

Food Security Action Guide



Partners



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Where Should We Start?

Vancouver Island is a 32,000km² island, occupied by over 750,000 residents, surrounded by many smaller island communities and growing. With costly transportation options, growing climate change challenges and a population that ranges from rural-to-remote-to-urban, it is important that we work toward a secure, safe and sustainable food future for our island communities.

Did you know that California currently supplies 70% of BC's fruit and vegetables?

The *Vancouver Island Food Security Action Guide* is here to help you make small changes that lead to big impacts for our food system.

Food Security means healthy food is affordable and easy to access and that we all have the skills, resources, time and tools to make healthy food choices and prepare healthy meals. **Food security means** we can find foods that fit our cultural values and that we have opportunities to grow food in gardens and harvest it from our lands and waters. And, **in a healthy food system** the people who supply our food can do so in a way that is both economically and environmentally sustainable.

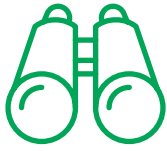
Is Vancouver Island food secure? Are we prepared if there is a major transportation disruption, natural disaster or economic crisis? Can our Island food system stand up to these challenges? And at home, if faced with an unexpected job loss, or illness, can we still put good food on the table?

We are food insecure when we cannot reliably access the foods we need to live healthy and active lives. About 10 per cent of those living in the Vancouver Island region are food insecure—they cannot always count on getting the next meal on the table.

Poverty is often at the root of the problem, living in an isolated community is another challenge and some people just need a helping hand with shopping and cooking.

Throughout our region, food champions are working hard to support a healthy food system for everyone. **You can help too, by making small changes where you live, work and play. We can all be champions for our food system.**

Let's grow a more sustainable future. Together we can ensure generations of Islanders can count on having reliable access to healthy food. **Inside you will find suggestions to help address concerns you might have about our food system.**



Vancouver Island Region Food Charter: Vision

Share this with your friends, family, local businesses and local government leaders.

A just and sustainable food system in the Island region is rooted in healthy communities, where no one is hungry and everyone has access to nutritious, culturally acceptable food. It requires viable, sustainable, and resilient systems to grow, harvest, process, transport, and distribute food while minimizing waste. A just and sustainable food system in the Vancouver Island Region means:



Health and well-being are generated for all, at all levels of the system: from food production, harvest, processing, acquisition, consumption, recovery and waste.



Farmers, fishers, harvesters, processors and distributors have the resources and knowledge needed for their trade and are able to generate livable incomes using sustainable practices.



Community environments support healthy food choices, food literacy, diverse food practices, healthy relationships with food and equitable livelihoods.



Traditional hunting, fishing, trapping, gathering, and conservation practices of Indigenous peoples are respected and enabled.



Breastfeeding is promoted and protected in communities as an optimal local, sustainable and traditional first food.



Mechanisms are in place to protect and preserve lands and waters on which our food system depends.



We have accessible and accurate information about the nutritional quality, composition, origin and safety of our food.



Mutually beneficial relationships exist between food purchasers, distributors, producers and consumers in urban, rural and isolated communities.



We have skills and knowledge about the ways food is grown, harvested, preserved, processed, purchased and cooked, and how to minimize waste.



A sustainable balance exists between fair local and international trade, and diverse vibrant production for the local market.



Eaters

We all eat! Whether shopping, cooking or sharing a meal, you can be a food champion everyday.

“I want to find affordable healthy food.”

- When grocery shopping, stick to the perimeter. Fresh, unprocessed foods are healthier and can be more bang for your buck!
- Local produce is cheapest when in season. Save money by freezing and canning seasonal foods.
- Join a Good Food Box program or bulk-buying cooperative to save money on healthy foods.
- Grow your own food in your backyard, on your balcony or in a community garden.
- Join a gleaning program to pick surplus fruit in your community.
- Connect with knowledgeable people who hunt, fish or harvest wild foods.

“I want it to be easier to cook healthy meals.”

- Prepare healthy meals with a group, at home at join a community kitchen.
- Love your leftovers! Cook in large batches so you don't have to cook so often.
- Save big on pots, pans, dishes and other cooking supplies at your local thrift shop.
- If you have difficulty grocery shopping or preparing food, contact your local volunteer services society—they may have programs to help you out.
- Learn what the information on nutrition labels means and teach your kids too.

