

SUSTAINABILITY HIGHLIGHTS

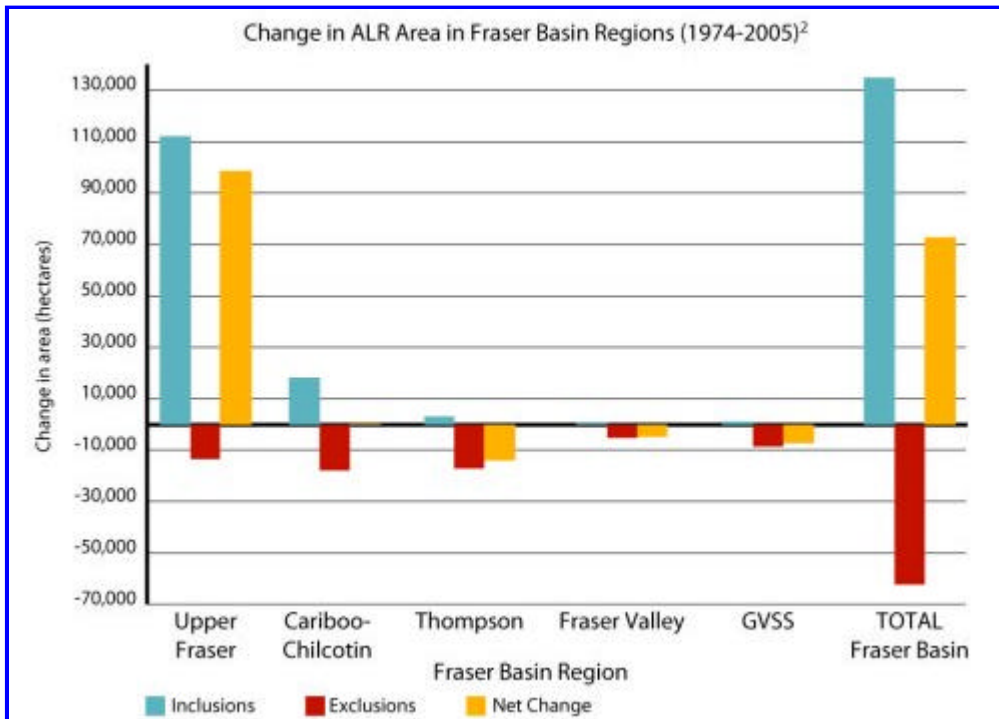
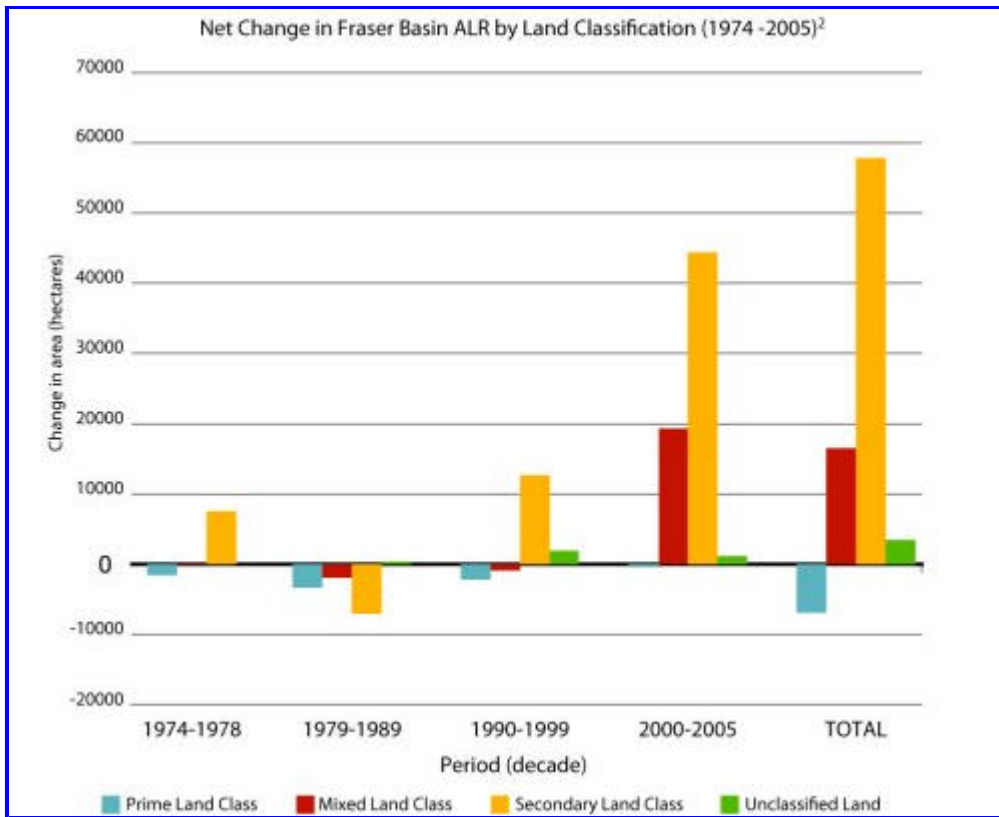
A secure, safe, reliable food supply is integral to sustainability. Food production takes place on less than 5% of BC's total land mass, and about 50% of BC farms are located within the Fraser Basin. In addition to food, agricultural lands provide income and employment, support local and regional economies, contribute to wildlife habitat and add to a region's green space. There are many pressures on, and risks to, agriculture, the family farm and a sustainable food supply, such as pressure on agricultural lands from urban development, low and shrinking farm incomes, competition from corporate agriculture around the world, invasive plants, a lack of local and regional food processing facilities to optimize food value, and diseases such as BSE (Mad Cow Disease), avian influenza, and most recently, E.coli. For example, avian influenza was initially identified in the Fraser Valley poultry industry in February, 2004. As a result, over 17 million birds were destroyed, and total economic losses are estimated at \$380 million.¹

