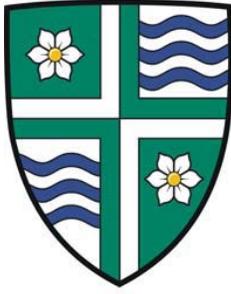


Township of
Langley



Est. 1873

Agricultural Viability Strategy

Phase 2: Public and Stakeholder Consultation
Summary Report

DRAFT July 22, 2011

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AVS2 was prepared with the guidance and assistance of the Agricultural Viability Strategy Task Force of the Agricultural Advisory Committee. Members of the Task Force were:

- Dave Melnychuk, Chair of Task Force and Professional Agrologist;
- Vic MacDonald, AAC Member and blueberry farmer;
- Mark Robbins, Regional Agrologist, BC Ministry of Agriculture;
- Karen Taylor, AAC Member and Farm Credit Canada; and
- Steve Trummler, AAC Member and former executive in the agri-food industry.

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Appendix A: AVS Survey Summary Reports – two volumes, under separate cover

Appendix B: Summary of AVS Survey Open-ended Question Responses

Appendix C: Vision Statements

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Township of Langley is one of the major agricultural communities in British Columbia. Approximately 75% of the municipality's land base is within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). This area accounts for about 38% of the ALR within Metro Vancouver and supports a wide range of crop and livestock operations. About 12,971 hectares (55%) of the ALR land in the Township of Langley is actively farmed.

Agriculture in Langley is characterized by a diversity of crops and livestock operations. It is a \$257 million industry, with a total farm capital of \$1.9 billion in 2006. Langley generates the third highest gross farm receipts in BC. Its farms produce high revenue products.

It is important that the ALR lands be well managed and that existing farms and activities be enhanced. Accordingly, the Township of Langley is preparing an Agricultural Viability Strategy (AVS) to establish an integrated policy and management framework for promoting and sustaining a viable agricultural community. The purpose of the AVS is to enhance the viability and sustainability of agriculture by focusing on farm viability issues, including the potential for local food production, diversification opportunities, economic challenges, urbanization conflicts, environmental issues and competition for agricultural land. The Langley Agricultural Advisory Committee is an active participant in the preparation of the AVS.

The AVS is being done in three stages. An Agricultural Profile was completed in 2010 during Phase 1 of the strategy development process. The Agricultural Profile was a summary of the key farm sectors of the community - complete with agricultural statistics and inventory maps of all agricultural uses in the Township.

Phase 2 (AVS2) is focused on public and stakeholder consultation, including a telephone survey and four focus group meetings. Issues identified in the survey and focus groups are compiled in this summary, which will help with setting a broad policy direction for the final phase.

Phase 3 (AVS3) will involve analyzing the information gathered in the first two phases, and working to create a comprehensive agricultural viability strategy with a set of policy tools that can be used to promote the future of agriculture in the Township of Langley.



2.0 OVERVIEW OF AVS2

AVS2 was designed to gather community input on a wide range of issues, challenges and opportunities facing agriculture in the Township of Langley. There were two components:

- (1) a statistically-valid community survey and
- (2) a series of focus group meetings with residents and farmers.

The quantitative survey results complement qualitative comments from the focus group meetings. The AVS2 report presents the range of observations, comments, suggestions and solutions discussed. The information has not been verified or fact-checked by the consultants, but is presented as a representation of stakeholder input. Collectively, information gathered in AVS2 will provide valuable insights for policy development in AVS3.

3.0 AVS Survey

The purpose of the AVS Survey was to develop a clear understanding of community values and current issues about farming, by involving residents in shaping the future of agriculture in the Township of Langley. The objectives of the AVS Survey were:

- to create a number of benchmark questions to be used in this and future surveys to allow comparisons of trends over time;
- to gather residents' perceptions of current community agricultural issues;
- to determine specific issues of Township-wide concern; rural area issue for heritage and tourism, environment, traffic, and growth as they relate to the agricultural community;
- to determine specific issues of community concern in the rural area; and
- to collect agricultural demographic information to supplement other information sources.

