

REGIONAL DISTRICT NORTH
OKANAGAN

REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL PLAN



2026

Acknowledgments

In **2015**, the Regional Agricultural Plan (RAP), a strategy and policy framework document, was developed to support and enhance the economic sustainability and resilience of the agricultural industry in the North Okanagan. A Consulting Team, composed of four consultants, led the original planning process for the Regional District.

The Regional Agricultural Advisory Committee (RAAC), comprised of elected officials and members of the farm community, was essential for providing technical advice and input on the planning process and serving as a liaison within the regional agricultural community. Funding from the Investment Agriculture Foundation was secured to offset the costs of this comprehensive planning process.



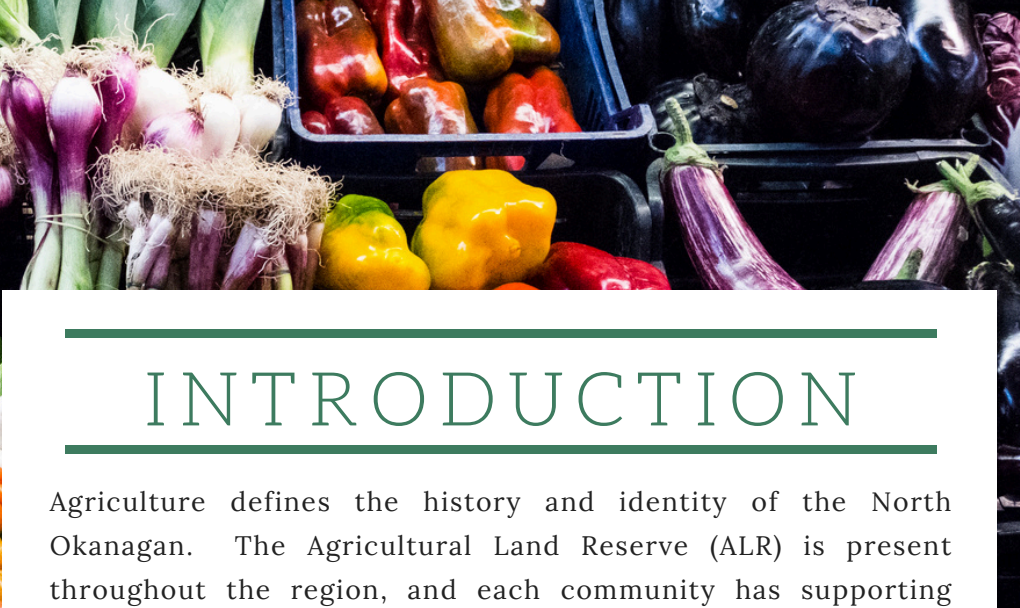
2025-2026 Review

In **2025**, the RDNO launched a review and update of the Regional Agricultural Plan. This work was carried out by RDNO staff in collaboration with the Regional Agricultural Advisory Committee, the Regional Growth Management Advisory Committee and members of the farming community and general public.

Through this consultation, it was confirmed that the seven priorities and sub-goals remained relevant. The original RAP contained 105 actions. After the review was complete, the Plan now contains 78 actions. From the original 2015 plan, 45 actions were retained, 27 revised, 34 removed because they were either complete or no longer relevant, and 6 new actions were created.

A notation of any revised or new policies is provided to give greater context to the evolution of this plan.





INTRODUCTION

Agriculture defines the history and identity of the North Okanagan. The Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) is present throughout the region, and each community has supporting agricultural designations and policies in their Official Community Plans (OCPs) and zoning bylaws. Agriculture provides not only local and regional economic benefits but also opportunities for local access to agricultural products, creating greater resilience to the increasingly frequent economic, environmental, and food supply shocks.

The original Regional Agricultural Plan (RAP) is the culmination of a Background Report, Market Opportunities Analysis, and extensive consultation with the agricultural community. The Background Report presented an overview of the regional context, the results of the Agricultural Land Use Inventory (ALUI), the Census of Agriculture analysis, and community consultation and issue identification. The Market Opportunities Analysis provided a high-level assessment of opportunities and challenges facing the North Okanagan agricultural sector. This RAP is a refresh of the original document. It combines that information with feedback from the community to present a **revised vision statement**, key priorities and recommended actions towards planning for agriculture in the North Okanagan.

Regional Agricultural Plans are intended to support the highest and best use of agricultural land and to develop strategies/actions to ensure a viable agricultural industry at the regional level. The RAP considers agriculture in its regional context and attempts to identify and anticipate future changes and challenges. The RAP, although developed by the Regional District of North Okanagan, acknowledges that the participation of local governments, senior levels of government, agricultural businesses, community organizations, and the public is essential to realize a resilient, sustainable and profitable regional agricultural sector.





2026 Vision Statement

Agriculture is central to the North Okanagan's identity- past, present, and future. Farms of all sizes thrive with affordable, long-term land access, supportive policies, and sustainable practices that ensure climate resilience and a diverse, healthy food supply. A strong local food system and proud regional identity of 'Okanagan Grown' connect residents and visitors to the land, the farmers, and the food that define this region.



It is important to note that, while the RAP has been developed for the RDNO, it is not solely the RDNO's responsibility to accept, adopt, endorse, implement, or accommodate any or all of the recommendations included within the plan. The RDNO's role is to raise educational awareness through policy and plan development, and the RAP is therefore a community endeavour and will require the effort of many individuals and organizations within the region to succeed.

Potential lead organizations and agencies are identified in the recommendation tables and grouped by jurisdiction. The recommendations and associated implementation strategy are put forward with the understanding that collaboration will be required in order to achieve success. Furthermore, the scope of this plan is regional; therefore, the provincial and federal levels are addressed to some degree, but are not the main focus of the report.

The North Okanagan is fortunate to be home to many organizations that support local agriculture either directly or indirectly. They include:

Producer Groups

- BC Agricultural Council
- BC Association of Abattoirs
- BC Fruit Growers Association
- BC Grape Growers Association
- BC Poultry Association
- BC Young Farmers – Okanagan
- Interior Greenhouse Growers Association
- Kamloops Okanagan Dairymen Association (KODA)
- Lumby Range/Livestock Association
- North Okanagan Beekeepers Association
- North Okanagan Cattlemen Association
- North Okanagan Organic Association
- Okanagan North Growers Co-op
- Okanagan Shuswap Sheep Producers Association
- Okanagan Tree Fruit Cooperative
- Okanagan-Kootenay Cherry Growers Association

Community Groups

- Armstrong Food Initiative Society
- Enderby Food Action for Today and Tomorrow (FACT) committee
- Kamloops/Okanagan 4-H Regional Council
- Land to Table Network Society
- Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship (OSS)
- Seed Savers
- Vernon Permaculture
- Vernon Pigeon and Poultry Club
- Young Agrarians

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

The following seven priorities emerged from the 2013 community consultation and were reconfirmed and prioritized in 2026.

