



# REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NORTH OKANAGAN

## REGIONAL AGRI-HUB WORKING GROUP

Tuesday July 4, 2023  
Boardroom – 9848 Aberdeen Road, Coldstream, BC  
6:00 p.m.

### REGULAR MINUTES

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<b>Members:</b>	R. Smailes	RDNO
	L. Frank	RDNO
	R. Fairbairn	Director, Electoral Area D
	C. Fraser	Mayor, Township of Spallumcheen
	G. Popoff	Councilor, Township of Spallumcheen
	S. Meggait	Meat Producer
	D. Harvey	Retired Accountant
	P. Wendt	Poultry Producer
	E. Davidson	Meadow Valley Meats
	J. Funk	Structural Engineer
	R. van Daltsen	Dairy Producer
	C. Haible (electronic)	Mushroom Producer
	A. Mohammad	Fruit Producer
	L. Horsfield	Community Futures
<b>Guests</b>	L. Benbow	Regional Agrologist
	K. Mullin	Community Futures
<b>Absent:</b>	L. French	Rancher
	M. Broersma	Dairy Farmer
	A. Hopkins	Director, Electoral Area F
	L. Blakeway	Land to Table
	M. Hodge	Hay & Cattle Farmer
	A. Gunner	Agricultural Economist

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#### CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m.

Acknowledgment that the Regional District of North Okanagan is on the traditional territory of the Syilx and Secwépemc First Nations.

#### NEW BUSINESS

1. The Working Group split into two facilitated breakout discussions and discussed five pre-determined questions:

**Group 1: Butcher/Abattoir, Poultry, Cattle, Dairy, Cold Storage**

- What is your vision for this Agri-Hub?
  - Grander Scale- running normal business hours from a time perspective- activated regularly.
  - Should not interfere with private enterprise- should be able to support agriculture- (labour pool market incorporated as a service to the Agri-Hub)
  - Specialty product focus- marketing the product
  - Farmer direct to the consumer with intent and niche market
  - Need for slaughter, cut and wrap and cold storage
  - The local farmers are missing the auction and small butcher shops there's no capacity for slaughter in the region.
  - Dairy needs to entice a processor to invest here.
  - Expandable and redundancy (in case there are tech problems)
  - Layout is important, the flow of traffic and how the site and buildings will work over time as it grows and expands must be considered.
  - Buildings must be serviceable by local HVAC Contractors.
  - There is demand for additional cold storage in the North Okanagan
  - A stand-alone concept, Okanagan independence and regional food security
  - Tie in research and development and training programs for things like "cut and wrap."
  - Olds Alberta has a course on butchering and TRU has a retail meat-cutting course if training was offered or supported there would be immediate jobs and demand for those skill sets.
  - Suggestions for the Agri-Hub to be operated by a non-profit
  - Purchasing house for Fruits
  - Small spaces for small producers, modular could be shared.
  
- What role do you envision the Agri-Hub playing for your sector/industry? Consider what is missing, how that impacts your sector and the gaps the agri-hub could fill (e.g. labour, infrastructure, coordination needs, etc).
  - Need a place to go to process and sell, take products to; farmers don't want to do the marketing.
  - Askew's Foods needs consistency
  - Farm gate sales- a place to consolidate products
    - Access to products should be an essential aspect of the agri-hub
  - It has to have a profit to service, longevity
  - Owned by a non-profit and then leased
  - Public ownership of land may entice processors by reducing investment cash and carrying costs.
  - Reduce barriers to entry, processing, and cold storage using the young agrarians model.
  - Have to separate meat, veggies and birds but hey all still funnel into cold storage after processing.
  - Need to determine the minimum footprint for cold storage.
  
- What role do you see the Agri-Hub playing for the agricultural industry as a whole in the North Okanagan? (e.g short-term and long-term opportunities for collaboration, synergies, and economies of scale).
  - Cold storage is center of the Agri-Hub – all industries need access to cold storage, it's where products get stored after they are processed and is key to attracting industry to the Agri-Hub.
  - Marketing & Distribution from the Hub to consumers