Results of the AVS Survey will be used to develop a better understanding of future opportunities and expectations for farmers and farming. It will be used to determine future policies and identify opportunities for enhancing farming in the Agricultural Land Reserve, as well as identifying other issues and constraints to farming.

3.1 Survey Methodology

The AVS Survey was conducted using a statistically valid, geographically stratified random sampling method. It was a telephone survey conducted by TNS Canadian Facts between February 18 and March 18, 2011.

A total of 1,470 telephone interviews with Township residents were completed. Since the survey was designed to focus on farming and rural issues, there was a deliberate attempt to over-sample residents in the rural areas, relative to the overall Township population. Of the total telephone interviews completed, 421 were with urban residents and 1,049 with rural residents. The samples represented a 28.6% urban and 71.4% rural split. Detailed survey samples are summarized in the following table.

	Actual Interviews Completed	Percentage of Total
Urban	421	28.6%
Rural	1,049	71.4%
- Rural North	263	17.9%
- Rural South	267	18.2%
- Rural Central	259	17.6%
- Salmon River Uplands	260	17.7%
Total Township	1,470	100.0%

TNS Canadian Facts has produced two reports. Volume I: General Summary documents the high level findings of the survey. Volume II: Technical Report contains all the verbatim responses to the open-ended questions, detailed statistical tables for closed-ended questions, and a detailed description of the survey methodology. The reports are provided under separate cover.

3.2 Highlights of Survey Results

The primary purpose of AVS2 was to conduct a public and stakeholder consultation program. The perspectives and issues compiled in this summary report should be analyzed in conjunction with other data sources, including the Agricultural Profile prepared in AVS1 and other information sources such as the Langley Tomorrow Surveys conducted in 2002 and 2006. This section highlights some of the findings of the AVS Survey.

- **Farming is important in Langley:** Survey respondents were asked to rank the importance of farming in the community. Those most likely to say it is “very” or “somewhat important” were urban residents, with 95% said so. Rural residents felt farming was (very/somewhat) important also, with 94% of farmers and 92% of non-farmers saying that this was so.
- **Langley residents value local food production:** All (100%) urban residents were adamant that local food production should be encouraged, while 96% of farmers and 98% rural non-farmers also agreed.
- **Full-time farmers are the minority in the community:** Only 9% of farmers reported that they were 100% reliant on their farm income. About 25% claimed to rely on 50% to 99% of the income, 17% said that they relied on less than one-half of the income from farming and 45% said less than 10% of their income came from farming.
- **Most farmers own their land, but most of it is not actively used as farmland:** The vast majority (80%) of farmers said that they owned their land and 17% leased it (3% said they didn’t know). Almost one-half (48%) of farmers either farmed the land themselves, or had someone else farm their land. The remaining one-half (50%) did not farm the land at all.
- **Properties are not large enough to support a viable farm:** Many reasons were cited why the land was not farmed. One of the most common reasons was the size and suitability of the land for farming. Other reasons related to life-stage, some farmers are retired, widowed or just too elderly to perform the arduous work required, and still others

commented that they had other jobs or businesses that provided employment. These reasons are consistent with the results of the Langley Tomorrow Survey conducted in 2002 and 2006 when similar questions were asked in the “rural” portion of the questionnaire.

- **Farmers are concerned about water-related issues:** Water plays a crucial role in farming. It is an essential element for livestock and horticulture. Survey results indicate that water supply, irrigation and drainage are “top-of-mind” issues affecting the long term viability of farming. Here is a sample of responses: “The biggest problem is water” ... “management of water resources” ... “water contamination by chemicals” ... “water sources are running out” ... “well water with high arsenic content” ... “water is scarce due to upstream contamination” ... “water stays on the land too long”
- **Farmers feel that they need a stronger voice:** As the community continues to urbanize, farmers feel that priority has been given to urban issues. Rural and farming issues are not well understood and well represented at the municipal level. Farmers feel that they need a stronger voice on Council and in planning of the rural areas. Representative responses include: “The Township should take care of our farming lands and should not change the use of the lands for different purposes.” ... “The Township should have better bylaws to protect farming” ... “They (farmers) need the backing of the local council”
- **There was good support for an Agricultural Viability Strategy:** Urban residents were more likely than their rural counterparts to agree that a strategy was needed to help plan and guide farming in the Township; 84% and 81%, respectively. Likewise, 76% of farmers agreed this might be needed.