1. **Protecting farmland and farmers**
2. **Managing clean, accessible, and affordable water**
3. **Encouraging sustainable agricultural practices and climate change resilience**
4. **Strengthening the local agricultural economy**
5. **Ensuring farmland availability for emerging and multigenerational farmers**
6. **Creating supportive government policies and regulations**
7. **Raising awareness through education and celebration of agriculture**



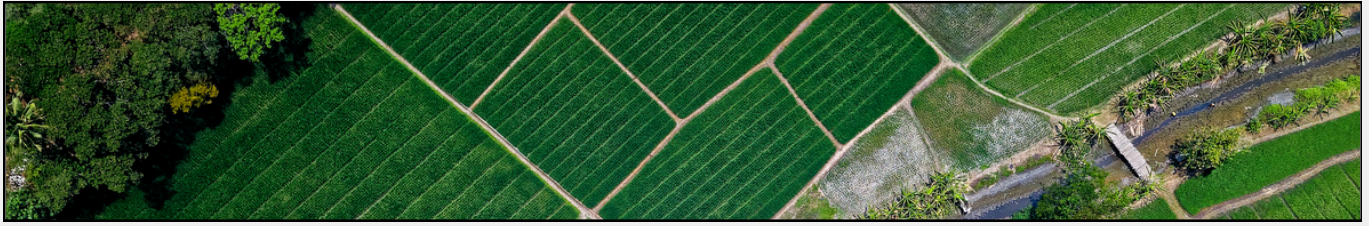
The priorities are further explained and a series of recommended actions are provided in table format in the following pages. The issue of climate change arose repeatedly, and it is felt that each priority is vulnerable to its effects (both known and unknown). Particular focus on climate change is afforded in Priority #3.

The tables include a list of suggested key players (including lead agency and supporting partners), along with priority level, timeframe, funding requirements and potential funding sources. A new implementation column has been added to highlight which actions have been initiated over the years and their status. It is important to note that the inclusion of any organization or agency in this list does not constitute a commitment on their part to participate; rather, it suggests the appropriate type of leadership and support required for each action to succeed.

The overall responsibility for implementing the RAP rests with the RDNO, and therefore, some of the actions are steps the Regional District can take. However, this is truly a community-based plan, and members of the farming community and supporting organizations are expected to take a lead role in many of the actions.

Priority Area			
A. Goal	Key Players	Resource Requirements & Potential Sources	Implementaiton Status

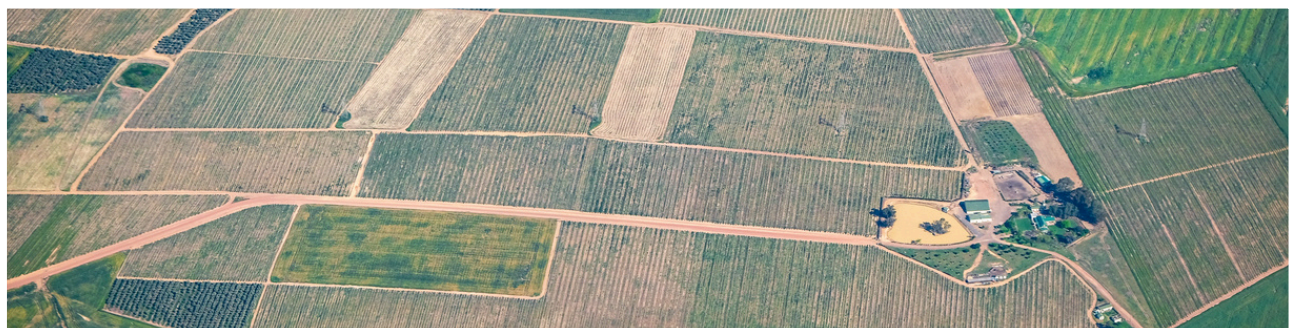
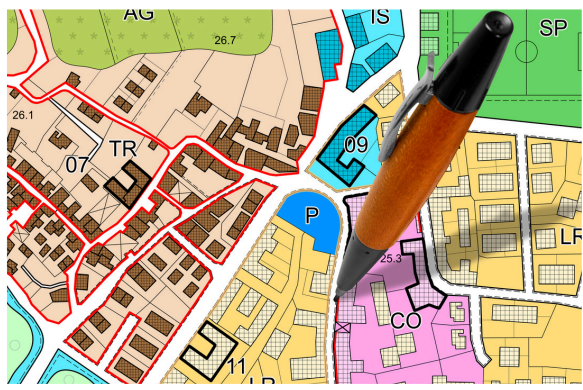
PRIORITY 1: PROTECTING FARMLAND AND FARMERS



The RDNO spans about 750,000 hectares, with 68,853 hectares in the ALR—primarily in valley bottoms where development pressure is highest. Since 2016, only 3.9 hectares have been excluded, reflecting strong support for farmland protection. Beyond the ALR, nearly 20,000 hectares are actively farmed, supporting jobs and contributing to 5.1% of regional employment (6.0% including food and beverage manufacturing). In 2021, 970 farms generated about \$182.2 million in operating revenue. These economic benefits to the region underscore the importance of protecting farmland through policies that limit non-agricultural development, reduce land-use conflicts, and ensure land remains available for agriculture.

Subthemes that emerged within the recommended actions in this priority include:

- Protecting the Farmland Base
- Strengthening the ALR: Non-ALR Edge
- Information Availability
- Taxation Tools and Incentives



Priority 1: Protecting Farmland and Farmers

Protecting the Farmland Base	Key Players	Resource Requirements & Potential Sources	Implementation Status
1.1 Protect current ALR boundaries as stable in planning documents, recognizing that amending the ALR boundary results in speculation, urban development pressure, and the reduction of agricultural activity on adjoining farmland.	Lead: RDNO, member municipalities Supporting: ALC, MoAF, MoTI	Requirements: Low to Moderate Staff time Source: RDNO, member municipalities	
1.2 (revised) Encourage the RAAC to review all North Okanagan ALR-related decisions on an annual basis to explore the cumulative impact of applications on the farmland base. These would include exclusion, inclusion, subdivision, non-farm use, and major urban development applications adjacent to the ALR. Forward these results to member municipalities for their information.	Lead: RDNO, member municipalities	Requirements: Low to Moderate Staff time Source: RDNO, member municipalities	2016 Priority that is done annually and will continue into the future.
1.3 (revised) Support the development of Home Plate standards (siting and size of residential uses) in the ALR. See the Ministry of Agriculture's Discussion Paper and Bylaw Standard (2011). Consider a regional approach for consistency.	Leads: RDNO, member municipalities Supporting: MoAF, ALC	Requirements: Low to Moderate (\$5,000 - \$10,000) Sources: RDNO	
Strengthening the ALR : Non-ALR Edge	Key Players	Resource Requirements & Potential Sources	Implementation Status
1.4 (revised) In collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and farmers, continue to educate and encourage farmers, non-farming neighbours and the general public to deal with issues of conflict using an issue-based approach.	Leads: RDNO, MoAF, member municipalities	Requirements: Moderate (\$10,000 - \$15,000) Sources: RDNO, member municipalities	In 2021, this action shifted from creating a Good Neighbour Policy to focusing on dispute resolution education, supported by an Agriculture in Your Community webpage featuring the Township of Spallumcheen's "Living in Agriculture" resource.

