Surrey is a diverse and growing city that encompasses a strong agricultural community. This combination allows for a sustainable, local and secure supply of high quality food of tremendous variety. As a fourth-generation farmer and resident, I see this as both a time of growth in our local industry and of an exciting, evolving civic identity.* ”

**MIKE BOSE**, *Farmer*  
Bose Family Corn Maze



**THE PURPOSE OF SURREY'S  
AGRICULTURE STRATEGY IS TO:**

1

To identify key priorities and actions for enhancing the growth and vitality of the agriculture sector in Surrey, by outlining 5 major “strategic directions” with 30 “priorities for action.”

2

To ensure the sustainability and resilience of the agri-food sector in Surrey in the face of a changing future, responding to a changing climate, changing markets and changing technology.

3

To reinforce and complement the BC Agrifoods Strategy and to direct actions at the local government level whereby the Provincial government and Agricultural Land Commission play a lead role in agriculture with Surrey continuing to contribute significantly to maximize local opportunities and successes.

Protecting Surrey’s agricultural land base and agricultural infrastructure systems are key elements to ensuring the success of the agricultural industry in Surrey. Without viable, available, accessible agricultural land and without access to affordable and sufficient water sources, the ability to provide fresh food is severely limited.

# STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Surrey's five Strategic Directions include:

## 1. LAND BASE

Preserve and enhance Surrey's agricultural land base for farming.

## 2. INNOVATION

Encourage and support innovation in production, processing and marketing across the agriculture sector.

## 3. INFRASTRUCTURE

Provide infrastructure necessary to support the growth and viability of the agricultural industry.

## 4. AGRI-URBAN CONNECTIONS

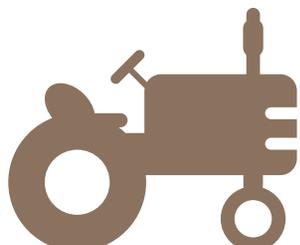
Enhance connections and relationships between agriculture and urban residents.

## 5. SUSTAINABILITY & RESILIENCE

Ensure a sustainable and resilient agri-food sector into the future.







## STRATEGY 1

# LAND BASE

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**Preserve and enhance  
Surrey's agricultural  
land base for farming.**

A stable, predictable and contiguous agricultural land base to operate upon is essential for the continued health and vitality of the agri-food sector for a number of reasons:

- It provides sufficient space to grow a wide range of crops efficiently
- It helps to keep land costs reasonable so farms can operate economically
- It helps to reduce competition from other land uses that prevent or impede agricultural operations
- It provides confidence in the future of farming in Surrey by encouraging long-term investments and supporting a new generation of farmers
- It maintains farm operation flexibility to meet emerging demands and opportunities

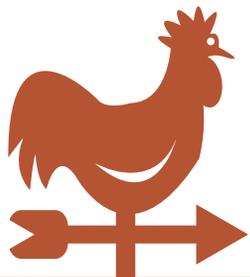
The Provincial Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) has a primary role in protecting the agricultural land base within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). Surrey can help reinforce the availability of the ALR land base, as well as those lands designated for agricultural outside of the Reserve, by being proactive in the enforcement of by-laws and by planning adjacent urban areas in such a way that they do not restrict farming activity.

## PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

- 1 Preserve Surrey's existing Agricultural Land Reserve boundary by requiring 2 ha of land of equivalent or better soil capability (from within Surrey) to be added to the ALR for every 1 ha of land (within Surrey) excluded from it.
- 2 Protect farming and agri-food operations from adjacent urban impacts (e.g. upland stormwater drainage, traffic, nuisance complaints, trespassing and noxious substances).
- 3 Maximize the productive use of agricultural land through such means as:
  - Leasing City of Surrey agricultural land to farmers
  - Advocating for tax assessment changes to provide incentives for landowners who use their lands productively
  - Amending zoning and other regulations to support agricultural innovation
- 4 Protect the Agricultural Land Reserve for farm uses by enforcing municipal by-laws, controlling illegal activities and by reducing the impact of permitted uses (such as farm residences) on viable farm operations.
- 5 Develop policy and programs that support and expand food production and opportunities for farming operations.
- 6 Examine opportunities for establishing an Agricultural Support District for lands outside of the ALR.







## STRATEGY 2

# INNOVATION

Encourage and support innovation in production, in processing and in marketing across the agriculture sector.