The AVS Survey included closed-ended (multiple-choice) questions and open-ended questions. There were four open-ended questions to allow the respondents to provide detailed responses on key issues. The verbatim responses to the four questions are provided in Volume II: Technical Report (under separate cover). Courtesy of Mark Robbins, a member of the AVS Task Force who is a Regional Agrologist with the BC Ministry of Agriculture, a summary of open-ended question responses is provided in Appendix B.

Survey respondents were asked to identify issues that should be addressed in an agricultural strategy. These issues were grouped into three categories: (1) Service Provision, (2) Environmental and Natural Resources and (3) Economic. The top five issues for each category are summarized below. The top issues garnered support of the majority of respondents (ranging from 65% to 88%). This suggests that there were strong agreements in the issues that the AVS should consider.

Service Provision

1. Water supply (87%)
2. Drainage (87%)
3. Protection of groundwater (87%)
4. Provision of utilities such as gas and hydro (79%)
5. Irrigation (78%)

Environmental and Natural Resources

1. Water use issues (88%)
2. Materials used such as fuel, pesticides, etc. (86%)
3. Waste management issues (83%)
4. Air quality issues (75%)
5. Energy supply and usage issues (70%)

Economic

1. Property Taxation (86%)
2. The profitability of farms (71%)
3. Government bylaws and regulation (71%)
4. Availability of financing and loans (66%)
5. Availability of farm labour (65%)

4.0 Focus Group Meetings

Focus Group meetings were held in April 2011 to provide “face-to-face” opportunities for residents, active farmers and industry stakeholders to explore issues affecting agriculture and farming in the community. The specific objectives of the Focus Group meetings were to:

- better understand farming in the Township,
- better understand the opportunities, issues and constraints to farming,
- better identify potential issues and opportunities to promote farming in the Township,
- better identify areas of support and priorities for ongoing agricultural research,
- better identify areas where the Township can support and encourage farming, and
- better prepare an effective Agricultural Viability Vision and Strategy.

The AVS Task Force assisted Township staff in compiling an invitation list for the Focus Group meetings. Invitations to the events were emailed to potential participants on the invitation list, as well as through individual telephone calls. Advertisements in the local newspapers were also used to publicize the events and seek public input and participation. In addition, the events were posted on the Township web site, Facebook and Twitter.

Four Focus Group meetings were held as follows:

FG1: April 12, 1:30 p.m.

FG1 was held primarily for livestock farmers or “producers” such as dairy farmers, poultry farmers and equestrian centre operators. Sixty-four personal invitations were sent with eleven people attended.

FG2: April 12, 6:30 p.m.

FG2 was held primarily for horticulture farmers or “growers” such as operators of nurseries, greenhouses, wineries and mushroom farms. Seventy-seven personal invitations were sent with fourteen people attended.

FG3: April 14, 1:30 p.m.

FG3 was held primarily for representatives from agricultural associations and government agencies such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Agricultural Land Commission, Metro Vancouver Regional Agricultural Advisory Committee, BC Dairy Foundation, BC Poultry Producers, BC Hothouse and Greenhouse Growers Association, Langley 4-H, Langley Horse Federation and Langley Sustainable Agriculture Foundation. Sixty-six invitations were sent with seventeen people attended.

FG4: April 14, 6:30 p.m.

FG4 was open to the general public, including urban residents, non-farmers in the rural areas and active farmers who were not able to attend the other FGs. Advertisements were placed in local papers and on the Township website to publicize the event. Participants represented a diverse group of interests including current and former farmers, real-estate developers and agents, ag-industry representatives, and urban residents interested in local agriculture and farming. While there were advertisements and public announcements, fifty personal invitations were sent and thirty people attended.

4.1 Focus Group Format

The Focus Group meetings were designed to explore issues affecting agriculture and farming in the community. The format of each Focus Group meeting is outlined below.