Priority 1: Protecting Farmland and Farmers

Strengthening the ALR : Non-ALR Edge	Key Players	Resource Requirements & Potential Sources	Implementation Status
1.5 (revised) Support the creation of a DPA for Farmland Protection in Fringe Areas/borders of municipalities with lands adjacent to the ALR. The DPA maps would identify ALR areas that may require buffering from non-farm land uses. Consider including buffers on land located adjacent to farms that are not in the ALR.	Leads: RDNO, member municipalities	Requirements: Moderate to high (>\$15,000) Sources: RDNO, member municipalities	
Information Availability	Key Players	Resource Requirements & Potential Sources	
1.6 (revised) Use the 2026 ALUI results and the most recent Agricultural Census data to update the baseline of agricultural information and State of the Region Indicators to continue to monitor and support the agricultural sector.	Lead: RDNO, MoAF Supporting: Member municipalities	Requirements: Moderate (\$15,000 - \$20,000) Sources: RDNO, member municipalities	
Taxation Tools and Incentives	Key Players	Resource Requirements & Potential Sources	Implementation Status
1.7 Encourage farmers and property owners leasing their land to farmers to apply for farm tax status through the BCAA. This will reduce the annual tax rate and create more affordability in land access.	Leads: RDNO Supporting: Real Estate Industry, MoAF, ALC	Requirements: Staff time (information session or factsheet or other communications piece).	2018 Priority- Staff worked with the RDNO Communicaitons Officer to include a "Did you Know" and general awareness campaign.

Priority 1: Protecting Farmland and Farmers

Information Availability	Key Players	Resource Requirements & Potential Sources	Implementation Status
1.8 Consider conducting a deeper level of investigation into how farmers wish to expand their operations in the next few years. This information will better help decision-makers plan for and facilitate changes to the local agricultural sector.	Leads: UBCO, Okanagan College Supporting: RDNO, ALC, MoAF	Requirements: Moderate. (\$15,000 - \$20,000) Possible summer student position. Sources: IAF, REF, other grants.	
Taxation Tools and Incentives	Key Players	Resource Requirements & Potential Sources	Implementation Status
1.9 (revised) Continue to advocate to the BCAA to consider whether the sale of value-added products could be included in determining primary production gross income. Currently, only the sale of raw farm products is included in income calculations, and this threshold is often too high for small farms to qualify for farm status for tax purposes.	Leads: MoAF, BCAA Supporting: RDNO	Requirements: Negligible	In 2018, BC Assessment Authority provided a presentation to RAAC on Farm Classification. A letter was sent to the Ministry of Agriculture and BC Assessment in February 2020 requesting a review and update to provincial legislation and farm tax class thresholds to further support farming in the region.

PRIORITY 2: MANAGING CLEAN, ACCESSIBLE, AND AFFORDABLE WATER

Farmers consistently identify irrigation access and seasonal water scarcity as major challenges, ranking among the top challenges in both 2015 and 2026. Concerns include water costs, access for new producers to water licenses, and on-farm storage, as summer demand continues to exceed historic annual averages. Climate change further reduces flows, efforts to expand reclaimed water use—currently about 10%—along with strategies such as on-farm storage, efficient irrigation, and drought-tolerant crops, can reduce pressure on water systems, but more will need to be done.

Ongoing research and on-farm tools will be required to support better water management, while broader regional planning efforts will require collaboration with the farming community.

Subthemes that emerged within the recommended actions in this priority include:

- Policies and strategies that support the management of water quality and quantity
- Innovative on-farm water use and conservation
- Water governance and agriculture

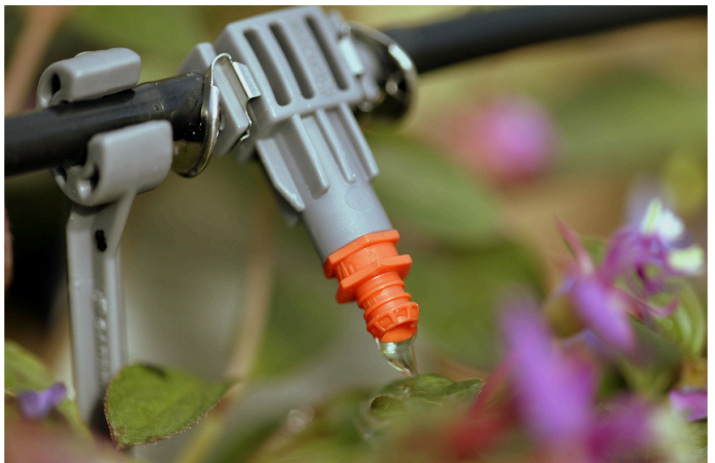


Priority 2: Managing clean, accessible, and affordable water

Policies and strategies that support management of water quality and quantity	Key Players	Funding Requirements and Sources	Implementation Status
2.1 Continue to support the implementation of actions outlined in the OBWB Okanagan Sustainable Water Strategy.	Lead: RDNO, member municipalities Supporting: OBWB	Requirements: Low to Significant Sources: OBWB, RDNO	
2.2 Collaborate with senior levels of government on coordinated solutions to surface and groundwater issues that may impact the agricultural sector, such as water quality, fisheries management, flooding, drainage and inter-basin water transfers.	Leads: RDNO, farmers Supporting: Fisheries and Oceans Canada, MoE, MoAF	Requirements: Low (<\$5,000) Staff time	
2.3 Continue to consider agricultural water supply and drainage needs, including irrigation and livestock watering, in all land use, surface water management, and groundwater management plans.	Leads: RDNO Supporting: member municipalities	Requirements: Negligible	
Innovative on-farm water use and conservation	Key Players	Funding Requirements and Sources	Implementation Status
2.4 (revised) Expand infrastructure and advocate for approvals for the use of non-potable water for farm activities.	Lead: RDNO, member municipalities, farmers Supporting: MoAF, agricultural supply industry	Requirements: Low (<\$5,000) Staff time Source: RDNO, water utilities	

Priority 2: Managing clean, accessible, and affordable water

Water governance and agriculture	Key Players	Funding Requirements and Sources	Implementation Status
2.5 Collaborate with the farming community to discuss water governance and rates. This could be done by hosting a forum to discuss water affordability within the current governance and rate structure.	Leads: Greater Vernon Water, other local water utilities, OBWB, farmers Supporters: RDNO, member municipalities	Requirements: Low to Moderate (\$10,000 - \$15,000)	
2.6 Continue to collaborate with the farming community to maintain access to adequate quantities of water at appropriate rates for farm operators.	Leads: Greater Vernon Water, other local water utilities, OBWB, farmers	Requirements: Low to Significant	