“I am curious about Vancouver Island's traditional foods & other social/cultural connections to food.”

- Talk to your parents and grandparents about your family food traditions.
- Organize a potluck to celebrate cultural foods.
- Attend Traditional Foods events to learn about local Indigenous food systems and practices.
- Visit your library for books on traditional foods.
- Share traditional recipes, cook and eat with your children, family and friends.

“We need a healthy & sustainable food system.”

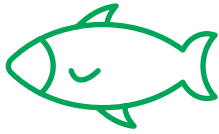
- Vote with your dollars—choose local, organic, in-season and fair trade when possible.
- Purchase from a farm stand or farm directly.
- Try purchasing fish and other seafood off the dock or from a community supported fishery.
- Visit or volunteer at your local farmers' market.
- Compost—do your landfill and garden a favour.
- Grow your own. Be sure to avoid chemical fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides, which can be hazardous to your health and the environment.
- Learn about how climate change is impacting the food we eat.
- Get in touch with your local food security hub to find out how you can support their work.
- Write to your local political representatives and business operators about your ideas and concerns about our food system.

WEBSITES

- bettertogetherbc.ca
- soilmate.com
- healthyfamiliesbc.ca/eating
- foodsecurecanada.org
- bcfoodsecuritygateway.ca
- indigenousfoodsvi.ca

APPS

- [Cookspiration](#)
- [eaTipster](#)
- [Breastfeeding Buddy](#)



New Producers, Fishers and Harvesters

Are you a new or aspiring hunter, farmer, forager or fisher? Then this section is for you! This section outlines a few of the ways in which your business can contribute to a healthy Island food system.

“How do I start a career as a grower, harvester and/or fisher?”

- Get a taste of the work; find employment or an apprenticeship on a farm or fishing boat.
- Do your research. Read up on what tools, skills and infrastructure you need to get into the field—crunch the numbers, predict challenges and put together a business plan.
- Diversify your income sources. Can you: teach, take on interns, host work parties or offer tours?
- Invest in some basic business skills training like bookkeeping and marketing.
- Find a mentor. Get connected with experienced local farmers through farmers markets, local not-for-profits and organizations.
- Get educated on the regulatory requirements from the Ministry of Agriculture and Canadian Food Inspection Agency before you start.

“I want to market my food directly to local purchasers.”

- Attend a meet-your-maker event to build connections with local food retailers and restaurateurs.
- Consider alternative distribution models, like community supported fishery or agriculture programs where customers purchase shares for seafood or produce ahead of the season.
- Find out which schools or other institutions have local procurement programs; such as farm-to-cafeteria.
- Invest in infrastructure (i.e. greenhouses, processing equipment and cold storage), that allow you to bring products to market year-round
- Read up on the Guidelines for the [Sale at Temporary Food Markets](#) on Island Health’s website.

Just for Fishers/Aquaculture Operators

- Consider becoming [Ocean Wise](#) certified or joining a program like [This Fish](#).
- Find out about which fisheries are endangered and learn about responsible fishing and aquaculture methods.

Just for Farmers

- Partner with local gleaning operations if you have products or seconds in the field that you are unable to harvest.
- Put land into a land trust to support conservation.

Just for Wild Harvesters

- Learn about responsible, respectful harvesting practices.
- Enroll in a safe harvesting program like the [Good Agriculture and Collection Practice](#) course.



New Producers, Fishers and Harvesters cont'd

“I think it’s important to protect Vancouver Island’s land, air and water for future generations.”

- Advocate for sustainable land and water policies; write a letter to local elected officials.
- Network with other producers/harvesters through your local farmers/growers/fisheries association to share and learn about new ideas or practices.