<p>Agricultural Land Reserve</p>		<p>FAIR/MIXED RESULTS - As of 2005, there has been a net increase of land in the ALR in the Fraser Basin; however, there has been a net loss in prime agricultural land overall and a net loss of ALR land in 4 of 5 regions.</p>
<p>Agriculture and the Environment</p>		<p>GETTING BETTER - Significant participation rates in the Environmental Farm Plan Program; growth among certified organic producers.</p>

ISSUES AND TRENDS

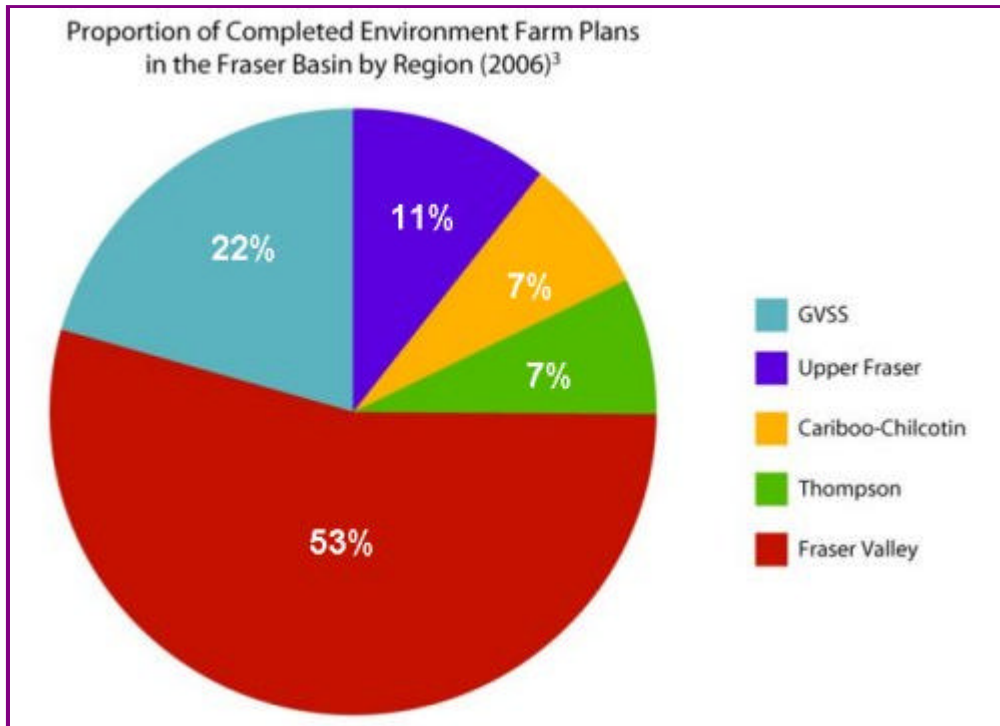
Agricultural Land Reserve (1973-2005) ^{2,1}