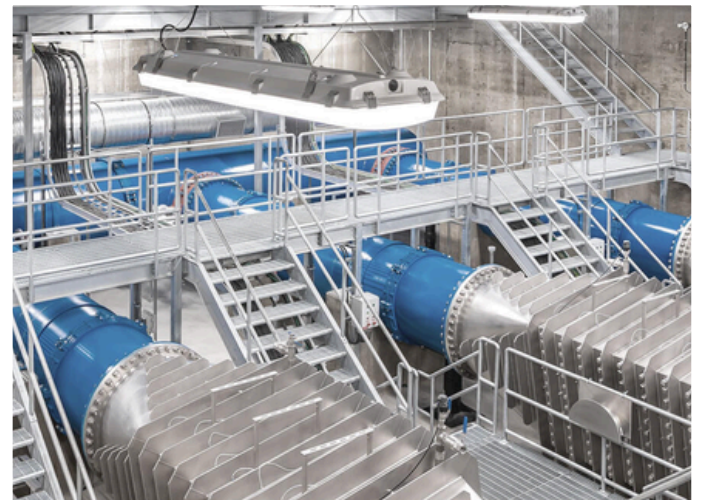


Priority 2: Managing clean, accessible, and affordable water

Policies and strategies that support management of water quality and quantity	Key Players	Funding Requirements and Sources	Implementation Status
2.7 (revised) Participate in the creation of Drought Management Plans, as the agriculture sector is a major component.	Lead: OBWB/Water Authorities Supporting: MoE, MoAF, farmers, RDNO, member municipalities, IHA	Requirements: Significant (> \$20,000) Sources: OBWB MoE, IHA, participating local governments	
Innovative on-farm water use and conservation	Key Players	Funding Requirements and Sources	Implementation Status
2.8 Review current groundwater inventory and mapping and assess potential opportunities for irrigation from aquifer sources.	Leads: OBWB, MoE, UBCO Supporting: member municipalities, RDNO, NRCan	Requirements: Significant (> \$20,000) Sources: MoE, OBWB	
2.9 (revised) Encourage farmers to participate in AgriService BC workshops on water efficiency (e.g., sprayer calibration workshops) and on-farm technology adoption programs.	Leads: Farmers, MoAF, AAFC Supporting: consultants	Requirements: Negligible	
2.10 (revised) Continue to support projects that improve water intake systems and storage of water. Encourage farm tours of producers who have successfully created on-farm water storage.	Leads: MoAF, MoE, CAI Supporting: RDNO, member municipalities agricultural supply industry	Requirements: Low (<\$5,000) In-kind staff support Sources: RDNO	
2.11 (revised) Promote the implementation of BMPs for irrigation and water conservation on farms through the EFP program and the Investment Agriculture Foundation. Advocate for making the EFP program mandatory.	Leads: MoE, MoAF, farmers Supporting: RDNO	Requirements: Negligible to Significant depending on the BMP Sources: MoAF	

Priority 2: Managing clean, accessible, and affordable water

Innovative on-farm water use and conservation	Key Players	Funding Requirements and Sources	Implementation Status
2.12 (revised) Encourage the use of the BC Irrigation Scheduling Calculator and AgriWeather Dashboard, as developed by the BC Ministry of Agriculture, and the AgConnect tool, as developed by Greater Vernon Water, to maximize water efficiency.	Leads: MoAF, farmers, GVW Supporting: RDNO	Requirements: Negligible	
2.13 Utilize programs, such as the EFP program, to assist with funding the construction of livestock exclusion fencing and ensuring healthy riparian buffer areas to protect surface water from manure runoff.	Leads: MoAF, farmers Supporting: RDNO	Requirements: Negligible to Significant depending on the size of the project Sources: ARDCorp, OBWB	



PRIORITY 3: ENCOURAGING SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES AND CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE

The North Okanagan is a highly productive agricultural region, with farmers committed to sustainable practices and residents supportive of continued environmental improvements. While agriculture will need to continue contributing to reducing emissions, it shares this responsibility with all sectors, and the RDNO will work with senior governments on climate strategies.

As the impacts of climate change are felt, farmers face challenges such as high irrigation needs, difficult soils and invasive species. Climate change is expected to increase risks, such as drought, underscoring the importance of emergency preparedness and local food resilience. Programs like the Environmental Farm Plan help farmers adopt sustainable technologies through financial incentives and encourage the adoption of best management practices, which can help reduce these risks and improve resource efficiency.

Subthemes that emerged within the recommended actions in this priority include:

- Climate change adaptation and emergency planning
- Implementation of sustainable farm practices and technologies
- Wildlife and livestock interaction management
- Control of invasive species and mitigation of their effects



INCREASED
**HEAT
STRESS**



INCREASED RISK OF
FLOODING



INCREASED RISK OF
WILDFIRE



INCREASED RISK
OF MORE
**EXTREME
WEATHER**



INCREASED
RISK
TO VULNERABLE
PEOPLE



SHIFTING
ECOSYSTEMS

Priority 3: Encouraging sustainable agricultural practices and climate change resilience

Climate change adaptation and emergency planning	Key Players	Funding Requirements and Sources	Implementation Status
3.1 (revised) Create awareness and support implementation of the <i>Environment and Climate Regional Guidebook for the Okanagan</i> , prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food.	Leads: RDNO, member municipalities, OBWB, farmers Supporting: MoAF, BC Emergency Response	Requirements: Low to Moderate Sources: MoAF, CAI, IAF, OBWB	
3.2 Collaborate with the Ministry of Agriculture on a pilot project that would develop site-specific climate change mitigation plans for individual farms.	Leads: RDNO, CAI, farmers Supporting: MoAF, BC Emergency Response	Requirements: High (>\$20,000) Sources: CAI, MoAF, RDNO	
3.3 Assist in producer education around climate change adaptation by hosting discussions and workshops on: crop tolerance to drought, crops suited to regional climate and water availability, insurance, integrated management of pests and disease, habitat for pollinators, re-introduction of native grasses for pasturing, and using technologies that protect crops from weather damage.	Leads: RDNO, CAI, member municipalities Supporting: MoAF, UBC Okanagan, Okanagan College	Requirements: Low to Moderate (\$5,000 - \$10,000) Sources: MoAF, CAI	
3.4 (revised) Ensure that agriculture is integrated into regional emergency preparedness, response, and recovery plans, with specific attention to mass carcass disposal and animal relocation during emergency events.	Leads: RDNO, CAI, member municipalities, groundwater representative(s) Supporting: MoAF	Requirements: Moderate to High (\$15,000 - >\$20,000) Sources: MoAF, RDNO, CAI	

Priority 3: Encouraging sustainable agricultural practices and climate change resilience

Implementation of sustainable farm practices and technologies	Key Players	Funding Requirements and Sources	Implementation Status
3.5 Support the health of pollinators through habitat preservation, wetland restoration, water retention, and adoption of agro-ecological principles. E.g. distribution of bee nest boxes and the planting of wildflowers in public parks and other public spaces.	Lead: RDNO, member municipalities Supporting: local food organizations, public	Requirements: Low – Moderate (\$5,000 – \$15,000)	
Wildlife and livestock interaction management	Key Players	Funding Requirements and Sources	
3.6 Participate in initiatives to seek management solutions to work with and or deter wildlife (e.g., bighorn sheep, coyotes, bears, deer, starlings) from damaging crops and livestock and spreading diseases.	Leads: RDNO, MoE, MoAF, OCCP, OSS, and member munis Supporting: SPCA, Bear Aware, EFP program	Requirements: Will depend on initiatives Sources: MoE, ARDCorp, IAF, non-profit grants	
Control of invasive species and mitigation of their effects	Key Players	Funding Requirements and Sources	
3.7 (revised) Continue to support the reduction of invasive species and noxious weeds through grants from the North Okanagan Conservation Fund and the Invasive Species Council of BC. Collaborate with the agricultural community to identify high-priority areas.	Leads: RDNO, farmers Supporting: MoE, MoAF, member municipalities	Requirements: Staff time (bylaw enforcement)	The RDNO continues to provide funding to the Invasive Species Council of BC's Action teams to protect and restore the region's landscapes from invasive species.

