**SAMPLE LETTER**

Date:

ATTN: Mayor Name

Name of Municipality: Mayor & Council

Address

Re: Name of Municipality: Support for Food and Farmland Trust

As a local *eater/community member/gardener/farmer/etc*. I have been following the movement of the Foodlands Access Program at the CRD level. I was *emotion* to hear the Foodlands Access Program Feasibility Study was received for information and, that the land access tool with the greatest impact within the jurisdiction of local government is a food and farmland trust where land would be secured in perpetuity for the purposes of increasing levels of agricultural production.

As a constituent I wanted to share with you how important this issue is to me and I hope a strong show of support will be put forward by Name of Municipality when it is time to indicate support to the Planning and Protective Services Committee by the May 31 deadline. This proposed tool for land access aligns with this municipality’s general vision for a healthy, sustainable, robust community as well as my own personal values.

Key points of importance to me are:

* **New farmer land access**: Over half of our farmers will retire in the next decade and we know that the largest barrier to new farmers is access to land.
* **Farmland is scarce and expensive** in BC and in the region is currently selling for up to $100,000/acre. We need to ensure land within our region is not only protected but used for food provisioning in perpetuity to build local food security.
* **Leasing from private land owners is not a preferred option.** This does not provide any long-term security and investment in things that make farms successful, like fences, drainage, buildings and greenhouses are unlikely to happen where there is not secure land tenure.
* **Sustainability:** Less than 10% of what we eat comes from our region, we need to ensure that farming and food production are key contributors to local food availability as a key sustainability strategy and climate adaptation and mitigation strategy.
* **Retaining farmland also supports the retention of natural areas,** the provision of ecosystem services, and to the rural culture of the Capital Regional District.
* **Foundation of other businesses**, **it's good for the economy**. Protecting and providing access to farmland increases local food available for the local food economy and is a foundation for a whole range of culinary related businesses.
* **The trust could receive donated land** and provide an effective mechanism for retiring farmers to work with local government to develop a farm succession plan and ensure a smooth transition to a new land steward committed to long-term food security.
* **Public Benefit:** Publically held land for agriculture presents a diversity of public benefits such as food security, local food availability, regional food system viability, rural economic development, regional jobs, agri-tourism, cultural heritage and practices, learning and education, health and wellness, community engagement, wildlife habitat, biodiversity and greenspace[[1]](#footnote-1).
* **Reconciliation**. Farmland can be important sites for accessing Indigenous foods, which contribute to health and wellbeing of Indigenous communities. Land not typically considered as food-producing, such as surrounding or unused farmland, may provide Indigenous peoples with greater access to their traditional foods[[2]](#footnote-2).
* **Ecosystem services** and potential benefits of cultivated area can also include pollination, carbon sequestration/storage, erosion prevention, maintenance of soil fertility and soil development[[3]](#footnote-3).
* **Support is huge**! 92% of BC residents report that believe local food production and the reduction of dependency on food imports is very important[[4]](#footnote-4) and “food and farming” is the second most important land use in BC after “natural fresh water systems.”[[5]](#footnote-5)
* **Stormwater Management**: Having regional food land protected and used for food provisioning has other benefits such as green space protection and is a natural asset for stormwater management, climate change mitigation.
* **Food Literacy:**  Publically held farmland also provides the opportunity to fulfill knowledge needs that many people growing up and living and working in urban environments are not exposed to. Investing in the having foodlands in the public domain has benefits for everyone urban and rural and can further the positive image of the CRD’s identity and become a valuable public asset.
* Successful models, mechanisms, resources and experts in the field exist, and there is community support
* **Without farmland** there will be no farming or farmers or food!

I’m aware there has been concern brought up about unfair competition but it’s important to remember that

* By creating opportunities for new farmers, we are supporting the possibility of entrance into the sector; however, the farmers accessing the land will be paying market rates for the lease of the public lands. Any farmer can have this opportunity. Farmers who have inherited land or purchased it cheaply long ago have expressed it themselves that they hold a very significant advantage. There will not be a flood of new farms into the market all at once. New farms will take time to develop.
* More farms increase the ability to aggregate (combine farm product) and get food into the market place that we currently cannot access due to small production levels.
* New farmers will take years to get their farms to high levels of production and they will not have access to develop the same infrastructure that landowners can.

I recognize that having a regional land trust may raise my taxes,but I am *in support/not in support* because of the benefits we will receive are important and the cost is very low.(For example, a level of $127,500/year of funding would require: only $0.70 per household/year for all areas of the CRD, $0.76 per household/year for all areas of the CRD except the Southern Gulf Islands and Salt Spring Island; or $1.91 per household/year for North Saanich, Central Saanich, Sidney, and Saanich. Even at the high end it would be less than $2 per household per year to support local food security.

My hope is that *……….*

Thank you for your time and supporting this issue.

Sincerely yours,

Name,

Address

1. CRFAIR. 2015. [*Findings Report Exploring Farm and Food Lands Access in the CRD: A Local Government Farmland Trust Approach*.](http://static1.squarespace.com/static/56e5a1d4e321404618f47dc7/t/574d1918b09f953f2982a396/1464670511336/Local%2BGovernment%2BFarmland%2BTrust%2BFindings%2BReport%2BFinal_CRFAIR2015.pdf) P4. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Powell, L. 2016.  [*Agriculture’s Connection to Health: A summary of the evidence relevant to British Columbia*](http://www.phsa.ca/population-public-health-site/Documents/AgConnectiontoHealth_FullReport_April2016.pdf). Provincial Health Services Authority. P4. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Wilson, S. 2010. [*Natural Capital in BC's Lower Mainland: Valuing the benefits from nature*](http://www.davidsuzuki.org/publications/downloads/2010/DSF_lower_mainland_natural_capital.pdf). David Suzuki Foundation. P66. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. McAllister Opinion Research. 2014). [*BC Public Attitudes Toward Agriculture and Food 2014*](http://www.refbc.com/sites/default/files/BC%E2%80%90Poll-Agriculture-and-Food-Detailed-Topline-Report-Aug-2014-PUBLIC_0.pdf). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)