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Outcome Report

Small Scale Food Processing Consultation Event

May 2001

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Outcome Report

Small Scale Food Sector Consultation

Richmond Executive Inn / April 2001

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Executive Summary:

On April 6th 2001 people from across the province of British Columbia gathered in Richmond for a **Small Scale Food Processors Sector Consultation**. The British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture Food and Fisheries, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the Ministry of Community Development, Co-operatives and Volunteers and CEDCO Victoria sponsored this event.

The sector consultation event was initiated and co-ordinated by Community Venture Development Services (CVDS), and was a community driven initiative by a provincial steering committee from within British Columbia's Community Commercial Kitchen Organizations (BC CCKO's).

A recent study of value-added food processing in rural BC, conducted by CVDS, concluded that markets for quality niche food products are expanding rapidly. However, with BC's geographic challenges, small scale growers and processors are facing obstacles to moving forward into these new markets.

As a result CVDS developed the sector consultation event first to bring the sector together to share the skills, knowledge and infrastructure of existing organizations with each other, and start-up groups; and second, consultation was required to strengthen the sector's vision of how this industry can contribute to community sustainability as the industry grows.

At the conclusion of the event several recommendations were put forward by the group including:

- Test the feasibility of a provincial marketing co-operative network to increase rural capacity in skills development, leadership, and knowledge base.
- Build community links with new or existing co-ops.
- Document a development process that can be of assistance to economic development groups interested in incubating this industry in their local area.
- Identify specific learning objectives.
- Provide opportunity for networking and avenues for marketing for rural participants from small communities

"There is a strong argument for buying food that has been grown and processed locally."

"As I see it there is a real potential for British Columbians to replace many of the imported products on our market shelves. To do this we need to focus on providing quality ingredients and attractive packaging and labelling. We also need to organize a provincial market network that is both appropriate for, and accessible to rural small scale food industry."

Lee Fuge
Grocery Manager
Capers
Community
Markets Victoria
In discussion
group...
Retail and
Distribution
Sector
Consultation
Richmond 2001.

The provincial steering committee has expanded due to the strong support from the sector and to remain a community driven initiative they agree to meet and plan the next steps toward developing a provincial association of small-scale growers and processors.

Synopsis:

Small scale growers and processors in today's economy are facing new challenges as markets for traditional food products become saturated, hard to access, and are often controlled by multinational corporations. Some British Columbians regard these realities as an opportunity to move into untapped specialty markets that are surfacing as consumers become more conscious of the source and quality of the food they buy. Over the past number of years these factors have provided an opportunity for people to develop food products to suit the shifting market trends.

The Cottage industry in rural B.C. is responding by diversifying away from raw commodity production and traditional food products, into specialty and organic crops, wild crafted botanicals, and value-added foods. BC communities recognize the economic opportunities that exist as a result of these new market demands for quality value-added food products. However, they are facing substantial challenges to fully meet this new market potential.

BC's Recent Small Scale Food Activity:

Across the province individuals and communities are earnestly laying the foundation for local agri-food based economies that are rooted in the values of social, cultural, and ecological sustainability. British Columbians concerned about issues such as food security and rapidly shifting global markets have been hard at work in their communities educating each other and organizing toward social change. These actions are evidenced by a multitude of sustainable agri-food projects such as the Christopher Spicer Centre in the Slocan Valley, Vancouver Island's Farmers Alliance, Victoria's Lifecycles, and B.C.'s Community Commercial Kitchen Organizations.

BC has also witnessed a growing number of urban community gardens, food box programs, rural agriculture and consumer co-ops, community forest and non-timber forest product initiatives, and the establishment of associations for organic and herbal growers and farmers markets.

Along with this, a number of community food policy organizations have mobilized, and are part of the B.C. Food Policy Network. These activities have become a shared strength with which to face the shifting market forces.

Why a Sector Consultation?

A recent study of value-added food processing in rural BC conducted by Community Venture Development Services (CVDS), a small Victoria consulting group working in the field of CED and co-op development, concluded that British Columbians across the sector and throughout most BC regions are facing similar obstacles to moving forward into new markets. As a result of these findings they received support from the British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture Food and Fisheries, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Ministry of Community Development, Co-operatives and Volunteers to put forward a proposal to organize a sector wide consultation.

British Columbia's Community Commercial Kitchen Organizations (BC CCKOs) came forward to join CVDS and form the steering committee for development of a consultation event that would focus on the needs of the emerging small-scale food processing sector in BC.

Vision:

Out of the steering committee development process came the vision for a sector wide consultation event that would provide an opportunity for participants from across rural BC including small scale farmers, microprocessors, commercial incubator kitchens, local market representatives, community stakeholders, co-operatives, and economic developers, to identify skills, knowledge and infrastructure needed to support continued growth in the sector, and thus to enhance the economic capacity of rural small scale enterprise.