1. Overview of AVS: Staff provided a brief introduction of the project explaining the three-phase process.
2. Overview of AVS2: Staff provided a summary of the two components (survey and focus groups), including highlights of survey results.
3. Overview of key trends: Consultants provided a summary of macro-trends that have an impact on farming and agricultural production.
4. Focus Group discussions: Using a modified World Café format, the consultants facilitated structured discussions.
 - Participants were asked to share their ideas under an overarching question and to build connections between their various ideas over several rounds of informal but focused conversations. The question was: From your perspective, what are the most important issues the Agricultural Viability Strategy must address to ensure the future of farming in the Township?
 - Participants were then asked to break into small groups focusing on one of three framing topics: social, environmental and economic. These three framing topics were chosen as they represent the three main facets of sustainability. Working within these topics ensures that the resulting strategy will be developed within a framework capturing a broad spectrum of values and criteria related to sustainability.
 - Once in the small group, participants were asked to identify their top responses to the question (issues) and their proposed solutions to those issues (actions) as

framed by the small group topic. Once these issues and actions were identified, the group worked together to identify obvious themes and delved into deeper discussion around each theme.

Each group spent thirty minutes discussing each framing topic with the help of a “table host”, reporting back to the larger group after each session. Major themes were identified during this process, and were generally consistent over each Focus Group. The major themes will be discussed in greater detail in section 4.2 below.

5. Reflection and Summary: The consultants led a discussion to reflect on the themes, asked the participants to provide a short vision statement by completing the phrase: *My dream for the future of agriculture in Langley is...* The responses will be used to help create a vision statement for the AVS. The verbatim responses are provided in Appendix C.

4.2 Focus Group – Issues and Actions

The Focus Group discussions were structured based on the three aspects of sustainability: social, environmental and economic. Participants were asked to identify the most important issues that the Agricultural Viability Strategy must address to ensure the future of farming in the Township. This section summarizes the issues and possible actions and solutions.

4.2.1 Social

The framing topic “Social” was used to identify issues related to broad topics such as demographic change, succession planning, labour supply, training of young farmers and new consumer trends. There were five main themes: (1) Succession Planning and Labour Shortage, (2) New Consumer Trends and Consumer Education, (3) Agricultural-Urban Interface Conflicts, (4) Land Use, and (5) Governance and Regulation

Social Theme 1: Demographic Change, Succession Planning and Labour Shortage

Many farmers are older, and are facing the questions of what to do with their farms once they retire. Do they pass them on to their children? Do they sell the land for a profit so they can retire? Are their children interested in taking over the farm? Like in other parts of Canada, farm succession planning is an issue that would affect the long-term viability of agriculture in Langley.

There is a distinct shortage of local farm labour. Many farms rely on seasonal workers, particularly those from Mexico and Central America. These workers require housing, medical care and other social services in Canada that should be managed carefully to ensure that the needs of the employer (farmer) and those of the worker are met in a respectful manner. Farmers also expressed the desire to promote farming to local youth as a viable career choice. Training and retention of skilled labour was also identified as an issue for local farmers.

Participants identified the following actions to help mitigate the issues:

- establish demonstration farms that would act as training facilities for young people to learn the skills and expertise and allow them to take over for the aging farmers;
- create programs connecting young people interested in farming with more established farmers to share knowledge and experience would help provide a new generation with the skills and experience needed to be successful farmers;

- support the Federal Guest Worker Program - local farmers feel it is essential for the success of their farms;
- monitor seasonal worker housing to ensure that workers are living in safe, sanitary and affordable housing while they are in Canada;
- provide social workers to work exclusively with seasonal migrant workers to ensure that their social needs are being met;
- promote celebrations and festivals that include seasonal workers to increase the community's awareness of the valuable work and skills they provide, and to break down cultural barriers between seasonal workers and local residents, ideas included a culinary event featuring food from different countries and/or a soccer tournament;
- encourage "low cost" lending rates for young farmers to encourage more young people to consider farming as a profession; and
- establish farming apprenticeship programs in local high schools, colleges and universities leading to an increase in skilled local labour.