Priority 3: Encouraging sustainable agricultural practices and climate change resilience

Implementation of sustainable farm practices and technologies	Key Players	Funding Requirements and Sources	Implementaiton Status
3.8 (revised) Encourage farmers to participate in the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) Program, which is voluntary, confidential, and free. This program identifies opportunities to adapt and respond to emerging environmental, regenerative agriculture, and climate challenges and changing environmental conditions. At the same time, efforts to identify and implement emission reductions or carbon sequestration on farms would help improve the community's natural environment and emission reduction targets.	Lead: MoAF, ARDCorp, farmers Supporting: RDNO, member municipalities	Requirements: Low Sources: MoAF, ARDCorp	Presentation was made to RAAC by Peter Spencer from the Environmental Farm Plan Program, and a Letter was sent from the RDNO to the Ministry of Agriculture and BC Agriculture Research and Development Corp requesting additional funds be put toward EFP implementation.
3.9 Develop a food system and agriculture speaker series at Okanagan College, with a focus on topical issues on food and the environment.	Lead: post-secondary institutions, farmers Supporting: local food organizations, Land to Table Network, and public	Requirements: Variable, depending on the length and depth of the speaker series. Sources: post-secondary institutions	
Wildlife and livestock interaction management	Key Players	Funding Requirements and Sources	Implementation Status
3.10 Distribute research and other information on current ungulate migratory pathways and wildlife corridors regionally. Include strategies to reduce livestock interactions with wildlife. The MoE and the IAF have many publications available on these topics.	Leads: OCCP Supporting: IAF, MoE	Requirements: Low (< \$5,000) Sources: MoE, IAF	
3.11 Communicate information to farmers about the provincial crop insurance program.	Lead: MoAF, farmers Supporting: RDNO, member municipalities	Requirements: Low Sources: MoAF	

Priority 3: Encouraging sustainable agricultural practices and climate change resilience

Control of invasive species and mitigation of their effects	Key Players	Funding Requirements and Sources	Implementation Status
3.12 (<i>revised</i>) Encourage coordination between MoE, MOTI, FLNRO, AGRI, Department of National Defence and member municipalities to manage noxious weeds on Crown range land and public properties. This will help ensure the long-term availability of farmland.	Leads: MoAF, MoE, FLNRO, MoTI Supporting: farmers, RDNO	Requirements: Low Sources: MoAF	

PRIORITY 4: STRENGTHENING THE LOCAL AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY



North Okanagan farmers produce a wide range of crops and livestock, including fruit, vegetables, grapes, ground crops, beef, poultry and dairy. Despite \$182 million in farm receipts (2021), much of this revenue leaves the region for processing, aggregation and distribution. Over \$300 million is spent annually on food within the region, highlighting an opportunity to retain more local dollars. Although farm profitability has increased slightly (from 11% in 2011 to 12% in 2021), margins remain tight, limiting expansion and investment in efficiency.

Efforts to improve food system connectivity have seen some success, but financial, administrative, and regulatory barriers remain. Reducing provincial and federal regulatory hurdles would help farmers bring products to market more easily. Supporting both new and existing farms is key to strengthening the sector and enabling economies of scale. Initiatives like the Food Shed (as developed by Land to Table Network Society) are improving distribution by connecting producers with community organizations, though many small-scale growers still lack the volume for consistent retail or export markets. Meanwhile, much of the region's dairy production is exported, highlighting the need for more local processing and value-added opportunities. Overall, there is strong support for further localizing and strengthening the regional food system.

Subthemes that emerged within the recommended actions in this priority include:

- Economic viability of local operations
- Regional marketing opportunities
- Creation, distribution, and sales of value-added farm products



PRIORITY 4: STRENGTHENING THE LOCAL AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY

It has been acknowledged that collaboration is required to assist producers in improving regional sector viability. Innovation enhances profitability and allows farmers to develop entrepreneurial ideas, gain useful marketing and business management skills, and access capital.

In 2022, the Township of Spallumcheen initiated a feasibility study and Business Case Assessment for a Regional Agricultural Support Area. A multitude of socio-economic benefits were identified for the region, if this collective vision were successful, including economic growth, job creation, community well-being and environmental sustainability. The first tenant of this site, the North Okanagan Butcher Hub, became operational in 2025, providing a much-needed service to the region's livestock producers. There is continued interest in supporting additional processing facilities at this location, including processing for Dairy, Poultry, Cold Storage, and a Community Commercial Kitchen & Community Food Storage/Distribution.

Additional agri-economic development strategies for specific sectors would provide clear, well-supported direction for local agricultural enterprises and attract innovative business models tailored to RDNO's specific situation, needs, and values.



sncəməłqtn Agricultural Park



Priority 4: Strengthening the Local Agricultural Economy

Economic viability of local operations	Key Players	Resource Requirements & Sources	Implementation Status
4.1 (<i>revised</i>) Continue to support the objectives of the Regional Employment Lands Action Plan that align with the intent of the Regional Agricultural Plan.	Leads: RDNO, member municipalities	Requirements: Staff time Sources: RDNO	
4.2 (new) Advocate with the support of member municipalities for a review and modernization of agricultural regulations by engaging provincial and federal policy makers. The current framework is burdensome and adds costs and delays to innovation and the expansion of agricultural operations. Look to other countries where agriculture thrives, for example, the Netherlands.	Leads: RDNO Supporting: MoAF, CFIA, IHA	Requirements: Staff time Sources: RDNO, Provincial and Federal staff	
4.3 (new) Support community and regional food planning by developing policies that increase local food procurement, support local food events, and increase capacity of the agri-food value chain. This could include an asset-mapping project.	Leads: RDNO, member municipalities	Requirements: Staff time Sources: RDNO	Land to Table (L2T) has begun discussions on local food procurement, identifying key challenges such as tight cost margins, centralized vendor requirements, and the need for consistent supply volumes. L2T will continue exploring opportunities but sees greater potential at smaller institutions (e.g., cafeterias, seniors' centres) that bypass intermediaries. L2T remains committed to expanding local food access and, in 2021, partnered with UBCO on a project that successfully increased direct sourcing from local farmers. The Food Shed initiative is another current example of connecting local food affordability programs, food services (caterers, institutions, restaurants), and retail outlets.