Consultation Objectives:

The principle objective of the sector consultation was to organize as a group to identify the current capacity of the value-added food loop in each region, including the barriers and the opportunities for success. Then, upon agreement the group would develop a co-operative action plan aimed at strengthening local and provincial infrastructure in order to advance the economic potential of rural small-scale food processing initiatives.

“Opportunities exist in many areas of the agriculture and food distribution industry. These markets can best be penetrated by networking and sharing resources and information.”

Christopher Spicer Center
commenting on ‘A study of primary Niche Market Agriculture 1996’

“Our guess is that this will be the year that the US market truly ‘discovers’ the British Columbia food scene ... the world is waking up to the fact that we have a vibrant local food and wine scene”

In: **“Trends”**
City Food Magazine
Vancouver / Victoria
April / May 2001

A Brief Overview of Sector Consultation Activity:

On April 6/2001, participants arrived in Richmond from largely rural locations all across the province. All parts of the sector were present, including at least nine co-operatives.

The event began with a welcome from Linda Chase-Wilde, formerly of the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture Food and Fisheries, currently the manager of co-ops in the Ministry of Community Development, Co-operatives and Volunteers. Both Ministries were sponsors of the event.

Following this John Hagan Program Officer for the Rural Secretariat, an arm of the Canadian Agriculture and Rural Communities Initiative (CARCI) program, spoke of the opportunities for advancement in small scale rural food and agricultural in B.C. He presented the audience with a profile of the funding possibilities, and requisite proposal guidelines mandated under the CARCI program.

Participants attended a cross-sectoral panel discussion aimed at identifying the current situation of the small-scale food processors value-added food industry in B.C. Afterwards they split up and facilitators recorded the groups' concerns about the issues and barriers to success facing the sector today. The workshop groups used this information to prepare an action plan to take advantage of existing opportunities for development in the small-scale food processing sector. During the plenary session participants came up with recommendations about how to immediately mobilize this action plan.

The same interactive approach was successfully utilized the next day during focused consultation sessions on environment and health regulations, merchandising and marketing, cooperation and networking, and development financing and infrastructure needs.

Besides participating as facilitators of workshops and plenary sessions, participants donated valuable door prizes, set up attractive and informative displays, and assisted organizers with various activities. A special thanks goes out to the steering committee for the many hours of volunteer planning and organizing that went into making this workshop a reality.

The current shifts in Canadian and World market trends are presenting an opportunity for small-scale food processors and producers to move into niche markets.

The markets for "traditional" food are well established and fully supplied. Small-scale processors seeking to tap into niche markets need to come together to create a plan to overcome obstacles such as limited capital and investment for start up, shifting product demand, incomplete technical skills and resources, and access to volume based markets.

Adapted from: **A Study of Niche Market Agriculture Production Opportunities for the Kootenays 1996**

The sector consultation served as a venue for to people to meet, create vital relationships and build business connections. It was a place to network ideas, impart critical knowledge and experience, and to develop collaborative strategies around shared issues.

A Word of Thanks to Our Sponsors:

“As far as I’m concerned the greatest asset in this sector is the people. I’ve come across so many beautiful people since I’ve begun this journey ...with so many great ideas ...so willing to venture out and take a chance on each other. We need to remember each other. We need to reach out and pat ourselves on the back for doing something really worthwhile in our communities.”

**Godfrey
Ferguson
Warm Lands
Specialty Food
Co-op –
In panel
discussion Sector
Consultation
Richmond 2001**

The Richmond event would not have been possible without the kind donations of our sponsors. Many thanks to CEDCO Victoria, The British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture Food and Fisheries, and the Ministry of Community Development Co-operatives and Volunteers. Special thanks also goes to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada CARCI program for matching support.

Evaluation Process and Outcome:

The organizers provided an evaluation survey for participants to fill out at the conclusion of the event. The general response was that the weekend was an overwhelming success. All feedback will be useful for the planning of future events. Please see Appendix C for evaluation feedback.

Plenary Session Feedback:

The information regarding the issues, barriers, and opportunities for success that was gathered through the consultation sessions has been transcribed, and archived. For the purpose of this report the aggregate data has been organized in a way that makes the material as easy to access as possible with the intention that the report should be immediately made available to the planning committee for action.

