

Township of  
**Langley**



Est. 1873

## **N E W S   R E L E A S E**

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### **LAND MATCHING PROGRAM GETS NEW FARMERS WORKING IN THEIR FIELD**

Farming and the local production of food are vital to all of us, but with property prices soaring in the Lower Mainland, would-be farmers who want to get into the business of working the land may find the cost of obtaining that land prohibitive.

To help a new generation of farmers, the Township of Langley is supporting the BC Land Matching Program, delivered by Young Agrarians, which pairs people who have agricultural land but don't have the ability to farm it with those who are eager to farm but don't have land.

"The Township of Langley is home to half of the farms in Metro Vancouver and agriculture is a thriving industry," said Mayor Jack Froese. "But if land is not passed on to younger generations – along with knowledge and opportunities to learn – it can be difficult to break into the farming business. To ensure farming remains viable for generations to come and to build our capacity, we have to encourage those who are interested in farming and make good use of the land we have. The Young Agrarians have a really effective, hands-on approach to helping new farmers get started."

Young Agrarians (YA) is a Canada-wide network that operates in BC as a program of FarmFolk CityFolk Society, a registered charity. YA provides support to up-and-coming farmers by gathering resources online, coordinating educational and networking events on and off farms, providing business mentorship to new farms in start-up, and facilitating access to land. The BC Land Matching Program pairs people who want to farm but can't afford property with those who have agricultural land but don't want to farm it, or want to ease out of their full-time farming responsibilities without giving up their land or animals.

Earlier this year, Township Council joined the partnership and made a one-time contribution of \$10,000 to the BC Land Matching Program on the recommendation of the Township's Agricultural Advisory and Economic Enhancement Committee, as one of the initiatives contained in its Agricultural Viability Strategy.

Walnut Grove couple Jeff and Ava Reeve are the first Langley farmers to be matched through the program and recently launched Reeve Pastures on 18 acres of leased land in Glen Valley, where they raise lamb and other livestock. The initiative has given them the opportunity to pursue their passion, start building for the future, and contribute to the local food supply, without incurring massive debt.

Neither Jeff nor Ava were born into farming, but for Jeff, who previously worked in property management and other jobs, farming had always been his dream – one that seemed a long way off.

“Farming was the long-term plan but we didn’t think we could be into it so soon,” Ava said. “We had looked at buying agricultural land and found that it was far beyond our means at this point, even outside of southwest BC. Just the interest on a loan to get land would be debilitating.”

After hearing about the BC Land Matching Program, the Reeves contacted Darcy Smith, the BC Land Program Manager and Land Matcher for Metro Vancouver and Fraser Valley. Smith helped the budding farmers find suitable land, complete with a supportive resident farmer to answer their questions and mentor them. She also encouraged the couple to plan ahead, made sure they understood the responsibilities involved, and helped them navigate the associated legal matters.

“Darcy prompted us with a lot of really good questions,” Ava said. “We thought, ‘Hey! Land! Yes!’ but she slowed us down, made us look at the process, and set us up in a way that worked for us long-term.”

“As a rural community with a lot of farmland, the Township of Langley is uniquely positioned to be leaders in creating opportunities for new farmers while supporting farmland owners,” said Smith. “We are excited that the Township is investing in the future of new and young farmers by partnering with Young Agrarians, and applaud its forward-thinking approach to ensuring farmland continues to be farmed.”

Although life in farming may mean long days, physical labour, and the emotional toll that the reality of raising animals can take, for Jeff, it is a chance to do something meaningful.

“I’ve always been motivated by the idea of the lifestyle,” he said, noting that local farmers play an important role in educating the public about where their food comes from, and provide a direct connection between food producers and consumers. “I went in wanting to live in a style that is authentic, and I’ve been loving it.”

As the first to benefit from the BC Land Matching Program, the Reeves are hoping other budding farmers will explore the program and start making their dream of farming a reality in Langley Township.

“A lot of young people just need a chance to try it out and get started, to get a foot in the door,” Ava said. “We would highly recommend this program for new farmers. This opportunity was exactly what we needed to get our ideas off the ground, give us the experience we needed with lower financial risks, help us refine our ideas and plans, and move us toward the farming future we want.”

Those who have farmland, want farmland, would like to learn more, or network with others are encouraged to save the date for Saturday, November 17 when a Young Agrarians Land Linking event is held at the George Preston Recreation Centre from 1 to 6pm. Additional details to come.

For more information on the BC Land Matching Program, visit **[youngagrarians.org/land](http://youngagrarians.org/land)** or contact Russell Nelson, the Township of Langley's Senior Long Range Planner at 604.533.6056 or [rnelson@tol.ca](mailto:rnelson@tol.ca).

*The BC Land Matching Program is funded in Metro Vancouver - Fraser Valley by the Bullitt Foundation, Metro Vancouver, B.C. Ministry of Agriculture, Township of Langley, and the City of Surrey.*