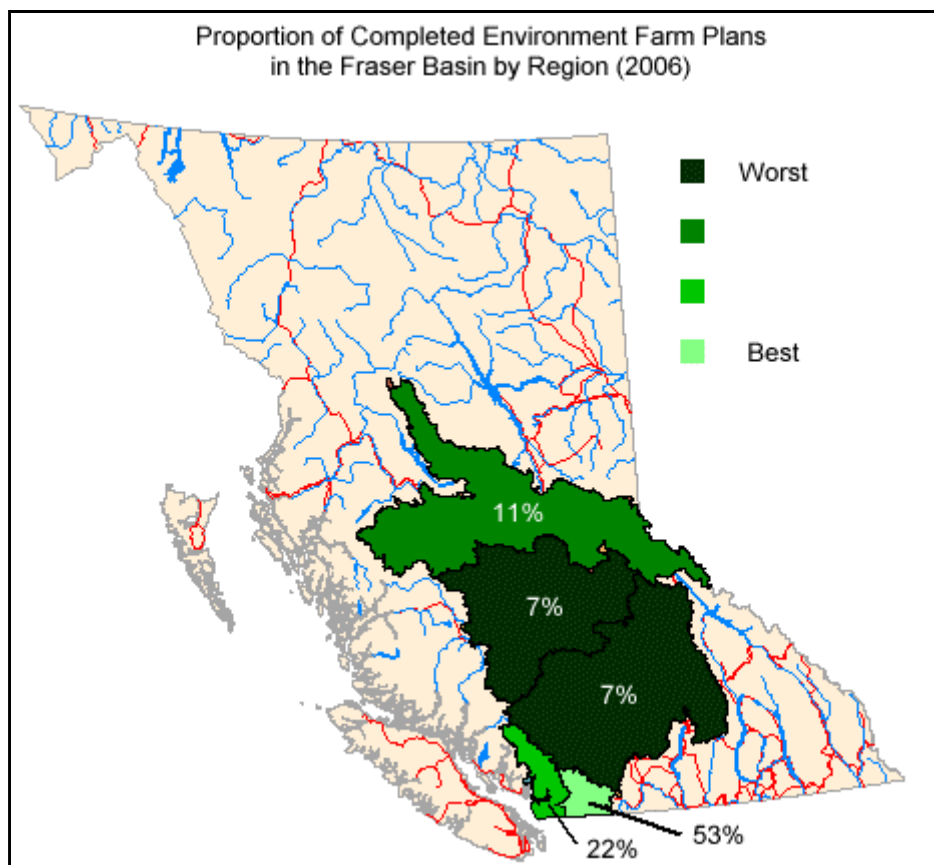
The Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), established in 1973, has prevented the conversion of farmland in the province into non-agricultural uses. Urban development is the most common basis for application for the exclusion of ALR lands. Since 1974, there has been a net increase in total ALR area in the Fraser Basin (3.3%), mostly due to the inclusion of mixed and secondary land classes in the Upper Fraser and Cariboo-Chilcotin regions since 1989. For example, 99% (97,808 ha) of ALR inclusions in the Upper Fraser were from mixed or secondary land classes. Other than the Upper Fraser, all Fraser Basin regions have experienced a net loss of prime, secondary and mixed quality agricultural land since 1974 (30,103 ha combined total decrease). There has been a net loss of 6,935 ha of prime land since 1974. Prior to establishment of the ALR, nearly 6,000 ha of prime agricultural land was lost each year to urban and other uses.²



Environmental Farm Plans (2003-2006) ³

Launched in 2003, the Canada-BC Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) Program aims to complement and enhance the current environmental stewardship practices of BC producers. The stated vision is "a sustainable agriculture industry in BC," with objectives including encouraging stewardship of the land, implementing beneficial management practices and improving farm profitability. A total of 365 Fraser Basin farms have completed and are implementing EFPs (45% of EFPs in BC) and many others have initiated EFP processes.



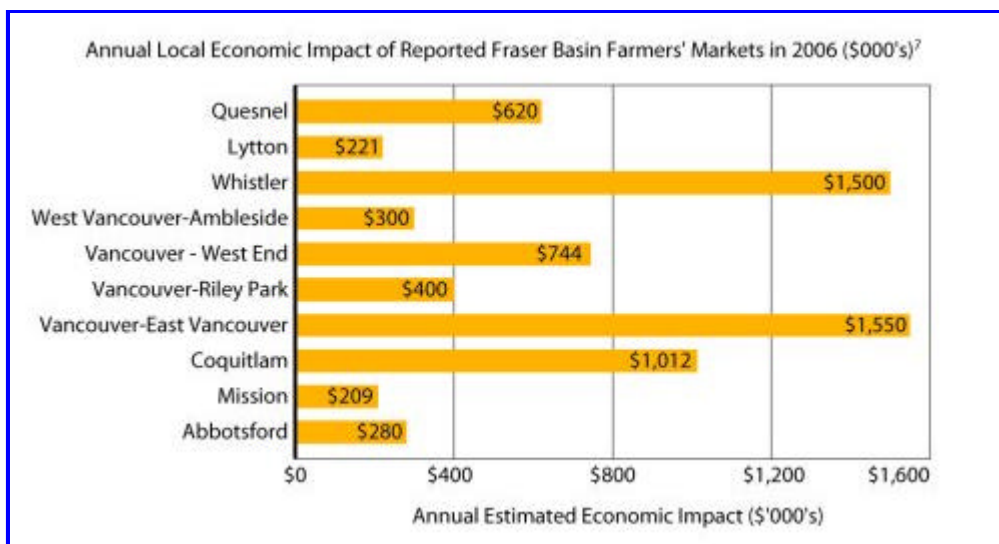


Organic and Other Producers (1992-2006) [4.5.6](#)