Plenary Report:

Issues and Barriers Facing the Small Scale Food Sector

Farmers' Issues and Barriers:

- The steady decline in family farms and farm income as a result of generational demographic shifts, waning government support in the form of policy structures and farm subsidies, globalization of commodity markets, and poor return on investment, is making it more difficult for small farm ventures to pitch themselves as viable enterprise to investors and financiers.
- Collaborative options for revitalizing the capacity of local land base economics such as small-scale farm enterprise co-operatives and marketing co-ops have not been fully explored.
- Decreasing seed diversity and the resulting control of seed business by transnational corporations is an issue for farmers who wish to retain local control of indigenous crops and protect the quality and natural biogenetics of their produce.
- The time and expense of certifying land, soil, and farm process to organic standards is challenging. Many farmers require ongoing support in this regard.

Processing Issues and Barriers:

- Market saturation by large producers means small-scale growers and processors need to diversify and find alternative ways to stimulate markets. Niche market and upscale products need to be identified or created. The product development issue is difficult for small-scale food processors.
- The general ability for small-scale food processors to recognize and respond to changes in public buying trends needs improvement. Changes in demand for quality and the desire for ready-made food such as packages of organic salad mix, healthy pre-packaged meals, and nutritional snacks are on the increase.

British Columbia's Community Commercial Kitchens share the issues and barriers found in this report. However, they face some unique obstacles that are not always consistent across the regions. Some of the difficulties they face are:

- ❖ no tenant support / need for anchor tenants
- ❖ lack of Funding for facilities manager and janitorial
- ❖ lack of education in the public sector and finance community about the potential benefits of kitchen access for emerging producers and the economy in general
- ❖ resulting gap in community, sector, and government support
- ❖ small size of business requirements means little access to wholesalers for the purchase of supplies such as jars, which translates into prohibitive cost.
- ❖ start up capital for development is difficult

Other issues facing community commercial kitchens are:

- ❖ need for board training
- ❖ need for quality control mechanisms and expertise
- ❖ need for a specialized BC model as the American model does not fit all BC contexts
- ❖ access to markets
- ❖ need to expand beyond self limiting provincial license

Packaging and Merchandising Issues and Barriers:

- The high cost of labeling & packaging to aesthetic and quality standards is often too much for the individual processor to absorb.
- Bar codes are an important element of the retailing and marketing of products. They provide crucial information to the processors and retailers who rely on them for tracking inventory and following statistical trends in sales. Bar code requirements can be complicated and expensive for small-scale food processors.
- Product quality standards are sometimes difficult for small processors to achieve.

Transportation Issues and Barriers:

- A weak link in the sector at this time is the inaccessibility & high cost of shipping and transportation, especially for those growers and producers in rural areas.
- The environmental cost regarding transportation between regions is an issue.

Marketing and Distribution Issues and Barriers:

“People often think that they need to be a relatively large or well established company to attract equity financing. In fact the current size of your company is not relevant. Of interest to investors are the potential applications of your technology, the size of the market, and your vision to capture that market. Investors’ returns come from the future not the present. Do your homework so you can get your business in front of investors with that early stage appetite.”

Making Waves Magazine / winter 2000
volume 11, no.4 Center
for Community
Enterprises

- There is a ready market demand, but meeting this demand is difficult for processors – this causes a sense of frustration and failure for the processors.
- Lone small-scale food processors cannot consistently supply their product in volume; this impacts the sale ability of their product to retailers. Buyers demand consistent supply sources to stock market shelves. Low volume capacity translates into ‘no purchase’ outcomes.
- Markets and retail chains resist buying directly from processors. Time and management constraints make it difficult for them to track and administer purchase relationships with independent processors. Markets are increasingly depending on large distributors who provide one stop shopping for products and services.
- Single growers and processors lack the technology base, market skills, product volume, and the dollars necessary successfully market their product.
- Farmers and processors are busy and have little time or ability to successfully market their product.
- In BC there are no formally organized regional or provincial marketing networks or co-operatives in place to facilitate the movement of local small scale value-added into the marketplace.
- The “Buy BC” campaign is perceived to target mass production and manufacturing culture as opposed to the small scale food processors economy of the local food shed. Promotion of “buy local” is needed.

Issues and Barriers for Capital and Technical Requirements:

- Concerns about food safety and adequate processing facilities are prevalent issues. Emergent processors have trouble locating, paying for, and maintaining safe, reliable, up to standard facilities and equipment. Some people are accessing, or attempting to develop community commercial kitchens as an option.
- Lack of capital and resources to build facilities and purchase equipment is a major barrier.