Priority 4: Strengthening the Local Agricultural Economy

Creation, distribution, and sales of value-added farm products	Key Players	Resource Requirements &	Implementation Status
4.4 (revised) Continue to support opportunities to develop or expand processing infrastructure within the region, including packing, sorting, processing and cold storage. Efforts should focus this infrastructure on the Regional Agricultural Support Area site, as it would connect agricultural sectors and bring the industry together, capitalizing on economies of scale for aggregation and supporting locally grown food.	Leads: Producer groups (KODA, etc.), RDNO Supporting: MoAF	Requirements: Staff time	A “Support Food Processors” working group was established through the Growing the Local Food Economy forum in 2018. The group consisted mostly of small to medium-scale food processors for a variety of food products. The Land to Table Network Society continues to support and receive funding from the RDNO for The Food Shed initiative (aggregation and distribution of local food).
4.5 (revised) Continue working with local farmers, agricultural operators, senior levels of government, member municipalities, and IHA on solutions that would facilitate and lessen the regulatory burden for local food processing.	Leads: RDNO, member municipalities, IHA, ALC, MoAF	Requirements: Staff time	In 2020, RDNO contributed \$10,000 to partner with Community Futures on the REACH agricultural business accelerator. In October 2021, the Province introduced modernized inspection categories, transitioning Class D and E slaughter licences to Farmgate and Farmgate Plus. In March 2022 and 2023, the committee supported RDNO’s role in developing the Regional Agri-hub Planning process, aligning with Action 4.4 to expand local food processing.
4.6 (new) Support and promote farm retail sales and farm stands, ensuring OCP and Zoning Bylaw standards permit this use.	Leads: RDNO, member municipalities, IHA, ALC, MoAF		



Priority 4: Strengthening the Local Agricultural Economy

Economic viability of local operations	Key Players	Resource Requirements & Sources	Implementation Status
4.7 Continue to support efforts by the City of Vernon's Economic Development Department to explore opportunities to promote agricultural business development and initiatives through economic development planning, including the identification of funding opportunities.	Leads: City of Vernon	Requirements: Staff time Sources: CoV/RDNO	
4.8 Host a skills and knowledge-building workshop series to discuss successful farm business models. Include topics such as winter business models, becoming wholesale-ready, food processing and value-added, marketing boards, small-scale alternative renewable energy projects, agroforestry, production quotas, and food safety.	Leads: Community Futures, and other agri-organizations Support: RDNO, MoAF	Requirements: Moderate (\$5,000 - \$10,000) Sources: Non-profit grants	
4.9 (revised) Work with industry associations and economic development groups to increase the market for regionally grown agricultural products.	Leads: Farmers, Community Futures, Land To Table Network Society Support: RDNO (RAAC)	Requirements: Staff time	

Priority 4: Strengthening the Local Agricultural Economy

Economic viability of local operations	Key Players	Resource Requirements & Sources	Implementation Status
4.10 (revised) Support the adoption of online software systems and the work of local organizations that connect producers to food retailers and wholesalers to improve communication and ease of ordering, logistics, locating local products, direct purchasing connections, and the number of business relationships with regional producers.	Leads: Regional producers, Retailers, wholesalers, chefs Supporting: Farmers	Requirements: Moderate (\$10,000 - \$15,000) Sources: IAF, local economic development organizations	
4.11 Build upon online and print resources that showcase regional farmers and food businesses, as well as maps of local food restaurants, farm tours, wineries, breweries, and cheese-makers, among others. Currently, several directories overlap in their listings, but many are not kept up to date, and others are incomplete. One streamlined local food guide or directory, similar to what is produced in the Comox Valley, would assist not only the public but also farmers to get to know what types of activities are occurring in their area and potentially create opportunities for collaboration and cooperation.	Leads: Vernon Tourism, Okanagan and Shuswap Chefs Association. Supporting: RDNO, Member municipalities, BCAFM, Community Futures	Requirements: Moderate (\$10,000) Requires ongoing maintenance and renewal. Sources: Advertisers, Tourism BC, REF	

Priority 4: Strengthening the Local Agricultural Economy

Regional marketing opportunities	Key Players	Resource Requirements & Sources	Implementation Status
4.12 (revised) Work with the community and province in the development of a common local identity, logo, or brand that can be used to highlight North Okanagan farms and products, or the Okanagan as a whole, differentiating them from other regions.	Leads: EDC, Farmers Institutes, BC Tourism Supporting: BCAFM, CSR	Requirements: Moderate (\$10,000 - \$15,000) Sources: IAF, RDN, graphic designer in-kind, other grants	
4.13 (revised) Support opportunities for year-round indoor farmers' markets or storefronts with regular hours.	Leads: BCAFM, farmers, development community Supporting: RDNO, member municipalities	Requirements: Significant (> \$20,000) Cost will depend on location and management model. Sources: Vendor fees, grants, credit unions	
4.14 (revised) Explore additional partnership opportunities to further promote North Okanagan agri-tourism, including enhanced promotion of local initiatives.	Leads: City of Vernon, Shuswap Tourism Supporting: RDNO, Vernon Tourism, BC Tourism	Requirements: Moderate to Significant (\$15,000 - \$20,000) Sources: BC Tourism, farmers (in-kind), BCAFm (in-kind), chamber of commerce, local media.	

Priority 4: Strengthening the Local Agricultural Economy

Creation, distribution, and sales of value-added farm products	Key Players	Resource Requirements & Sources	Implementation Status
4.15 Facilitate connections between local farmers and organizations such as the Small Scale Food Processors Association, small scale meat processing, and existing cold storage facilities.	Leads: Farmers and agri-organizations Support: SSFPA	Requirements: Negligible	
4.16 Encourage producers to build upon the success of existing production of niche and specialty products to create collaborative marketing opportunities both within and external to the region.	Leads: Farm businesses, processing agencies	Requirements: Negligible	
4.17 Support and improve other Shuswap and Okanagan farmer-owned brokerage firms or co-ops to: - Co-ordinate production and on-stream timing, - Provide a central order desk for local retailers, - Provide information about sources of supply and on-farm markets, - Co-ordinate transportation of inputs and goods for sale - Facilitate connections between local farmers and chefs to increase the amount of local food offered in restaurants, cafeterias, schools, etc. and to help farmers plan what and how much to grow of various crops in order to meet demand.	Leads: Farmers, Retailers, Distribution companies, L2T Supporting: RDNO	Requirements: Depends on how the program is carried out. Could be low – moderate. Sources: Co-op Assoc. of BC, Farmers Institutes (in-kind)	
4.18 Identify potential mechanisms by which farming workshops, demonstrations, and educational courses can be offered on a regular basis, including possible collaboration with academic institutions.	Lead: IHA, academic institutes, farmers, RDNO Supporting: MoAF,	Requirements: Negligible	

Priority 4: Strengthening the Local Agricultural Economy

Economic viability of local operations	Key Players	Resource Requirements & Sources	Implementation Status
4.19 Actively facilitate connections between producers who need skilled labour and existing employment programs (e.g. agri-labour pool; student summer job program; Step-Up; and SOIL apprenticeships). Specifically highlighting opportunities for small-scale farms to access labour on a temporary basis (shared employees).	Leads: MoAF, Service Canada, farmers Support: Post secondary institutes, employment service organizations	Requirements: Low (<\$5,000) These programs exist - it is just a matter of connecting producers to them. Sources: MoAF (in kind), Service Canada	Community Futures plays a key role in linking farm operators with employees. There are a number of Labour and Hiring Programs to support farmers and other major economic sectors within the region. Joy Magnell, Employment Advisor, Community Futures, presented at the May 6, 2021, RAAC meeting on the various programs and online opportunities that are currently available. eg. WorkBC and Futuresbc Business Programs.