- Availability of labour & workers
- Could an Agri-Hub be an employer?
- Opportunities for fruit and veggies and sausages.
- If there were no barriers or restrictions on what the Agri-hub could offer to your industry, what would you want to see? Be specific (ie. Type of facility; Size of facility; Training/Education; Research needs)
  - Dealing with restrictions and regulations like the ALC.
  - Marketing Boards, it would be ideal to get them dealt with and out of the way to move forward.
  - Keep it under the size to avoid CFIA restrictions/regulations.
  - Exports are challenging- Federal approvals needed for every aspect of the value chain.
  - No restrictions on value add products
  - Domestic/local is a "lower bar" (just the Canadian standard)
  - We need the number of animals processed here
  - Project layout- size needs for each aspect of the facility
- How do your sector needs and aspirations align (or not) with the Agri-Hub objectives (e.g. increased processing and opportunity for local producers to grow their businesses).
  - Has to be consistently running
  - Large enough

## **Group 2: Fruit, Vegetable, Cold Storage**

- What is your vision for this Agri-Hub?
  - OKIB perspective- food security, land for agricultural purposes, how can they support this initiative, funding/application support. Sun Valley ranch has 1500 acres of farmland on reserve, and they are looking to increase food security for their residents.
  - Community Futures has heard demand for a processing space/community kitchen opportunity.
  - Modular cold storage: look at having five 500 sq ft units and five 10,000 sq ft units for growers of different sizes to utilize.
  - Picking apples usually begins end of August and cold storage needs could last through to April.
- What role do you envision the Agri-Hub playing for your sector/industry? Consider what is missing, how that impacts your sector and the gaps the agri-hub could fill (e.g. labour, infrastructure, coordination needs, etc).
  - A collection point for product- aggregation and distribution
  - Governance elements
  - Managing/facilitating contacts between farmers and retailers
  - Social needs (non-profits): 1400 good food boxes need refrigeration and additional storage space (200-300 sq ft).
  - Costco building (old Kelowna location) has been gifted to OKIB: it's a 150,000 sq ft facility they are looking to relocate and rebuild on land within the North Okanagan.
  - Whatever facility is built for the Agri-Hub it needs to be flexible in design to accommodate expansion and growth.

- What role do you see the Agri-Hub playing for the agricultural industry as a whole in the North Okanagan? (e.g short-term and long-term opportunities for collaboration, synergies, and economies of scale).
  - Co-location that is flexible and promotes collaboration and synergies between sectors, and opportunities for shared investment.
- If there were no barriers or restrictions on what the Agri-hub could offer to your industry, what would you want to see? Be specific (ie. Type of facility; Size of facility; Training/Education; Research needs)
  - Have retail/wholesale located in the Hub, and potentially host a farmers market (winter location or entire year long).
  - A partnership between the agri-hub and BX Ranchlands could provide the education, training and research needs.
- How do your sector needs and aspirations align (or not) with the agri-Hub objectives (e.g. increased processing and opportunity for local producers to grow their businesses).
  - Real need and opportunity for cold storage and processing
  - Collaboration between growers and producers for retail & wholesale
  - Tourism opportunity- people can see farming in action and learn about the history of the area and current farming practices

## 2. Reporting out on "What We Heard"

The facilitator of each breakout group provided an overview of the group discussions. The general consensus was:

- Cold Storage is a priority, along with an Abbotiri/Butcher Hub and space for additional processing.

## 3. Full Group Discussion

- From your sector/industry's perspective, what are the most important factors that need to be considered/clarified for a successful Agri-hub?
  - Need more data on the number of animals processed within the region
  - A modular approach to the Agri-Hub is best
  - What is an adequate size for cold storage? 50,000 sq ft has been mentioned as a good starting point
  - Need to approach the ALC with what uses are being proposed to ensure there are no roadblocks along the way.
  - Need to be broad and as flexible as possible with the proposal and site design.
  - The Agri-Hub should start out as a non-profit service delivery.
- What were the high points in your conversation (e.g. what ideas garnered the most energy from the group)?
  - There is a clear consensus on the priority uses for the Agri-Hub; however, there needs to be a mission statement developed to create a solid basis/purpose for the Agri-Hub.
- Are there any potential drawbacks to this plan (facility proposal) that we should consider?
  - Abbotir/slaughterhouse could become a public relations challenge. Need to create awareness of what is being proposed earlier on in the process.
  - Need to develop a list of permitted and non-permitted uses, so it is clear. Send this list to the ALC for consideration/approval before proceeding to a business plan.

- Leaving the future of this project in the hands of the ALC is concerning, is zoning part of the solution?
- Create an Agri Support Hub with permitted uses like the I-4 zone and review that list with the committee for what it could include.

#### **4. Next Steps/Focus Group Discussions**

- Sector-specific value chain conversations, distributions and market demand.
- Staff to invite Valley Direct, Farm Bound, and Helmut's Sausage Kitchen to present on the challenges or opportunities they see and have experienced within their sector.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:08 p.m.