- The shortfall of available technical resources is a barrier. Processors need to learn where and how to access “appropriate” technology that is useful for small scale processing.
- Product testing and quality control is an issue, specifically the cost and the limited access to testing facilities, especially for the rural areas.
- There is a need for a larger supply of local organic produce for processing as well as long term cold storage facilities to support the processing function. This has capital implications

Issues and Barriers in Sector Education for Small Scale Processors:

- There is a gap in information available to processors and to the general public about collaborative community agri-food partnership options such as co-operatives and community supported agriculture (CSA). Education, research, and Web / database linkages to active co-ops and CSA initiatives need to be established. Currently there are few co-op or CSA networks working together to support each other.
- Many farmers require training to gain the skills necessary to develop a processing expertise that will allow them to move out and diversify into potential small scale value-added markets.
- There are many unemployed people in the rural areas that would be attracted to develop small-scale food processing businesses, if they had the links and training in place.

Issues and Barriers for Public Education:

- Public, government, and market sector education and awareness is needed to increase the profile and perceived social and economic value of B.C.’s community commercial kitchens.
- Farmers markets remind us that loss of communal culture impacts on social education. In our recent electronic and pre-packaged world small growers and processors can easily forget to make use of the face-to-face education and community learning that happens through direct marketing at the community level. The value of hands-on learning and the social aspects of gathering at the community market place cannot be overemphasized.

Issues and Barriers for Policy Advocacy:

- There is very little information measuring the potential impact of BC CCKOs in terms of the above indicators. Critical data is needed to access mainstream and CED funding sources for venture capital, and to gain broader community support.
- Lack of clarity about what services Community Futures has to offer and inconsistencies in programs between regional Community Futures offices has been a cause of confusion for small-scale food processing entrepreneurs.
- People in technical assistance positions lack relevant knowledge about the business of small scale food processing. There is a current need to provide training and resource people to support the sector.

- Values are shifting toward a more local focus, communities need to be given a voice and an active role in governing, community planning, and directing the process and outcomes of policy-making activity.
- There is a need to structure strong municipal and regional policy frameworks for local growers and producers such that they will not be absorbed into free trade cross border agreements.
- No current commitment exists to keep the revenue cycling through the communities that generate the product and cash flow. Communities need to be given the scope to use local revenue to reinvest in community activities at all levels.
- The small-scale food processing industry is not yet a clearly defined sector. As a result, grey areas of interpretation mean processors have to negotiate with, and answer to several ministries.
- Co-op members feel that there is a general-lack of respect in some government and business realms for co-operative enterprise. “Co-op” is often viewed as a left of centre social welfare action rather than a viable option for building a profitable business with a social conscience.
- There is a need to establish a recognizable identity amongst small-scale food processing industry players and to preserve that identity both by creating industry specific language, and strategically naming the sector so the public and policy makers will recognize it.
- There is little or no recognition of the potential for urban agriculture and cottage industry. General invisibility makes the force of small urban initiatives less powerful.

Issues and Barriers to Development and Finance Infrastructure:

- There is a general lack of knowledge in the sector about who is doing what, and what financing and resources are available for development and financing.
- There is no current provincial strategy for developing capital, infrastructure and investment finance to support small scale food processing.
- There is no specialized debt financing structure in the province for the small-scale food processing industry. Small-scale food processing needs to be recognized as a viable investment option amongst existing community lending programs.
- A need exists to provide a co-ordinate voice to approach government and finance organizations about developing policies to support this emerging sector.

- Few Community Economic Development (CED) partnerships currently exist between sectoral interests themselves, and between the sector, the financial community and the regional and provincial policy makers.
- There is no clear commitment from rural Credit Unions to support this sector.

Plenary Report:

Opportunities and Recommendations for Action

Market Opportunities:

- The potential for import replacement of out-of-region food products with quality small-scale food processing from local sources has been clearly demonstrated. Processors need to develop a comprehensive inventory of what products are currently on the shelves that hold potential for BC replacement including freezer goods, condiments, cereal, and crackers.
- In addition to this, a new market opportunity is opening up for handcrafted, locally produced, high quality, organic, non-GMO that is emerging from a general cultural shift in market demand that identifies these issues.
- There is a growing market for products that are linked to the culture and local geography of the unique regions of British Columbia. Emerging small-scale food processing industry would do well to consider the opportunities that this presents. The opportunity to market specialized labels such as “Kootenay”, “Salt Spring”, “Northern” etc, needs to be further explored.
- Taking this thought further, regions can come together and share a recognizable label and labeling system. Among the numerous benefits to this would be the marked recognition of product by consumers, repeated exposure (increasing the profile) of local product, which can translate into increased market demand, a consistent quality of labeling, and administrative cost savings for processors.
- The city of Victoria purchases and consumes a large amount of organic produce. This market can be developed further. In addition, growers can take advantage of markets that are surfacing as a result of current shortages of quality organic produce across Canada.

Marketing Strategies:

There are opportunities to establish regional marketing co-operatives, for example:

- The Christopher Spicer Centre in the Slokan Valley region of the West Kootenays has put forward a plan to create the Kootenay Manqué’, a marketing and distribution co-operative that will support Kootenay Boundary growers and processors.