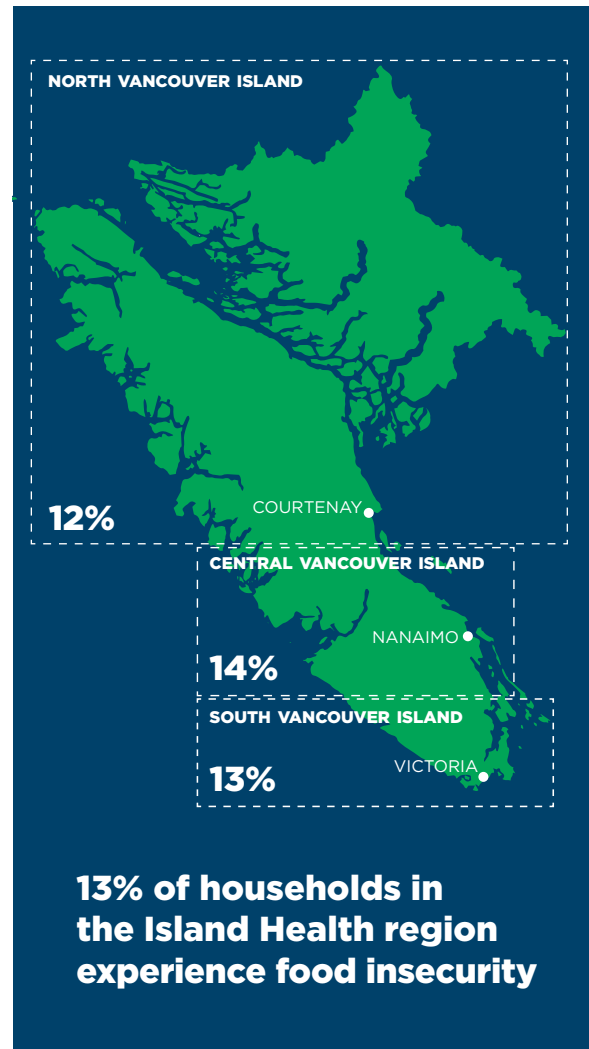
“I want to highlight local food production in my community.

- Share your skills, experience and knowledge at community events.
- Participate in community events like conferences and festivals.
- Show off your trade and encourage some new business by offering tours or taking on volunteers.
- Engage with your [local food security hub](#)
- Engage with local media. Send out a press release, tweet and write letters to the editor.

WEBSITES

- farmtocafeteriacanada.ca
- youngagrarians.org
- islandfarmfresh.com
- oceanwise.ca
- thisfish.info
- soilmate.com
- [Island Health Food Safety site](#)
- [Canada Food Inspection Agency site](#)
- [BC Agricultural Food Safety site](#)

RATES OF FOOD INSECURITY





Local Governments and Community Planners

A healthy food system starts with a healthy community
– Local government leaders and community planners are responsible for shaping our communities and our food system.

“I want my community to have a vibrant and diverse food economy.”

- Develop policies that protect your community’s food production assets including farmland, waterways, shorelines and ecosystems.
- Support food enterprises by serving local food at meetings and events.
- Communicate and raise awareness about your community’s food-related policies.
- Ensure plans, policy and zoning reflect the needs of food oriented businesses and community organizations.
- Retain industrial lands for food processing, distribution and warehousing.

“I want to ensure equitable access to healthy food for everyone in my community.”

- Explore enabling policies for innovative food distribution strategies, such as mobile farmers markets, healthy food carts & good food boxes.
- Create enabling bylaws to allow local residents to raise backyard chickens, keep bees and grow food on residential or public land.
- Collaborate with local agencies to identify ways to support food needs of the marginally housed (e.g., storage, preparation/eating infrastructure)
- Participate in development of poverty reduction strategies to ensure incomes can cover food costs in your community.
- Commit staff time to support food advisory committees and policy councils.
- Consider public space improvement to facilitate eating and breastfeeding (i.e. seating, hand washing, picnic infrastructure.)
- Engage with Island Health in neighborhood design and community planning to support healthy food choices for everyone.

“I want my community to withstand food supply issues brought about by climate change, environmental and economic challenges.”

- Develop policies that mitigate climate change and other forms of environmental damage to ensure long-term local food and water security.
- Do a community food assessment to assess food needs and assets in your community.
- Identify local food reserves as part of your emergency preparedness planning.
- Raise awareness about potential threats to the food supply; encourage community members to keep emergency food supplies.