Social Theme 2: New Consumer Trends and Consumer Education

Participants identified several issues related to new consumer trends such as the preference for safe, local foods. While these new trends are getting people to learn more about agriculture and farming, further work is needed to bridge the gap between the new trends (such as the 100-mile Diet movement) and actually knowing what is grown where and by whom.

Consumer education is an excellent way to get people interested in farming, sustainability and local food production. Participants identified the following actions to help mitigate the issues:

- brand Langley agriculture: participants identified farmers markets, farm tours, and harvest festivals as key ways to educate people about local food production and farm practices; and
- promote community gardens in urban areas can lead to increased awareness about food systems and the importance of local agriculture.
- build a centralized agri-complex that could act as a community centre, an education hub, an exhibition hall, a museum and historical centre, and a local food hub providing a one-stop shop for food production, marketing and sales. The complex would be a "meeting place" for the farmer and the consumer. In addition, it would provide office/meeting space for local agricultural groups allowing for knowledge sharing and community building.

Social Theme 3: Agricultural-Urban Interface Conflicts

Participants identified the conflicts that occur when urban development encroaches on active farmland. Complaints about noise, smells from livestock and fertilizers, and pesticide use are common in areas where residential uses are adjacent to farm uses. Farmers feel that rural residents who are not farming like the idea of living in a farm-like setting, but do not understand the realities of productive farming which includes loud machinery (and roosters), odiferous fertilizers and livestock and the necessity of pesticide use in certain agricultural situations.

Farmers also identified the increase in urban type crime that has been associated with residential/urban encroachment. Theft of farm equipment and animals, marijuana grow-operations and associated drug/gang violence were all identified as major challenges facing local farmers.

Participants identified several ways to mitigate some of the interface issues:

- create better, more effective buffer zones between residential and agricultural properties;
- regulate land purchases by requiring prospective purchasers of residential property adjacent to active farmland to sign an agreement stating they understand the “realities of farming” and the implications of living adjacent to a working farm prior to purchasing the land. (The Township currently uses a Restrictive Covenant to have subdivisions in and adjacent to the ALR flagged so that new owners will acknowledge and agree that as the lands are subject to potential farm related activities which may expose the lands to normal sights, sounds and smells associated with normal farm practices, and that the lands will not be used without voluntarily accepting such sights, sounds and smells associated with such farm practices. This restrictive covenant could be expanded to residential properties outside of/adjacent to the ALR.)
- prohibit non-agricultural residential uses on arable, productive land; and
- increase police presence in agricultural areas and increasing monitoring of agricultural uses (and power usage) to thwart marijuana grow operations.

Social Theme 4: Land Use

Participants identified several land use issues that have direct implications on the future of farming in the Township. Subdivision of larger agricultural plots into smaller parcels has a major effect on farming. The smaller the parcel, the less likely it will be financially viable to farm, and once land is subdivided it is almost impossible to consolidate back into a larger more viable plot. Subdivided parcels also lead to higher land prices, which can push farmers out of an area due to increased costs and increased land speculation.

Participants identified the following actions to help mitigate the land use issues:

- restrict subdivision of productive agricultural land as a possible solution to the loss of larger agricultural parcels;
- provide incentives for those working to consolidate smaller parcels for an agricultural use;
- prohibit residential development on arable agricultural land or minimizing building footprint and/or regulating setbacks to discourage country estate development;
- prohibit large-lot rural/country estates as a solution to the loss of productive farms;
- promote smaller niche farms that can be successful on small plots;
- promote programs that will connect owners of country estates with farmers interested in leasing their land for niche/small scale agricultural uses such as an apiary or gourmet lettuce production; and
- consider the option the build temporary greenhouse structures instead of concrete based structures.

Social Theme 5: Governance and Regulation

Participants identified several issues relation to governance and regulation at the municipal, provincial and federal levels. Issues around water (access, cost, pollution) were the most commonly identified. The prohibitive cost of municipal water servicing is limiting many farmers.