Marketing and Distribution Co-operatives Can Provide:

- ❖ a professional marketing platform which can be adapted to a full range of products, from onions and sprouts to pate' and sauces
- ❖ group purchasing of packaging and labels to reduce the individual producer costs
- ❖ effective connections between farmers and "value-added" producers to maximize the use of local ingredients
- ❖ regional direct marketing projects
- ❖ access, as part of a regional product line, to markets outside the area
- ❖ shared Universal product license to facilitate access to a bar code for retail level sales
- ❖ access to data base of approved kitchen facilities for fledgling processing enterprises
- ❖ an established network of producers around the region for information exchange, collaboration, mentoring, sharing of equipment and resources.

Opportunities for Transportation and Shipping:

- There is an opportunity to develop regional and provincial distribution networks
- Collaboration among producers to transport and deliver product would make shipping more efficient.

Sector Education Opportunities:

A practice skills, apprenticeship, and mentoring program could be developed and supported by processors to assist start-up enterprises while providing valuable labour support.

- There is an opportunity to take advantage of the business education, and skill development curriculum, which is being developed for small-scale food growing and processing by the Open Learning Institute (contact Michelle Nicholson at mnichols@openschool.com).
- The video produced at the Small Scale Food Processors event, with support from the BC Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (MAFF), is a valuable tool that will help guide the Steering Committee in forming a strategic action plan for this sector.
- There is an opportunity to develop a training program tailored specifically for farmers who want to learn to diversify into small scale value-added processing. The training program could explore the benefits of adding a value-added element to a small farm business; the

kind of products that could be developed; what products are in demand; how to get started; where and how to market; and it could assist them in making connections to producer / marketing networks that are currently being established.

Public Education Opportunities:

- The opportunity to organize a campaign profiling local small-scale food processed products can be developed and assertively put forward through schools and the mainstream media including the Internet. This could be co-ordinated province wide through a high profile marketing strategy.
- There is an opportunity to fill the current gap in grass roots education and research, and the sharing of information and resources for co-operative enterprise. The potential exists for rural communities to tap into and further develop work that has begun at the British Columbia Institute for Co-operative Studies at the University of Victoria.
<http://web.uvic.ca/bcics/>

Farm Specific Opportunities:

- The opportunity exists to organize farmers regionally much like the Island Farmers Alliance. These bodies can include consumer members and can join under a provincial umbrella for strength in lobbying.
- Take up the opportunity to farm in an environmentally friendly way. Stewardship of the land is an investment that will capitalize on environmentally sensitive global markets in the future. Take advantage of the growing demand for “safe food”.
- There is an opportunity to develop “mentoring” programs linking growers to people who have land (people who want to farm can lease land that is available).
- There is an opportunity and an interest in exploring the co-op option for growers and for marketing.

Opportunities for Policy Advocacy and Development Infrastructure:

Finance Policy

- There is a need to build the credibility of the sector. Policy makers and financiers need to be convinced that there is real economic and social benefit for them when they investing in the small scale value-added food industry.
- There is an opportunity to bring rural Credit Unions together in partnerships as a message to the community of finance that food issues are integral to a healthy community economy. The sector needs to strategize about how to get Credit Unions to see the benefits of managing their “Sustainability Profile”. The message needs to support these emerging trends, and will result in long-term profitability.
- The opportunity exists on the regional level to create a template for a collaborative system of micro lending and finance. Small farm and small-scale food processors can come together to create an asset base and equity leveraging mechanism to assist in capital start up and business improvement for diversification.

Development Strategy

- The sector can take the opportunity to mobilize and develop a strong co-ordination strategy. The development of a comprehensive provincial data / resource base is considered a priority. Care should be taken not to duplicate networks, list serves, and organizational structures that are already in place, but rather to make them more accessible.
- There is a need for an in-depth inventory (needs assessment) of the gaps that exist in the value added sector in BC that reaches beyond the scope of this report.
- In addition to this, participants’ identified the opportunities to map the current capacity of the sector & rural community networks including human and intellectual capital, geographically specific opportunities, & existing infrastructure and resources.
- Growers and producers who would like to see BC government become more responsive to issues of the sector, suggest policy makers could research the American model for local agri-food development, which continues to be very successful.

“Those of us living in the remote locations have a great interest in developing a provincial association to connected us to the rest of the province so we can gain access to information, resources, and technology.”

Wild Island Foods Co-op in: Final Plenary

“Specialty foods have been a Canadian agri-business success story. Canada sustains a significant capability in specialty food manufacturing. The industry may offer significant potential for further development and with it opportunity for generating employment and export revenues.”

