

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY

Higher Valued Crops Production

Comox Valley, British Columbia, Canada



This investment opportunity is based on the growing interest in improved local food self-sufficiency.

Vancouver Island produces only 10.9% of the food consumed; 89.1% is transported/ imported from other areas. The Comox Valley produces about 16% of the food consumed locally but has the land, water and climate to increase this significantly.

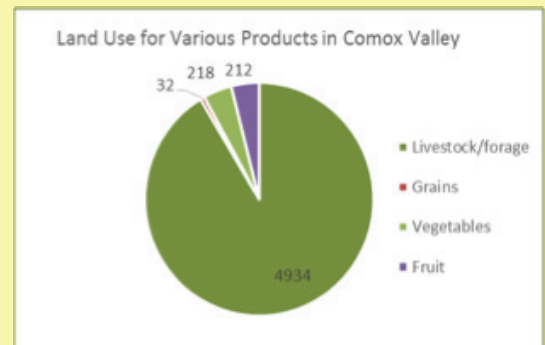
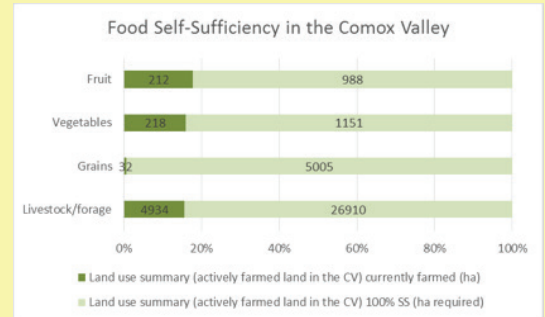
Opportunity: Increase production of higher valued crops in the Comox Valley; specifically fruits, vegetables and grains. This can be achieved by:

- More intensive use of land that is actively farmed with:
 - Increased irrigation
 - Improved drainage
 - Improved management and
 - More intensive production systems (including increased greenhouse production)
 - Conversion of unused or underutilized land to higher valued uses.

Current Situation: Over the past decade, the Comox Valley has developed a reputation as an agricultural & culinary destination. The area produces a diverse range of Agrifood products and its fruit and vegetable producers are recognized as organic or near organic. Even so, the Valley has 23,529 ha of land in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) of which only 5437 ha (23.1%) is actively used for farming. Of that, 4934 ha are used for livestock and forage production; only 462 ha (<2%) are used for fruit, vegetable and grain production.

• Vegetables – potatoes are the main crop with 141 ha (65%) of the 218 ha in vegetable production. Most of the remaining 77 ha is small lot intensive market garden with an emphasis on organic production.

• Berries, tree fruits, and grapes - there are 212 ha of berries and tree fruits in production. Cranberries are the largest with 80 ha in production, followed by blackberries (64 ha) and grapes (40 ha). The remaining fruit crops tend to be produced on small lots or as part of smaller mixed farm operations. Suitable land, with available irrigation water, is available to significantly increase production of these crops.



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- Grains are produced on 32 ha; these are mainly used for livestock feed currently. There is a growing interest in increased cereal production for both human and livestock consumption. Grain production trials have indicated that yields can be significantly higher than the Prairie provinces. The price of grain and straw, on Vancouver Island, are also higher than other areas because of the cost of transport onto the island.

- Increased production of all of the above crops would allow the region to develop more storage and processing facilities and improve access to wider distribution channels. Most of the smaller operators are now selling at the Farmers' Market or from the farmgate. There are strong demands for their product, throughout the Island, and in Vancouver and the Comox Valley is known for its product quality.

Investment Opportunity: With only 2% of the local agricultural land base used for higher valued crops, there is a broad opportunity to increase production:

- The average age of local farmers is 57.5. Many of these producers have scaled-back operations and/or have underutilized farmland. Productivity of these farms can often be increased quickly and significantly.

- Local production of vegetables, fruits and berries, combined, is estimated to be less than 16% of local consumption and there are opportunities to distribute, throughout the island, and into other markets.

- There are only 12 ha of tree fruits in production on 40 different parcels. There are opportunities for larger scale production, with varieties that are suited to the local climate.

- There is potential to increase greenhouse production; areas of the Comox Peninsula have sunlight hours comparable to the best greenhouse growing areas in the Province.

- Although it is cheaper to produce grains and oilseeds on the prairies, the yields and prices for the product are much higher on Vancouver Island. There is an interest in production of heritage and specialty varieties. There is a large amount of land that is available and suitable for cereal production – some of it being crop rotations within other farm production systems or conditioning land in preparation for higher value crops. To go along with this, there is an opportunity to do custom work and harvesting associated with grain production – especially small lot harvesting.



¹ Vancouver Island Coast Regional Agriculture Framework for Action, 2011

² Based on "BC's Food Self-Reliance" – a model that estimates that 0.5239 ha is required to produce "a healthy diet for one person". Of the 0.5239 ha, .053 ha (about 10%) needs to be irrigated. Comox Valley production is based on a Land Use Inventory that was conducted by the BC Ministry of Agriculture in 2013.

Agriinvestment Support Services:

Services include:

Foreign Direct Investment and
Export Information
Immigration Resources and Provincial
Nominee Program
Market Research and Economic Indicators
Soil Mapping and Gap Analysis

John Watson Executive Director

Comox Valley Economic Development

00-1-250-792-0375

john@investcomoxvalley.com

 @comoxvalley

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