

July 10, 2003



## Sound Bites

The newsletter with a vision of regional food sustainability

Volume 2 Issue 9

# Small Scale Food Processor Association Saanich Peninsula Outreach and Consultation



The SSFPA is committed to the development of regional capacity to support small-scale food processors and producers. Events around the province have been held in partnership with local groups (see Sound Bites Issues 5-8 at [www.ssfpa.net](http://www.ssfpa.net)). To follow-up from the Field to Table meeting held in Victoria on January 21st and 22nd, Small Scale Food Processor Association staff (Mary) and students (Clare and Maria) conducted outreach calls and visits throughout the month of May. The team worked hard to ensure that the diversity of folks involved in small-scale food processing were contacted, and appreciated the support of local organizations in distributing information. A database of people doing small-scale food processing in the area with 140 names has been created. The team visited several local processors to interview them in more depth. All were invited to participate in a consultation meeting held on June 9th at Coast Capital Savings Credit Union.

## Our Learning in the Region: The Team Reports

In getting in touch with small-scale food processors in the region, we were amazed by the incredible passion and resilience demonstrated by the many folks we spoke to and met. There is a clear move towards reclaiming lost agricultural land, and stewardship for future generations.

Our learning about this region has shown that many diverse trends are present. These include:

- Region is popular so Agri-tourism and Eco-tourism are both strong.
- A desire to honour holistic approaches.
- Desire to reclaim family farming history.
- Many folks have a strong commitment to organic farming.
- Strong commitment to the sustainability of our land and food resources.
- Growing interest in the economic advantages of value-adding including agri-tourism.
- A sense of isolation and overwork is common.

- Many small-scale food producers and processors in the Capital District Region are doing well, selling to established markets including restaurants, farmers' markets and retailers.
- A growing number of women are starting and succeeding in the small-scale food processing industry.
- Many small-scale food processors and producers choose to stay small for it is a deeply felt lifestyle choice.
- There is a great generosity in sharing stories, and a willingness to mentor one another.
- There are strengths that lie in the commitment, hard work and quality of products, and the great diversity of folks working in the sector.

There is variety in how folks sell their products including: farm-gate, local farmers' markets, community markets, retail outlets, wholesale, through distributors, through brokers, and over the internet.

We heard that this time of year is very busy making daytime meetings difficult.



In speaking about SSFPA, people's feedback is that many small-scale food processors and producers tend to belong to several associations or organizations. They encourage SSFPA to make sure that their work provides tangible benefits and does not duplicate existing work. To address this, SSFPA is building meaningful and synergistic relationships amongst associations committed to regional food sustainability and the success of small scale food value adding businesses. The SSFPA offers transparency to avoid duplicating services. SSFPA is implementing innovative business solutions to problems other associations are not addressing.

Mary Murphy, Clare Kirkby-Yazganoglu and Maria Stefanyk.

## Strengths in the Region

The commitment, resilience and passion shared by the people who are involved in small-scale food producing and processing represents a huge strength for this region. It is clear that the diversity of people who have embarked upon value-adding and the breadth of wisdom that this represents is also a strength.

There is growing awareness of the possibilities of regional branding, and merchandising that honours culture and history. Folks are also building relationships and working together towards solutions to common problems. The many organizations and associations that have been involved in supporting small-scale food production/processing are also strengths. The growing relationships between people and associations and between the associations themselves signify an important emerging strength in this region.



## Challenges in the Vancouver Island region

People in this region spoke about frustrations with:

- Marketing and merchandising
- Distribution
- Competing with U.S. large scale companies
- Struggles with accessing the market and product development
- Labelling requirements
- Isolation
- Access to community kitchens or secondary processing facilities
- Finding brokers, distributors and retailers that effectively promote and understand product
- Increased pressure in meeting regulations that better suit large scale operations
- Access to jars
- Access to finance
- Lack of support in the emerging and the growth phases of business
- Cost of land

## Next Steps

A Peninsula Working Group has been established. This group will meet and work together to address the following issues:

- Coordinating business support services to small-scale food producers/processors
- Coordinating access to finance services
- Considering the feasibility of establishing a regional identity of shared services (bar codes, laboratory services, marketing etc.)

To participate in the working group or to voice your thoughts about opportunities in the region or the work of SSFPA, please contact Mary Murphy at 370-5167.



## Sound Bites

### Consultation Meeting Summary

On June 9th, 2003 small-scale food producers and processors, as well as representatives from organizations committed to regional food security and community economic development came together at the Consultation Meeting supported by Coast Capital Savings Credit Union.

Lance Hill from Health Canada gave an informative presentation on the new labelling requirements that will be coming into effect over the next five years. For information about this presentation, please go to our website at [www.ssfpa.net](http://www.ssfpa.net).

Audry Lochrie from CEDCO Victoria spoke about business facilitation and access to finance services that are now being provided by CEDCO Victoria. For more information about this program, please call Audry at 360-0852.

Participants talked of some of the challenges of small-scale food processing and are motivated to move ahead with regional opportunities with the creation of a regional working group.



Marketing Opportunities emerging for SSFPA members:

1. Gift basket program featuring distinctive food products.
2. Box distribution program: the development of a flyer of local food products and the eventual distribution of these products.
3. Sharing services between small scale food processors to reduce the costs of bar codes, nutrient tables, ingredients testing etc.
4. The development of a marketing/distribution network specific to small scale food processors.

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