Peat Marwick Stevenson & Kellogg Specialty Foods: A Distributor Perspective Federal / Provincial Market development Council (FPMDC)

Investment Strategy

- There is an opportunity to create and a profile and culture for Social Entrepreneurial Ventures (SEV), which target specific markets. An example of this is Washington State's *Chefs Alliance for Social Action and Sustainable Agriculture* (www.bountifultable.com).
- There are many people with resources and a palate for food of exceptional quality, taste and aesthetics that would by a product line if they knew it was of benefit to local producers and processors, and helping to develop the community.

Opportunities for Co-ordinating Provincial Partnerships:

Sector Partnerships

- Producers feel there is an opportunity to celebrate and share the successes of active small-scale food processing enterprises. A provincial information clearing house and newsletter for small processors, commercial kitchens and anyone who considers themselves to be part of the small scale value-added food sector could provide important linkages and a place to nurture a sense of identity as a collective force.

Government and Funding Partnerships

- The opportunity exists to build partnerships between Federal, Provincial and Municipal government policy makers, Credit Unions, CED partners and community investors. The focus of which would be to gain support for the business development and capital for the start up phase of small scale value-added food processing.
- Business partnerships can be developed with Community Futures by showing them that small scale industries are profitable community ventures to invest in. An invitation to them to help support this emerging sector needs to be made.
- Processors can organize a sector group to advocate to Western Diversification to have them assist in creating specialized assistance in this sector.
- The sector can work with larger government initiatives such as the Federal Governments' CARCI program and the Agrifood trust.

Community Partnerships

- Financial institutions and community Credit Unions can be encouraged to work with small-scale food processors at the grass roots level as a business strategy.
- A framework can be established to assist people in creating community commercial / incubator kitchens to address processing needs. There could be an incubator tool kit.
- Processors can nurture School District and community organization partnering for the development of community commercial incubator kitchens
- The opportunity exists to bring rural community colleges into mutually beneficial partnerships with the small scale food industry by creating programs for students to learn about food processing and quality testing, and by making facilities and expertise available for processing and testing of product by rural small processors.

Final Plenary April 7 / 2001

Mobilizing for Action

In concluding the weekend consultation the group came together to consider how to move forward. There was overwhelming agreement that the next step should be to: Develop an independent provincial association of small-scale growers and processors, based upon partnerships with regional networks.

Recommendations:

Step 1:

Develop an action plan to assist the people and organizations involved in small-scale food processing to become structured.

Step 2:

Develop a strategic plan to address development needs to support this emerging industry.

- Training and education

- Organization of regional and or provincial marketing and distribution co-operatives
- Acquiring production technology
- Transportation and shipping
- Policy development
- Capital and equity sourcing
- Community and government partnerships
- Product development
- Resource and information networks

Step 3:

Develop strategic partnerships to support a sustainable infrastructure for the sector.

- Community Futures
- Credit Unions and Development Finance Subsidiaries
- Development Funders:
 - A. Western Diversification
 - B. Vancouver Foundation and other similar development funders
 - C. CARCI
 - D. Agrifood Trust

Sector Consultation Concluding Statement:

At the conclusion of the sector consultation event, it was unanimously agreed that small-scale growers and processors in the rural regions of British Columbia are facing significant challenges to moving into expanding markets. These challenges include: geographic isolation; limited access to small-scale production technology; underdeveloped marketing, distribution and information sharing networks; lack of finance and venture capital for business development and improvement; a need for more supportive government and municipal policy frameworks; and a yet to be defined sense of identity as a unified small scale sector in relation to the wide-ranging food and agricultural system as a whole.

The resulting outcome of the sector consultation is to strengthen the vision of how this industry can contribute to community sustainability by bringing together a Steering Committee (see Appendix B) that will work towards organizing a provincial association of small-scale food processors to actively address these challenges.

At the Final Plenary, participants were asked to put their names forward to contribute their time in organizing a Steering Committee and preparing a Strategic Action Plan. The Steering Committee thus formed has BC regional representation with cross-sectoral expertise.

The intent of all the funders, and Community Venture Development Services, has been to facilitate community/rural driven activities, outcomes, deliverables and impacts, with the main objectives of sharing and strengthening the small-scale food processing industry. With this understanding, the Steering Committee will meet to:

- Test the feasibility of a provincial marketing co-operative network that can increase rural capacity in skills development, leadership and knowledge base.
- Build community links with new or existing co-ops.
- Document a development that can be of assistance to economic development groups interested in incubating this industry in their local area.
- Identify specific learning objectives.
- Provide opportunity for networking and avenues for marketing for rural participants from small communities

The main consensus is that there is a vibrant market opportunity waiting and that investment in building the infrastructure to support small-scale food processors could meet social, environmental, and economic goals.