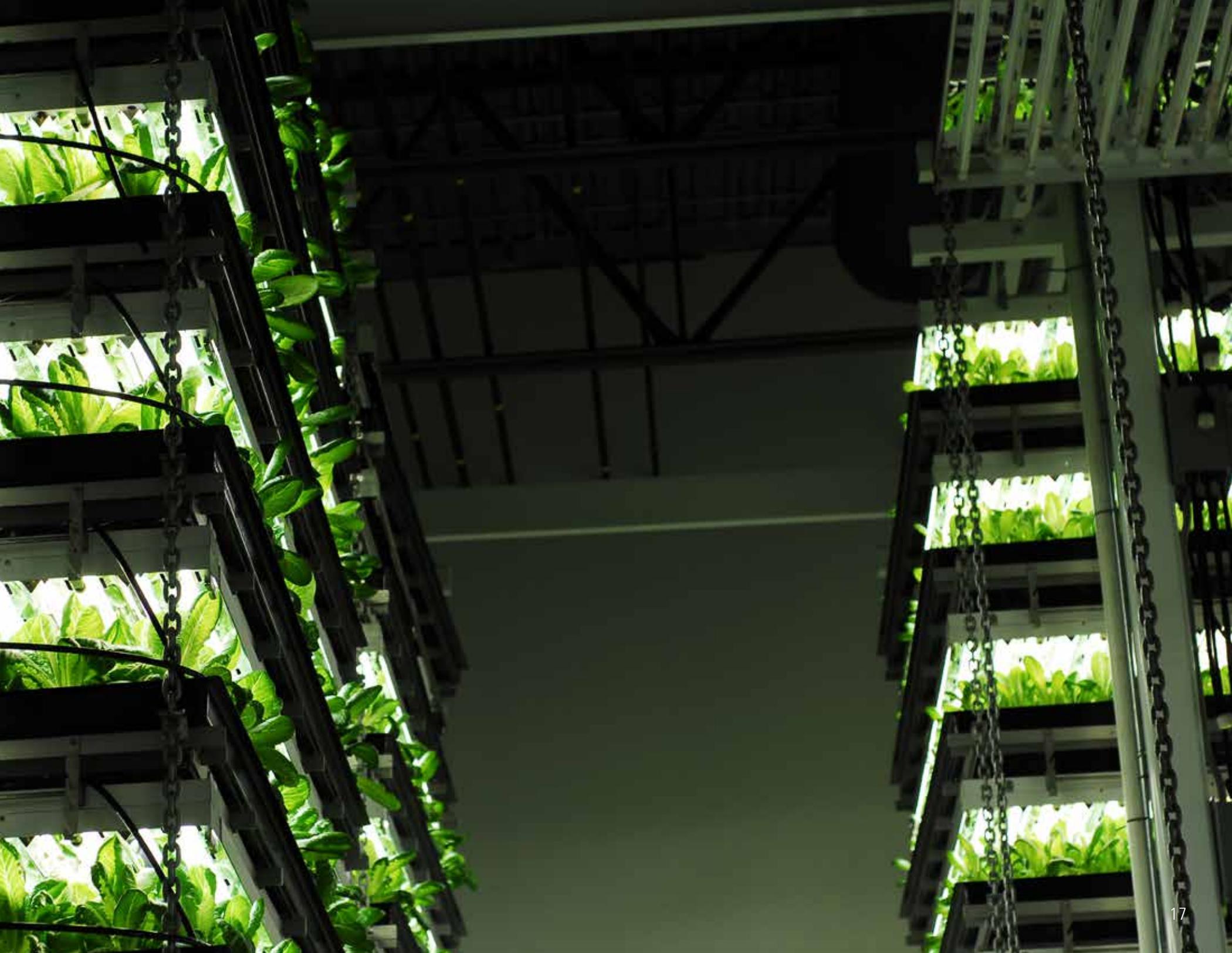
The world of agriculture and food is constantly changing; and these changing circumstances require constant innovation by the entire sector in order to respond to new challenges and opportunities. The high value of the Canadian currency, rising fuel, fertilizer and other input costs, and increased land use competition places pressure on producers and processors in BC and in Surrey. While many of these external pressures are global in scope, the City can play a role by encouraging experimentation through pilot projects and by supporting innovative approaches, technologies and practices.