Participants also identified building setbacks and other zoning regulations as issues that have a negative effect on their farm practices. Non-farmers or those who leave their land fallow who exploit farming tax breaks were also identified as an issue. Farmers would like farming to be recognized by the municipality as the priority use in agricultural areas and would like a

stronger voice in local government. Unclear application of government regulation (such as Fisheries and Ocean Canada legislation, Right to Farm Act, ALC Act) was also identified as an issue for local farmers.

Participants identified the following actions to help mitigate the issues:

- increase tax incentives/property tax breaks on productive farmland;
- implement tax increases for those who keep their land fallow;
- increase engagement between regulatory bodies and farmers to allow farmers to have a say in setting regulations on farmland – better communication is needed between regulatory agencies to ensure that regulations work together and are easy to understand and enforce; and
- get funding/tax revenue from Metro Vancouver for being the “bread basket” of the Metro area - compensation for feeding the region.

4.2.2 Environmental

The framing topic “Environmental” was used to identify issues related to broad environmental topics such as climate change, wildlife habitat, waste management, pollution, pesticide use, and water quality issues. There were five main themes: (1) Water, (2) Waste Management, (3) Chemical Use and Pollution, (4) Wildlife Habitat, and (5) Municipal Services and Regulations.

It is important to note that most of the Environmental themes are consistent with the results of the AVS Survey. The Focus Group meetings provided opportunities for more in-depth exploratory discussions of the issues.

Environmental Theme 1: Water

Water is a big issue in the Township of Langley. Water costs, access to municipal water, water quality, drainage and runoff, and the disposal of waste water were all identified as major issues facing local farmers. Development upstream can lead to soil erosion and clogged ditches, and polluted run-off from paved areas (roads, sidewalks, and driveways) can have a negative effect on farm practices further down the water system.

Participants identified the following actions to help mitigate the water issues:

- ask Metro Vancouver to reduce water costs for food producing farms as a part of the Local Food Strategy;
- advocate for province-wide water metering to increase awareness about water preservation and prices;
- regulate and monitor pesticide/fertilizer use near both groundwater sources and fish producing streams and rivers;
- work with Fisheries and Oceans Canada and nearby municipalities to mitigate soil erosion and clogged ditches;
- meter water in urban areas to reduce water usage, thereby preserving cheaper groundwater for farmers;
- require better stormwater management systems throughout the Township – redirecting rainwater to storage tanks for fields rather than into the sewer system and
- map aquifers in order to generate priorities/management strategies to protect aquifer resources.

Environmental Theme 2: Waste Management

Dumping on agricultural land, improper disposal of chemicals and pesticides, and disposal of animal waste were identified as important issues facing local farmers. Contamination from landfill and animal waste can adversely affect the soil and water quality.

Participants identified the following actions to help mitigate the waste issues:

- support alternative waste management systems - i.e. an anaerobic digester and waste to energy technology;
- provide a centralized composting system that may tie-in with above;
- provide educational materials to farmers about how to handle manure, fertilizers and pesticides;
- enforce tighter regulation and increased fines for dumping on agricultural land; and
- provide a centralized area for managing agricultural waste.

Environmental Theme 3: Chemical Use and Pollution

Chemical control and storage, fertilizer and pesticide run-off, contaminated well water and streams, and soil contamination and reclamation and increased air pollution were identified as environmental issues that affect viability of farming in the community.

Participants identified the following actions to help mitigate the issues:

- educate farmers on best management practices around chemical pesticide/herbicide usage and disposal;
- increase the monitoring and regulation of local well-water and streams;
- banning cosmetic pesticides in the Township;
- enforce regular monitoring and reporting on air and water quality to prevent crisis situations;
- educate farmers on how to be environmental stewards and still run a viable farm; and
- promote organic farming and sustainable farming practices.

Environmental Theme 4: Wildlife Habitat

Wildlife habitat, loss of pollinators, urban encroachment and riparian area regulations were identified as major issues facing local farmers. Loss of habitat forces wildlife (deer, rabbits) on to farmland where they can destroy crops.

Participants identified the following actions to help mitigate the issues:

- require preservation and management of wildlife corridors in all new urban development; and
- promote apiary uses on fallow land or on country/rural estate properties.