Appendix A: Sector Consultation Participant List

- ◆ Abra Brynne / Christopher Spicer Centre / Slocan Valley
- ◆ Lyn Cayo / DEVCO / Nelson – West Kootenay
- ◆ Nicole Cheland / BC Institute for Co-operative Studies / Victoria
- ◆ Scott Crawford / Island Farmers Alliance / Vancouver island
- ◆ Greg Cushing / WarmLand Specialty Food Co-op / Duncan
- ◆ Margaret Daskis / Fresh Ideas / Maple Ridge
- ◆ William Dawson / Victoria
- ◆ Aria Desilets / Slocan Park
- ◆ Ian Farber / BC Beekeepers / Kamloops
- ◆ Ramona Faust / Harrop Proctor Community Co-operative / Proctor
- ◆ Godfrey Ferguson / Warmland Specialty Food Co-op / Duncan
- ◆ Viki Ford / BC Heartlands Food Co-op / Vanderherooft
- ◆ Lee Fuge / Capers Community Markets / Victoria
- ◆ Harvey Glasier / British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries / Dawson Creek
- ◆ Donna Gross / Wild Island Foods Co-operative / Sointula
- ◆ John Hagan / CARCI – Rural Secretariat – Agriculture Canada / Edmonton
- ◆ Vanessa Hammond / CEDCO Victoria / Victoria
- ◆ Craig Johnson / Canadian Food Inspection Agency / Vancouver
- ◆ Terri Hanen / Northern Exposure Gift Company / Dawson Creek
- ◆ Barb Hilman / BC Heartland Food co-op / Fort Fraser
- ◆ Art Holbrook / Astrisk Productions / Victoria
- ◆ Brenda Hotte / HotHucks / Vancouver
- ◆ Ian Hunter / Valhalla Greens / Nelson




- ◆ Mara Jernigan / Farmfolk Cityfolk / Cobble Hill
- ◆ Mary Alice Johnson / Moss Street Market / Sooke
- ◆ Joe Karthein / Karthein's Kraut / Crescent Valley
- ◆ Catherine Klinsteuber / Powell River Farmers Institute / Powell River
- ◆ Jodi Koberinski / Agra Roots / Christina Lake
- ◆ Joan Kotarski / Fairfield Community Association / Victoria
- ◆ Ron Lablanc / Laughing Coyote Land Co-operative / Slocan Valley
- ◆ Donna Little / Fairfield Community Association / Victoria
- ◆ Robert Maheu / WarmLand Specialty Food Co-op / Duncan
- ◆ Maureen Macdougall / CEDCO Victoria / Victoria
- ◆ Sandra Mark / CVDS / Victoria
- ◆ Bill McMahon / Advantage workers Co-operative / Dawson Creek
- ◆ Frank Moreland / CVDS / Victoria
- ◆ Monica Mueller / Kindness Cakes / Chilliwack
- ◆ Michelle Nicholson / Open Learning Agency / Victoria
- ◆ Glenda Olson / BC Heartlands Food Co-operative / Vanderhoof
- ◆ Ellie Parks / CVDS / Saltspring Island
- ◆ David Philips / Northwest Community College / Masset
- ◆ Don Putt / CFDC North Fraser
- ◆ Janet Romain / BC Heartlands Food Co-operative / Vanderhoof
- ◆ Romona Scott / Growing Circle Food Co-op / Saltspring Island
- ◆ Carrie Schafer / Northern Lights Gift Company / Dawson creek
- ◆ Pam Sholty / BC Heartlands Food Co-operative / Vanderhoof
- ◆ Colleen Shepherd / CVDS / BCICS Institute / Victoria
- ◆ Catherine Simpson / New Westminster School District

- ◆ Bill Slater / Canadian Food Inspection Agency / Vancouver
- ◆ David Springbett / Asterisk productions / Victoria
- ◆ Matt Strand / CVDS / Victoria
- ◆ Daniel Terry / Denman Island Chocolates / Denman Island
- ◆ Herb Theissen / CFDC South Fraser / Abbotsford
- ◆ Donna Tookey / Peace Value-Added Food and Agriculture Association / Dawson Creek
- ◆ Jeni Trusscott / Molly Enterprises / Creston
- ◆ Andrea Turner / CFDC Shushwap / Salmon Arm
- ◆ Pamela Vipond / Sage Kitchens / Golden
- ◆ Christine Watts / BC Functional Food Network / Vancouver
- ◆ Klaus Werner / CFDC North Fraser /
- ◆ Linda Chase-Wilde / Ministry for Community Development Co-operatives and Volunteers / Victoria

Appendix B: Steering Committee.