“I want to support community food literacy.”

- Celebrate food in your community through events and food-friendly public spaces where people can cook and eat together.
- Plant beautiful, edible shrubs, trees and native plants in visible public places
- Integrate food with parks and rec programs and infrastructure. (Consider community kitchens and orchard gardens).
- Use public signage to build community awareness of community food assets (i.e. fish bearing streams, community gardens, fruit trees)

RESOURCES

- [PHSA Food Action Framework](#)
- [PHSA Seat At The Table Report](#)
- [PHSA HBE Linkages Document](#)
- [Planning.org Food Policy Planning Guide](#)
- [Plan H Healthy Eating Food and Food Security Action](#)
- [North Saanich Whole Community Agriculture Strategy](#)



Public Institutions and Private Enterprises

Foster positive change and inspire others with stories of your organization's positive food practices.

“I want to support a healthy sustainable food system for Vancouver Island.”

- Learn about product labeling and certification programs and consider making a commitment to ethical and sustainable product guidelines.
- Support local food enterprises by choosing them as suppliers.
- Inspire others with stories of your organization's positive food practices.
- Participate in poverty reduction strategies and coalitions

“I want to create an environment that makes healthy choices easy for my staff and clients.”

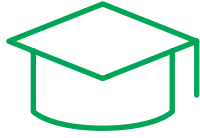
- Ensure all your facilities have places for staff to store, prepare and eat healthy lunches.
- Implement guidelines that encourage healthier food and beverage choices at meetings and events.
- Provide healthy “convenience” foods for staff and clients—consider integrating perennial fruit bearing trees and shrubs.
- Use signs, physical cues and price incentives to encourage healthy and sustainable food choices among staff and clients.
- Follow the Healthier Choices in Vending Machines in BC Public Buildings policy.
- Explore being a site for, or coordinator of, a [Good Food Box](#) program for staff/clients.

“I want to foster positive relationships with food and respect for the cultural diversity of food practices.”

- Encourage staff social events that are centered around healthy food.
- Integrate healthy food into programs offered to staff and clients to improve participation.
- Include positive and educational messaging about food in your newsletter or other communication materials.

RESOURCES

- farmtocafeteriacanada.ca
- [BC Eat Smart Meet Smart Guidelines](#)
- [BC Healthy Vending Guidelines](#)



Educators and Schools

Children and youth are the future stewards of our food system. Create or join a network of educators to discuss options to teaching food security to youth, as well as celebrating culturally important food traditions in the classroom.

“I want my students to experience the benefits of eating locally and healthily.”

- Start a lunch-time healthy cooking class.
- Grow peas and lettuce on your classroom’s windowsill.
- Build a vegetable/native plant garden, orchard, greenhouse or compost in your schoolyard and build curriculum around it.
- Celebrate culturally important food traditions in the classroom.
- Champion a Farm to School program in your school and connect with supportive community partners.

“I want all my students to have access to wholesome meals.”

- Advocate for universal school breakfast and lunch programs that integrate healthy meals.
- Review the foods available for sale in your school—is there a way to make the healthy options more appealing?
- Ensure your school is meeting the Food and Beverage Guidelines for Sales in BC Schools.
- Work with local cooks and start a Growing Chefs program.
- Explore implementing the BC Fruit and Vegetable Nutritional Program in your school.
- Participate in poverty reduction strategies

“I want to network with other educators and share resources about food security.”

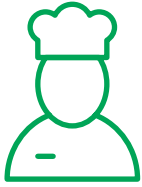
- Create or join a network of educators to discuss options to teaching food security to youth.
- Contact your local dietitian in Island Health’s public health program.

“I wish my students had a better understanding of what food security is and how it impacts them.”

- Look for local non-profit organizations that offer in-school programs or field trips related to food.
- Talk to a dietitian in Island Health’s public health program to learn about curriculum you could offer your class.
- Invite an expert from your community to host a pro-d workshop on how to integrate food literacy into all areas of your curriculum.
- Ask local growers and harvesters to provide mentoring opportunities for your students.
- Invite [Indigenous Food Champions](#) to share the teachings about foods in the area.