Innovation can take many forms, including supporting:

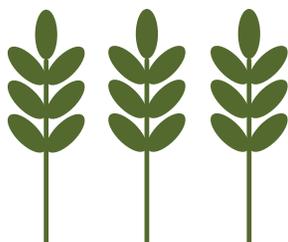
- New crops or commodities that have not yet been grown or produced in Surrey or in the region, including nutraceuticals (medicines derived from food products)
- New production technologies, techniques or practices that allow better efficiency or utilization of resources
- New and productive products derived from waste or agri-food by-products, including waste-to-energy and composting
- New approaches to providing and housing farm workers
- Opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and mentoring
- New market identification and development and engaging in niche marketing to diverse cultural groups

## PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

- 1 Support Surrey-based research and development of innovative production technologies and practices such as “vertical farming,” roof-top farming, advanced irrigation and fertilization systems, etc.
- 2 Encourage the production of new crops and commodities, particularly high-value crops, and those serving new markets with growth potential.
- 3 Partner with Canada’s national trade specialists, the Province, producer groups and local businesses to develop new markets (local and global) and marketing strategies for local commodities.
- 4 Encourage innovative management programs for the recycling of agriculture and food waste into an energy resource. Determine appropriate locations for these operations, on or off farms, where efficiencies will best be realized and farming operations will not be compromised.
- 5 Support programs that connect farmers with business expertise in developing business plans for new or innovative ideas.
- 6 Advance opportunities for Farming Co-operatives to ensure appropriate food pricing of local produce and agricultural products.







## STRATEGY 3

# INFRASTRUCTURE

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Provide infrastructure necessary to support the growth and viability of the agricultural industry.

Current agricultural practices require publicly-delivered infrastructure in order to grow and thrive, including:

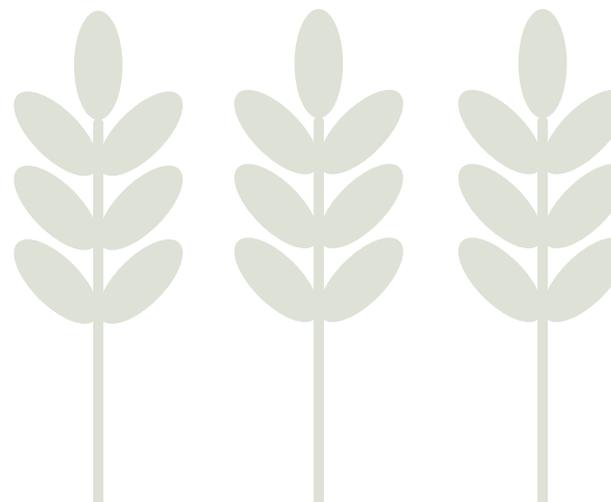
- Clean and sufficient water supplies for livestock, washing of harvested foods and food handling equipment, and crop irrigation.
- Safe wastewater treatment related to food processing and packing operations.
- Safe and accessible transportation infrastructure providing access to farms and to markets, as well as safe, convenient routes between farm parcels for slow-moving farm vehicles.
- Drainage and flood protection works including pump stations, drains, ditches and dikes.
- Appropriate and sufficient energy supplies to permit the efficient and cost-effective operation of intensive agriculture and processing operations.

Providing this infrastructure in a cost-effective manner is a challenge for the City and requires thoughtful planning and appropriate financing strategies to permit the agri-food sector to fulfill its economic potential.



## PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

- 1** Investigate ways of improving access to an adequate and safe water supply for livestock watering, crop irrigation, produce washing and food processing uses.
- 2** Ensure a safe and convenient transportation network supporting agriculture including access between farms and markets, farm vehicle travel routes and direct access between fields and farm operations.
- 3** Encourage the growth of the ag-industrial sector and its agricultural support services by reviewing land use policies and regulations and adjusting where appropriate.
- 4** Partner with senior levels of government, commodity groups and industry leaders to maintain and grow the food processing industry in Surrey by providing appropriate incentives and the widespread acknowledgement of those incentives within the City's Economic Development Strategy.
- 5** Continue to improve lowland drainage and flood management infrastructure in keeping with the Lowland Flood Control Strategic Plan.







## STRATEGY 4

# AGRI-URBAN CONNECTIONS

Enhance connections and relationships between agriculture and urban residents.

Agricultural operations located within a large and growing metropolitan region, especially those directly adjacent to urban neighbours, depend on constructive relationships between 'country' and 'city'. While the Provincial "Right to Farm" legislation protects defined normal farming practices, the City can help to foster positive connections between agricultural and urban land uses and communities by:

- Encouraging 'good neighbour' relations and reducing conflicts along the urban-agricultural interface
- Raising public awareness and celebrating the importance and essential value of the agri-food sector to the economy and quality of life in Surrey
- Encouraging wide and direct participation in a broader understanding of local food production by supporting such educational ventures as urban agriculture, community gardens, agri-tourism operations, farm markets and community-supported agriculture
- Making it easier for young prospective farmers to gain access to land, technical information, expertise and mentoring opportunities

These actions will benefit the agri-food sector by developing new and stronger local markets and by creating a broader public understanding and support for agriculture.

## PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

- 1** Develop and implement a set of 'good neighbour' policies and guidelines including:
  - Adequate setbacks and buffering of urban uses along the edge of the ALR.
  - Ensuring no impact of urban runoff on farm operations.
  - Reducing trespass onto farmland through site planning and fencing/buffering.
  - Reducing the potential for nuisance complaints related to normal farming practices through site planning and education of urban residents.
- 2** Raise public awareness of agriculture in Surrey through initiatives such as farm tours, media materials, community events and encouraging partnerships with producer associations and grocery stores to promote local farm products.
- 3** Support community events promoting and celebrating local agriculture such as Flavours of Surrey event the Blueberry Festival, the Cloverdale Rodeo, Party for the Planet and others.
- 4** Encourage the growth of urban agriculture, community gardens, farm stands and farm markets through information support and by reducing red tape.
- 5** Consider implementing an "AgOneStop" system that provides information and assistance to farmers and prospective farmers seeking to start or grow their business.
- 6** Promote enhanced food literacy and skills in schools by using school gardens and by connecting with farm markets and farm operations.
- 7** Encourage access to healthy local food and produce for low-income families.







## STRATEGY 5

# SUSTAIN- ABILITY & RESILIENCE

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Ensure a sustainable and resilient agri-food sector into the future.

As an industry that depends at its root on the ecological processes of soil formation, nutrient cycling and pollination and on clean water, clean air, soil fertility and a predictable climate, the agri-food sector is vitally concerned with environmental sustainability. While the factors driving climate change are global in scope, Surrey's urban and agricultural sectors alike play a role in mitigating carbon emissions and adapting to the effects of a changing climate. On a more local scale, the City can influence air and water quality and can reduce pollution and loss of fertile soils through the regulation of land uses and enforcement of its by-laws. Farming practices can also play a part in ensuring healthy and diverse ecosystems, cultivating a diversity of crops to ensure resilience and allowing natural processes to provide valuable services that enhance productivity and profit.

The concepts of diversity and resilience extend to human resources as well. Sustainability includes training and supporting a new generation of farmers and food producers to ensure continued stewardship of the land and access to healthy local food.

## PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

- 1** Encourage farm operations to complete Environmental Farm Plans (EFPs), including Beneficial Management Practices, to enhance biodiversity to the greatest extent possible without compromising food production. Manage City-owned farmland to model best practices.
- 2** Encourage producers to diversify crops and agricultural operations to maintain a balanced and resilient food system as needed.
- 3** Partner with the Province and Metro Vancouver to encourage farm practices and processing activities that maintain clean surface and ground water, clean air and healthy soil processes.
- 4** Develop infrastructure (e.g. diking, drainage, flood management, transportation) renewal and emergency management strategies that allow the agriculture industry to respond and adapt to a changing climate.
- 5** Investigate the feasibility of a farm incubator program, using City-owned ALR land to support young farmers seeking agricultural training and initial access to land.
- 6** Investigate the potential for a local or regional Agricultural Innovation Fund to support sustainable and innovative projects that enhance agriculture in Surrey.



A group of chickens, including several brown hens and one white rooster, are standing in a grassy field. The background is a dense line of green trees. A dark, semi-transparent horizontal band is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing white text and quotation marks.

“ *Food security is when community residents have access to safe, affordable, culturally-acceptable, nutritionally-adequate diet through a system that maximizes community self-reliance, environmental sustainability and social justice.* ”

**- SURREY SUSTAINABILITY CHARTER**

# STRATEGY IMPLEMEN- TATION

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Promote best agriculture practices to enhance environmental sustainability.

Surrey's Agriculture Strategy will be implemented through a variety of means, including:

- 1 Undertaking a comprehensive review of relevant by-laws including: the Official Community Plan, Agricultural Development Permit Guidelines, Zoning By-law, Development Cost Charges By-law, Soil Removal and Deposition By-law, Land Development and Subdivision By-law and others to reduce unnecessary regulation and to support innovation and renewed investment in the agriculture sector in Surrey.
- 2 Supporting feasibility studies and pilot projects on a number of key aspects including:
  - Investigation of alternative sources of water for agriculture.
  - A farm incubator program supporting young farmers.
  - An AgOneStop system for dealing with all agriculture-related inquiries.
- 3 Investigating the potential for establishing a Surrey Agricultural Innovation Fund, to work in conjunction with programs offered through the Provincial Investment Agriculture Foundation, to provide support for innovative and sustainable agricultural initiatives.



*Mayor*  
DIANNE WATTS

## City of Surrey Mayor and Council



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*Councillor*  
BRUCE HAYNE



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*Councillor*  
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