- Glenda Olson, Heartland Co-op, Vanderhoof, BC
- Andrea Turner, General Manager, Community Futures, Shushwap, Salmon Arm, BC
- Donna Gross, Wild Island Foods Co-op, Sointula, BC
- Don Putt, Agriculture Coordinator from North Fraser Community Futures (retired from steering committee)
- Linda Chase-Wilde, Manager of Co-op's, Ministry of Community Development, Co-operatives and Volunteers
- Abra Brynne, Foodshed Animator, Salmo Outreach office of the: Christopher Spicer Centre for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural life
- Herb Thiesen, General Manager, Community Futures South Fraser
- Michelle Nicholson, Co-ordinator of Instructional Development, Open learning Agency, Victoria, BC
- Pamela Vipond, Sage Kitchens, Golden, BC
- Catherine Kleinsteuber, Powell River Farmers Institute, Powell River, BC
- Brenda Hotte, HotHucks / Vancouver BC
- David Phillips, North West Community College / Masset, BC
- Donna Tookey, Peace Value-added Food and Agriculture Association, Dawson Creek, BC
- Maureen MacDougal / CEDCO Victoria / Victoria
- Lynn Grossutti / Karma Kitchen Café / Vancouver

Appendix C. Evaluation

Statement			
This event met my expectations.	35	3	
I learned some important things that will help my business.	33	3	
	Two said N/A		
I was able to help make a difference in moving our industry forward by attending this event.	29	7	
	One is “hopeful” One “Do not know”		
I made important contacts.	35	3	
I found others who I could work with.	35	3	
I want to help move forward on the Action Plan. Please contact me.	Twenty-six people gave their addresses so that they can help move forward on the Action Plan.		

Comments:

1. Contact sheet is great; think you could lose the pkg for it.
2. I think that the lecture given us by the consultants at lunch condescending and inappropriate.
3. Didn't have enough info in advance to form expectations.
4. Quieter hotel rooms: great food, many thanks.
5. Thanks for all the hard work.
6. More than met them [expectations] was one of the most beneficial/well organized I've attended.
7. I have no business so question # 2 is N/A. Good Work! 3 weeks!?! Commit to move forward on action plan.
8. Thanks for asking me to be on the Steering Committee.

9. Found everyone spoke from and of their local situation with simplicity and strength gained from their personal and community experience. The announcements were smooth and elegant with a sense of respect for our differences, and there was attention to all of us all together, where we felt safe to discuss both our failures and successes. The challenge is for us to network ideas, resources and plans. We need to remember to lead from the heart with open arms and growth comes from the ground up.
10. A little slow getting started. Short notice. Very well orchestrated. A very big thanks to Sandra, Colleen and associates.
11. Fantastic event. Many thanks.
12. I am hopeful that question # 3 will make a difference, so I didn't answer it yet.
13. Considering the timeframe for putting this conference together, you did very well. I found the Saturday sessions the best! The CFIA was excellent and very helpful for me personally. I heard similar comments about the other workshops. Nice going! Good luck with future endeavours!
14. I think an association of small food processors in BC would be of assistance.
15. Let's co-operate.
16. It was great and just a beginning, thank you.
17. Great conference---well organized and informational.
18. Regional meetings.
19. Do not know the answer to question #3.
20. Great presentations---I would like more workshops along the same lines. The contacts we made are very important to our business. Thank you.
21. Ensure this process continues. Support Sandra Mark!
22. Great workshop!!

Appendix D. Participant Websites As Provided

- Denman Island chocolate
info@denmanislandchocolate.com
- Karthein's Kraut
www.sweetkraut.com
- Rural Secretariat / Agriculture Canada
www.rural.gc.ca
- Peace Value Added Food and Ag Association
www.peacecounrtyproducts.com
- Agra Roots
www.agraroots.org
- BC Food Systems Network
www.fooddemocracy.org
- Farmfok Cityfolk
www.ffcf.bc.ca
- Warmland Specialty Food Co-operative
www.warmlandgourmet.com
- British Columbia Agricultural Awareness (BCAC)
www.agaware.bc.ca
- Island Farmers Alliance www.islandfarmfresh.com/ifa.html
- Canadian Food Inspection Agency
www.cfia-acia.agr.ca
- Open Learning Agency
www.ola.bc.ca
- British Columbia Institute for Co-operative Studies
[//Web.uvic.bc.ca/bcics](http://Web.uvic.bc.ca/bcics)
- Community Futures Development Association BC
<http://www.communityfutures.ca/provincial/bc/>
- BC Ministry of Agriculture Food and Fisheries
www.gov.bc.ca/agf/
- BC Ministry of Community Development, Co-operatives and Volunteers
www.gov.bc.ca/cdcv/