Environmental Theme 5: Municipal Support for Sustainable Farming and Stewardship

Most of the environmental issues pointed to inadequate policy linkage to support sustainable farming and land stewardship practices, particularly at the municipal level. The National Environmental Farm Planning Initiative helped Canadian agricultural producers develop and implement environmental farm plans (EFPs) through provincially delivered programs. Environmental farm planning is a voluntary process that producers can use to identify both environmental strengths and potential environmental risks on their farms. It includes a prioritized action plan to reduce the risks. Strong municipal policies could be developed to dovetail and leverage senior government programs.

Participants identified the following actions to link municipal policies with programs like the Environmental Farm Planning Initiative:

- consider introduction of an “enhanced” farm tax status for those farming in an environmentally responsible way such as certified organic farmers and those who have completed an EFP;
- regulate crop conversion to minimize monoculture issues (i.e. everybody switching to blueberries) and maximize biodiversity; and
- promote sustainable farming practices with organizations such as the BC Association for Regenerative Agriculture and the Langley Sustainable Agriculture Foundation.

4.2.3 Economic

The framing topic “Economic” was used to identify issues related to broad economic topics such as input costs, marketing, land value and taxation. There were 4 main economic themes: (1) High Land Prices, (2) High Cost of Farming, (3) Collective Branding and Marketing, and (4) Infrastructure.

Economic Theme 1: High Land Prices

High land prices in the Metro Vancouver area are seen as a major barrier to viable farming. Issues such as land speculation and increased demand for non-farm uses have driven up the price of farmland, making it difficult for farmers to maintain their livelihood. Farm land is not economically viable on a small scale, once land is subdivided it is often lost to agricultural use.

Participants identified the following actions to help mitigate the issues:

- lobby the BC Assessment Authority to reform the farm tax system by:
 - tightening the definition of farm tax status to prevent abuse;
 - considering a three-tier taxation system for active career farmers, hobby farmers and non-farmers/country estate owners;
 - developing a method to tax land bought, sold and retained as agricultural use, and
 - requiring non-farmers in the ALR to pay an extra property tax;
- research alternative land ownership models (i.e. purchasing development rights from farmers - see Washington State example);
- consider establishment of an agricultural land lease program for new/young farmers;
- regulate or prohibit non-agricultural uses on arable farmland; and
- prohibit subdivision of farm land.

Economic Theme 2: High Cost of Farming

Increasing fuel costs, processing costs and global competition are issues identified as major issues facing local farmers. Increased fuel prices have an impact on fertilizer supply, farm equipment usage and transportation of product and supplies. Global competition from foreign produce and livestock hurts local farmers.

Participants identified the following actions to help mitigate the issues:

- provide low interest loans to help new farmers;
- provide fuel tax relief or bulk fuel prices for farmers; and
- provide income tax breaks for farm workers to recognize their contribution to local food supply.

Economic Theme 3: Collective Branding and Marketing

Langley has a rich agricultural heritage which should be celebrated and promoted. While many successful programs and initiatives (such as the Circle Farm Tour and the Langley Farm Fresh Guide) exist, they fail to promote the Langley agricultural industry collectively as a significant economic sector and local food provider.

Participants suggested the following actions to help address the issue:

- develop a branding and marketing program for the Langley agricultural industry by:
 - creating a unique brand (such as “Langley Farm Fresh”) to promote the local agricultural industry and capitalize on current themes such as sustainable agriculture, local food production and local food security;
 - bringing together existing agri-tourism initiatives to focus on a collective program with a co-ordinated advertising campaign, including maps and signage;
 - profiling distinguished Langley farms and farmers and creating a positive image of farming as a career; and
 - linking Langley food producers with local stores.

Economic Theme 4: Infrastructure

Like other industries, agriculture requires a wide range of support infrastructure. The high price of hooking up to the municipal water system, lack of ditch maintenance to control weeds and drainage issues were identified as major issues facing farmers. In addition, there is a lack of food processing facilities in the region. Farmers are trucking produce out of the area (and in some cases out of the province) for slaughter, processing and packaging, increasing costs to both the farmer and the end consumer.