RESOURCES

- farmtocafeteriacanada.ca
- growingchefs.ca
- healthyschoolsbc.ca
- [BC Healthy Vending Guidelines](#)



Grocery Store and Restaurant Operators

Learn about ethical and sustainable product labeling and certification programs and reduce your carbon footprint by offering your consumer available in-season, local produce.

“I want to sell products that are environmentally and socially responsible.”

- Reduce your carbon footprint by offering your consumer available in-season, local produce.
- Learn how to legally buy ‘off-the-dock’.
- Participate in meet-your-maker events and develop relationships with local producers.
- Feature environmentally and socially responsible products on special boards and fresh sheets.
- Grow food at your place of business.
- Join the Island Chefs Collaborative.

“I want to make it easier for my consumers to make healthy choices.”

- Learn about ethical and sustainable product labeling and certification programs.
- Post recipe ideas for in-season, local produce.
- Connect with local recreation program to find out about cooking and healthy eating courses that your customers might be interested in.
- Offer healthy grocery store tours run by dietitians, highlighting how to read nutrition labels and look for local products.

“I want to support groups in my community that are helping people to access foods.”

- Support food recovery by donating healthy food items (see: BC Food Donor Environment Act).
- Volunteer your time and food expertise to food banks, community programs and schools.
- Donate healthy food to community events to promote your business and healthy food choices.
- Participate in poverty reduction strategies in your community

Just for Grocery Stores

- Nudge customers in the right direction. Arrows pointing to the produce aisle can encourage fruit and vegetable purchases.
- Shopping carts equipped with placards depicting healthy choices are great for sales of fresh produce.
- Promote healthy impulse buys by stocking more nutritious options near the check-out.
- Take the mystery out of per-kilo produce shopping by providing digital weight stations that allow users to calculate the cost per amount, or consider per unit pricing.
- If your store has a points or loyalty program, offer point bonuses for healthy purchases.
- Create displays that highlight ingredients for a healthy, affordable recipe, include a recipe card for customers to take home with them.

Just for Restaurants and Cafés

- Make healthier choices more visible or prominent
- Give creative names to healthy menu items.
- Provide nutritional information that is easy to access/understand for standard menu items.
- Participating in the Informed Dining Program.

RESOURCES

- soilmate.com
- [Island Chefs Collaborative](http://IslandChefsCollaborative.com)
- oceanwise.ca
- [Cornell Food Psychology Lab](http://CornellFoodPsychologyLab.com)
- informeddining.ca
- farmfolkcityfolk.ca/DonatingFoodGuide



Community Organizations and Service Providers

Clients benefit when organizations incorporate healthy food into their services, even if food is not the primary focus. Your clients will have more focus, energy and learning ability if their nutrition needs are being met. Food can be a great “carrot” to draw people in, enhance social connections, and develop people’s skills.

“I think it’s important that all of my clients, and their families, are eating well.”

- Have simple healthy snacks available during group programs or drop in times.
- Involve clients in food growing or food preparation as a part of programs.
- Feature cultural snacks and meals. Invite clients to share stories about their food traditions.
- Use conversations around food as a way to help participants relax and open up opportunities for sharing on other health topics.
- Encourage dietitians and health care providers to prescribe fruits/vegetables to clients.

“I want my programs to reduce food access barriers.”

- Connect your clients with food education or food access programs.
- Consider family eating schedules in your program design. Schedule the program to allow family meal times, or provide food if occurring during a typical mealtime.
- Create a baby-friendly environment to facilitate breastfeeding.

“I think it is important to support a healthy sustainable food system on Vancouver Island.”

- Provide local, organically produced foods during your community programs, meetings or events.
- Seek out a local farmer, fisher or grocer who may be willing to donate some excess product to your organization.
- Participate in poverty reduction initiatives in your community
- Compost the food waste from your programs.

“I want to be prepared to meet the needs of my clients even if there is a spike in food prices or an interruption in our food supply.”

- Be flexible with the foods you provide clients. Choose items that are in season and keep a stockpile of local preserves for the off season.
- Have an emergency kit with enough food and water for on-site staff and clients in case of an emergency.

WEBSITES

- foodsecurecanada.org
- cfccanada.ca
- whyhunger.org