PRIORITY 5: ENSURING FARMLAND AVAILABILITY FOR EMERGING AND MULTIGENERATIONAL FARMERS

The cost of farmland in most regions of BC is prohibitive: not only for new farmers but also for those who are taking over longstanding family farm businesses. Whether a producer is just starting out or coming from a long family history of farming, the question of whether and how to obtain land is challenging. While most of the North Okanagan's ALR lands (and some farmland outside the ALR) have been cleared, large capital costs may still be required to convert or prepare land to be productive. Sometimes a family's younger generation of farmers may decide to switch crop varieties, upgrade equipment, or modernize practices. These activities all entail investment costs. With appropriate policies and community initiatives in place, some of the burden of accessing land can be alleviated.

Subthemes that emerged within the recommended actions in this priority include:

- Farmland access options
- Succession planning
- Alternative land access options



Priority 5: Ensuring farmland availability for emerging and multigenerational farmers

Farmland access options	Key Players	Funding Requirements and Sources	Implementation Status
5.1 (new) Create awareness for new farmers and landholders about legal, collaborative, trust-based models that counter high land costs and ensure long-term tenure. This can include Farmland Trusts & Stewardship, promotion of land-matching programs, and community farm models.	Lead: RDNO, member municipalities Supporting: MoAF, ALC	Requirements: Low Sources: RDNO	
Alternative Land access options	Key Players	Funding Requirements and Sources	Implementation Status
5.2 Consider putting publicly-owned ALR properties into a Regional Farmland Trust or Agricultural Parks for new and emerging farmers, a community allotment gardening program, an incubator farm program, or an agricultural demonstration site.	Leads: RDNO, Member municipalities	Requirements: Low to Significant	

Priority 5: Ensuring farmland availability for emerging and multigenerational farmers

Farmland access options	Key Players	Funding Requirements and Sources	Implementation Status
5.3 Continue to create and share resources such as farmland access agreement reports and decision-making guides. Share links to the resources on local government websites.	Lead: Young Agrarians, Farm Folk / City Folk Supporting: RDNO, member municipalities	Requirements: Low (\$5,000 - \$10,000) Sources: non-profit grants	
5.4 Provide leadership regarding the distribution of information on financing options. This may include hosting events to share examples of successful farm business plans, grant or loan applications, or alternative financing opportunities.	Lead: Community Futures, Real Estate Industry, lending agencies Supporting: Young Agrarians, MoAF	Requirements: Moderate (\$10,000) Sources: IAF, REF	
5.5 Encourage realtors to become more knowledgeable regarding farmland access types.	Leads: Real estate industry	Requirements: Negligible	
Succession planning	Key Players	Funding Requirements and Sources	
5.6 Provide access to research and information regarding alternative business arrangements such as stratas, cooperatives, and corporations and alternative land ownership/tenure models. These may assist families in succession planning.	Leads: Young Agrarians, MoAF Supporting: RDNO, member municipalities, farmers	Requirements: Low (< \$5,000) Sources: REF	

Priority 5: Ensuring farmland availability for emerging and multigenerational farmers

Alternative land access options	Key Players	Funding Requirements and Sources	
5.7 Continue to update and promote land-linking and mentorship programs to match land with people who want to farm.	Leads: Young Agrarians Supporting: RDNO, member municipalities, realtors	Requirements: Low (<\$5,000) Sources: various NGO funding	
5.8 Offer assistance and workshops on options for family farm succession planning. This may include fostering a mentorship program for those without anyone to pass the farm to within the family.	Leads: MoAF, ALC, Growing Forward Supporting: RDNO, member municipalities, realtors	Requirements: Moderate (\$10,000 to \$15,000) Sources: ARDCorp, FIRB	
5.9 Support apprenticeships, mentorships, incubator farms, and other farm-based employment programs. This could include: industry-based training programs (e.g. for dairy technicians); Step-Up - a federal mentoring program; and Okanagan College's Culinary Arts Program. This will assist new/emerging farmers to gain experience prior to renting or purchasing land.	Leads: Community Futures, post-secondary institutions, Young Agrarians, ag industry, AAFC Supporting: farmers, Farm Folk / City Folk, RDNO, member municipalities,	Requirements: Low (<\$5,000) In-kind staff support. Established programs are self-funded. Sources: SIDIT, Western Diversification,	

PRIORITY 6: CREATING SUPPORTIVE GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

Local governments regulate land use under the Community Charter and Local Government Act, including zoning and subdivision powers. RDNO growth management plans and Official Community Plans recognize agriculture as essential to the region's landscape, identity, and economy. Zoning bylaws influence agricultural land through parcel sizes, building limits, setbacks, secondary dwellings, and subdivision rules. Together, these policies support preserving agricultural land, strengthening the rural economy, and promoting a diverse, resilient local food system.



Agricultural activity is governed by multiple federal, provincial, regional, and municipal authorities through various laws, regulations, and bylaws, many of which fall outside local government control in BC. Some government policies and regulations still challenge farmers, making it important to understand how they interact.

The Regional Agricultural Plan provides guidance to support local and regional planning, helping clarify jurisdictional roles and identify actions that local governments can lead and those that require broader collaboration.

Subthemes that emerge within the recommended actions in this theme include:

- Policy and Plan Updates
- Subdivision and Zoning Considerations
- Availability of Local and Regional Support



Priority 6: Creating Supportive Government Policies and Regulations

Policy and Plan Updates	Key Players	Funding Requirements & Sources	Implementation Status
6.1 Ensure that planning documents (OCPs, neighbourhood plans, infrastructure plans, etc.) clearly state support for the ALR and recognize agricultural uses as the highest priority for those lands.	Lead: RDNO, member municipalities	Requirements: Staff time	
6.2 (new) Enhance compliance and enforcement for farmland protection.	Lead: RDNO, ALC Compliance and Enforcement Officers	Requirements: Staff time Sources: RDNO, member municipalities	
6.3 (new) Review local planning and regulatory bylaws, such as the OCP and Zoning bylaws, to ensure agriculture is clearly supported and aligns with existing provincial and federal regulations.	Leads: RDNO, member municipalities	Requirements: Staff time Sources: RDNO, member municipalities	
Subdivision and Zoning Considerations	Key Players	Funding Requirements & Sources	Implementation Status
6.4 Examine the feasibility of identifying “urban agriculture” as an allowed activity within town centres and on rural residential land and perhaps even within greenspaces and parklands. This scale of food production will help to support a healthy pollinator population and raise awareness regarding what’s in season locally.	Lead: RDNO, member municipalities	Requirements: Staff time	Member municipalities strongly support this action, have supporting policies in their OCPs, and are willing to partner on the feasibility and coordination of such work.

