



**For immediate release
September 24, 2018**

Agricultural Plan for the Squamish Valley to move ahead following successful grant application by SLRD Electoral Area D and the District of Squamish

Funding from Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC builds on recently completed Squamish Valley Agricultural Land Use Inventory

Squamish, BC – An Agricultural Plan for the Squamish Valley will be developed in partnership with the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (SLRD) and District of Squamish (DOS), thanks to \$30,000 in federal and provincial government funding from the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC. The Agricultural Plan will build on the work and findings of the Squamish Valley Agricultural Land Use Inventory (ALUI) completed in 2017. The project is slated to get underway this fall and is targeted for completion early in 2020.

The SLRD and DOS will match the funds with \$15,000 each as well as in-kind support. The Squamish Valley Agricultural Plan will encompass the Upper Squamish Valley (Electoral Area D) and the District of Squamish municipal area, including Paradise Valley.

Protecting the agricultural land base and bringing it into production are key issues and opportunities to be addressed in the Agricultural Plan, given that only four per cent of all parcels within this area's Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) is currently used for farming. The 2017 ALUI clearly illustrates the agricultural potential of the Squamish Valley. The study also revealed that the majority of the effective ALR land within the planning area is in a natural or semi-natural state.

The Agricultural Plan will explore ways to assist local governments, First Nations, industry, community organizations and other stakeholders to: address existing and developing issues; encourage the emerging agri-food sector to capture opportunities; create a sustainable plan for agriculture; and establish a workable implementation strategy to further goals and opportunities in the plan.

The need for a Squamish Valley Agricultural Plan was first identified by DOS in 2013, and was further supported through two 'deep-dive' community engagement sessions focused on food systems, co-hosted by DOS and the Squamish Food Policy Council. The Squamish Food Policy Council continues to be a passionate champion for local agriculture, and will lend its expertise and support throughout the agricultural planning process.

The development of a Squamish Valley Agricultural Plan is in line with local and regional plan policy directives supporting resilient and healthy communities, as outlined in the Squamish2040 Official Community Plan, SLRD Electoral Area D Official Community Plan, and the SLRD Regional Growth Strategy, which is currently being updated to include chapters on Food Systems and Climate Action to highlight the importance of a strong local agriculture/food system.

A steering committee will be formed to guide the planning process. More information about the process and kick-off events will be released later in the fall. In the meantime, information about the project, including a link to the ALUI is online at www.slrd.bc.ca/SquamishValleyAgPlan.

This Agricultural Plan project is being funded in part by the governments of Canada and British Columbia through programs delivered by the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC.

Quotes:

“This funding will really help us capitalize on the momentum of our joint efforts to date, and we thank our federal and provincial partners for their contribution. These efforts will directly impact our collective long-term health and economic sustainability by strengthening local agriculture and increasing productivity of and access to our foodlands.” - **Patricia Heintzman, Mayor, District of Squamish**

“The Investment Agriculture Foundation is proud to help the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District explore its agricultural potential through the Squamish Valley Agriculture Plan. We developed the Agricultural Area Planning Program to help communities protect and improve their local food systems in municipalities and regional districts around BC.” - **Jack DeWit, Board Chair, Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC**

“We are excited to embark on this collaborative planning process, which will not only strengthen our local agriculture sector, but will also diversify our regional economy and support healthier communities throughout the region. We thank the members of the Squamish Food Policy Council for their passion and dedication, and the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC for its generous financial support.” – **Jack Crompton, Board Chair, Squamish-Lillooet Regional District**

“Completing the Agriculture Land Use Inventory and working towards the Agriculture Plan will be an important step towards strengthening and supporting food and farms in Squamish. We are thrilled about collaboration between the Squamish Food Policy Council, District of Squamish, Squamish Lillooet Regional District and the Ministry of Agriculture. These efforts will bring many opportunities for our community members.” – **Michalina Hunter and Krystle tenBrink, Food Project Managers, Squamish Food Policy Council**

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