The number of certified organic producers in BC has increased considerably (187%), from 154 producers in 1992 to 442 producers in 2004. ⁴ This trend is also evident in the Fraser Basin, where the number of organic producers has more than doubled since 2000. There were 196 farms producing certified organic products by 2006. ⁵ In addition to certified organic producers, there are a significant number of farmers that contribute to sustainability with environmentally responsible practices. For example, an inventory of agriculture in the District of Kent in the Fraser Valley region, found 26 nearly organic producers in addition to the three certified organic producers. ⁶

Buying Local-Farmers' Markets (2006) [7.ii](#)

Producing and buying locally grown food supports local economies and communities, while reducing transportation costs and environmental impacts. The number of local farmers' markets in BC has grown considerably in the past few years, increasing from about 60 in 2000 to 100 known markets in 2006, 28 of which are within the Fraser Basin. Preliminary results from a recent UNBC study of 10 Fraser Basin farmers' markets found that, on average, 1,670 people attended each market, spending between \$11 and \$21 per person, and that each farmers' market contributed between \$210,000 and \$1.5 million annually to the local economy. ⁱⁱ "Grown or produced locally" was regularly cited as one of the top reasons for buying at farmers' markets.



INSPIRED ACTION

What is being done?

- The BC Agriculture Plan Committee held public consultation meetings across BC in 2006 to develop a "Made-in-BC" agriculture plan that will increase public awareness on agriculture and food, support engagement of First Nations, encourage the growth and diversification of the industry and enhance the contribution of agriculture to the economy, environment and quality of life: www.harvesttohome.bc.ca.
- Some local approaches to address agricultural interests, urban development pressures and conflicts with non-farm uses of rural lands include Agricultural Area Plans (11 in the Basin), Agricultural Advisory Committees (11 in the Basin), and agricultural land use inventories (14 in the Basin).⁸
- In the Thompson region, the Fraser Basin Council, in partnership with the Government of Canada, Province of BC, Pacific Salmon Commission, and the BC Agriculture Council, has installed 11 climate stations and 7 soil moisture stations to assist the agricultural community with their land and water management decisions.

What else can be done?

- Individuals and businesses (such as restaurants and retailers) can purchase local, organic and environmentally responsible products to help support local farmers and reduce environmental impacts.
- Local governments and the Agricultural Land Commission can continue to protect prime agricultural lands.
- Farm owners and operators can implement EFPs, and participate in programs such as the Strengthening Farming Program⁸ or the BC Agriculture Plan Committee.
- Governments and businesses can expand and enhance the capacity of local food processing facilities to strengthen the viability of the agri-food sector.

BC 4H Club for today's youth

BC 4H (Head, Heart, Hands and Health) is a recognized agriculture and outdoor recreation program that engages youth by helping them become productive, self-assured adults who contribute to their communities. Most 4H youth live on farms or

in rural areas. Through such programs as Rural-Urban Connections-they gain exposure to careers in agriculture, new technologies and the issues agriculture faces in rural-urban interface areas. The club offers agricultural and other skills training, plus opportunities for fun and friendship: see www.bc4h.bc.ca.



PHOTO: The BC 4H weed squad at work

REFERENCES

1. British Columbia Animal Health Care Centre Diagnostic Diary, Vol 15, Issue 1; January 2005.
2. Agricultural Land Commission. Agricultural Land Reserve database. Custom tabulation and ALC website: www.alc.gov.bc.ca. 2006.
3. BC Agriculture Council. Environmental Farm Plan Database and website 2006. www.bcac.bc.ca/efp_programs.htm.
4. Macey, Anne. 2005. Canadian Organic Growers-Certified Organic production in Canada 2004.
5. BC Certified Organic website at www.certifiedorganic.bc.ca.
6. Marion Robinson Personal Communication, October 2006.
7. Connell, David J. 2006. Economic and Community Impacts of Farmers' Markets in BC. School of Environmental Planning, University of Northern British Columbia. Available online at www.unbc.ca/planning/localfood.
8. Ministry of Agriculture and Lands Strengthening Farming website: www.agf.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/sf/about.htm.

FOOTNOTES:

- i. For a description of Agriculture Capability Classes, see: www.alc.gov.bc.ca/alr/Ag_Capability.htm.
- ii. The UNBC study calculated the annual local economic impact of each farmers' market by multiplying the direct annual sales by 2.0. UNBC acknowledges that, although this is the most commonly used multiplier, it does vary widely (from 1.2 to 8.0) and further research is required to establish a reliable multiplier for farmers' markets.