Priority 6: Creating Supportive Government Policies and Regulations

Subdivision and Zoning Considerations	Key Players	Funding Requirements & Sources	Implementation Status
6.5 Consider updating Schedule E “Signage Provisions” of the RDNO Zoning Bylaw (No. 1888, 2003) to specifically allow for signs advertising farm properties, agricultural areas, farm traffic, directional signage to farmers markets and agritourism.	Lead: MoTi, RDNO, Member municipalities Supporting: BC Tourism, BCAFM	Requirements: Low to Moderate (\$5,000 - \$15,000)	
Availability of Local and Regional Support	Key Players	Funding Requirements & Sources	Implementation Status
6.6 Identify current on-farm or near-farm housing options for farmers and farm labourers. This would be an initial first step in a longer process to establish more affordable on-farm farm worker housing that does not compromise the agricultural productivity and integrity of farms. Examples: - Ministry of Agriculture’s “Regulating temporary farm worker housing in the ALR: Discussion paper and standards” - Farm Worker Housing Policy Review, Community Social Planning Council BC	Leads: RDNO, member municipalities Supporting: Local agricultural and labour organizations, ALC	Requirements: Moderate to Significant (\$15,000 - \$20,000) Sources: RDNO, MoAF, IAF and other grant agencies.	
6.7 (revised) Collaborate with other Regional Districts and industry associations in the Southern Interior on solutions to agricultural sector issues of mutual concern.	Lead: RDNO Supporting: Other regional districts	Requirements: Staff time	In 2022 and 2026, staff and committee members participated in the Provincial AAC workshops. Staff have previously been in touch with Ag Committees in the valley; however, the areas of interest have not always aligned. Staff have a list of active AACs within the Okanagan and will reach out when topics of mutual interest and concern are identified.

PRIORITY 7: RAISING AWARENESS THROUGH EDUCATION AND CELEBRATION OF AGRICULTURE

Raising awareness through education and the celebration of agriculture is essential for building a more informed, resilient, and sustainable society. Education helps people understand where their food comes from, the challenges farmers face, and the importance of responsible land and resource management. By integrating agricultural knowledge into schools, community programs, and public campaigns, individuals become more connected to the food system and more supportive of local producers. Celebrating agriculture—through events, festivals, and recognition of farmers—further strengthens this connection by highlighting the cultural, economic, and environmental value of farming. The continued promotion and popularity of events like the Armstrong IPE demonstrate strong public interest in engaging with and celebrating agriculture. Together, education and celebration inspire appreciation, encourage innovation, and promote practices that ensure food security and environmental stewardship for future generations.

Subthemes that emerge within the recommended actions in this theme include:

- Education occasions for the public
- Agritourism opportunities at the farm level
- Agricultural events and showcases at the community level



Priority 7: Raising awareness through education and celebration of agriculture

Agritourism opportunities at the farm level	Key Players	Funding Requirements and Sources	Implementation Status
7.1 Share success stories from those who have experience in agri-tourism (U-picks, culinary events, farm tours) with other farmers who are interested.	Leads: Tourism Vernon, farmers, RDNO (RAAC) Supporting: MoAF	Requirements: Low (< \$5,000) Sources: RDNO	
Agricultural events and showcases at the staff and community level	Key Players	Funding Requirements and Sources	
7.2 Provide agricultural learning opportunities for the RDNO Board, RAAC and Staff members. Including an annual farm tour and updates to the Board from RAAC.	Lead: RDNO Supporting: Other regional districts	Requirements: Low	
7.3 Build upon the active mural culture of the North Okanagan to further celebrate local agriculture by including farming as a theme on street art (e.g. murals, lamppost banners).	Leads: RDNO, member municipalities, School Districts, local art community	Requirements: Significant (> \$20,000) Sources: RDNO, member municipalities	
7.4 (revised) Explore the possibility of creating an interpretive trail adjacent to farmland and the Rail Trail that includes archival photos, and facts about the local agricultural sector.	Leads: Historical organizations, RDNO, member municipalities Supporting: agricultural organizations, farmers	Requirements: Significant (> \$20,000) Sources: RDNO, member municipalities	

Priority 7: Raising awareness through education and celebration of agriculture

Education occasions for the public	Key Players	Funding Requirements and Sources	Implementation Status
7.5 Facilitate linkages between secondary and post secondary curriculum and programs and regional farming interests such as culinary programs that demonstrate how to source locally.	Lead: Young Agrarians, Farm Folk / City Folk, post-secondary institutions, Land to Table Network Society Supporting: School Districts 22 & 83	Requirements: Low	
7.6 Increase communication of research needs between farmers, academia, and government research stations.	Lead: Farmers, agricultural organizations Supporting: UBC Okanagan, Okanagan College, other academic institutions	Requirements: Low	
7.7 Assist in education around climate change mitigation and adaptation, and agriculture by making connections between the research community and the farming community.	Leads: post-secondary institutions, OBWB, CAI, MoAF Supporting: Farmers, ag-industry	Requirements: Low to Moderate (\$10,000 - \$15,000) Sources: MoAF, CAI	
7.8 Continue to assist with the promotion of agricultural events and festivals in the RDNO (e.g. farmers markets, the IPE).	Leads: Tourism Vernon, Tourism BC, RDNO, IPE Support: member municipalities	Requirements: Low (if simply assisting to advertise other events) – Moderate (if hosting new events). Sources: Chamber of commerce, Tourism Vernon.	

Priority 7: Raising awareness through education and celebration of agriculture

Agricultural events and showcases at the community level	Key Players	Funding Requirements and Sources	Implementaiton Status
7.9 Consider developing a regional agri-tourism strategy	Lead: Farmers, City of Vernon, Tourism Vernon, RDNO, Chamber of Commerce Supporting: MoAF, ALR	Requirements: Moderate to Significant (\$15,000 to \$25,000) Sources: Tourism BC, IAF	The Land to Table Coordinator met with Tourism Vernon on this initiative. The City had a good handle on the producers/processors within the North Okanagan who are open to the public. They have specific criteria and vetting requirements that must be met before they will include someone in their brochure. Local producers/processors are to get in touch with Tourism Vernon directly if they have experiences to offer.



CONCLUSION

Those involved in agriculture and food production in the North Okanagan are passionate people. Farmers are keen to see barriers removed so that their livelihoods can be enhanced and made more economically viable, and at the same time, consumers are interested in obtaining more of their food from local sources. All are deeply concerned about building resilience to climate events and water shortages. The vision, priorities, goals, and recommended implementation actions outlined in this Regional Agricultural Plan are all derived from community engagement.

The development of a Regional Agricultural Plan for the North Okanagan fulfills, in part, a region-wide commitment set forth in the Regional Growth Strategy to preserve and strengthen the rural economy and increase the viability and productivity of farmland and food production. The Regional Agricultural Plan will provide all members of the food-producing community in the North Okanagan, along with elected officials, staff, and other leading agencies in the region, with a strong vision and directive to increase food production and enhance the livelihoods of those involved in agriculture.