Participants identified the following actions to help mitigate the issues:

- provide subsidized municipal water for farmers (also see Environmental Theme 1);
- maintain drainage ditches with a focus on removing debris and weeds and improving drainage on adjacent agricultural land;
- improve stormwater run-off systems (by using stormwater Beneficial Management Practices) to reduce flooding on agricultural land;
- develop a “Langley Food Hub” with the following elements:
 - an agri-industrial park to encourage investment in food processing facilities with an emphasis on local economic value chain, local food production and local food processing;
 - an agri-complex to act as a “centre of excellence” for agricultural education, exhibition, food processing and value-add production;
 - a demonstration farm; and
 - a permanent farmer’s market.
- work with agricultural municipalities (such as Chilliwack, Abbotsford, Surrey and Delta) to create a strong coalition of local food producers, increasing the political leverage at a provincial and federal levels.

5.0 Conclusion

The Township of Langley is one of the major agricultural communities in BC. With about 75% of its land base in the Agricultural Land Reserve, Langley has the most number of farms in the Metro Vancouver area.

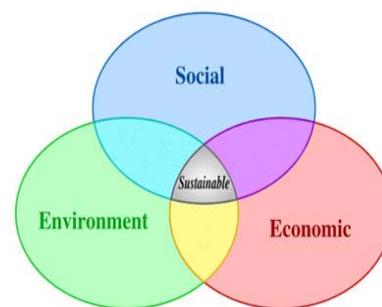
With the assistance of the Agricultural Advisory Committee, the Township of Langley is preparing an AVS to establish an integrated policy and management framework for promoting and sustaining a viable agricultural community. The purpose of the AVS is to enhance the viability of agriculture by focusing on farm viability issues, including the potential for local food production, diversification opportunities, economic challenges, urbanization conflicts, environmental issues and competition for agricultural land.

The AVS is being conducted in three phases. AVS1 was completed in 2010 with the publication of an Agricultural Profile. AVS2 is being completed with results from a statistically-valid AVS Survey and qualitative information from four Focus Group meetings. AVS3 will commence in fall of 2011 with a focus to analyze the data from AVS 1 and AVS 2, consider policy options, and develop a policy framework for promoting and sustaining a viable agricultural community.

During AVS2, broad engagement was done and feedback was received from a diverse sampling of Township residents, ranging from those intimately involved in the farming industry to those living in urban areas with no farming or agricultural experience. Responses have shown that a large majority of Township residents are passionate about the future of agriculture in the Township of Langley.

The AVS Survey results supported some of the emerging trends and public perceptions of agriculture in the community. They reinforced benchmark data from the Langley Tomorrow Survey conducted in 2002 and 2006 when similar questions were asked in the “rural” portion of the questionnaire. For example, the survey results showed full-time farmers are the minority in the community. Only 9% of them reported that they were farming full-time. Almost one-half (48%) of them either farmed the land themselves, or had someone else farm their land. The remaining one-half (50%) did not farm the land at all, citing small parcel size and life-stage issues as main reasons for not farming.

Structured based on the three aspects of sustainability: social, environmental and economic, the Focus Group discussions identified a number of issues that are unique to Langley. Some of the issues have a high degree of overlap, with the top issues showing up repeatedly throughout the process. For instance, the suggestion of subsidizing municipal water for farmers was brought up under “Environmental Theme 1: Water” and “Economic Theme 4: Infrastructure.” The water issue is has a common characteristic, as represented by the yellow area in the diagram, indicating an overlap between environment and economic.



An essential and critical element in farming, water was the most mentioned issue in both the AVS Survey and the Focus Group meetings. The issue is directly related to water supply, water contamination, irrigation and drainage. There is either not enough water, or too much of it. Management of water resources as it relates to agriculture should be examined in more detailed in AVS3.

Appendix A: AVS Survey Summary Reports

The AVS Survey Summary Reports are available upon request. Please contact the Long Range Planning Department, Community Development Division, Township of Langley, at 604-533-6034.

Appendix B: Summary of AVS Survey Open-ended Question Responses

The Township of Langley conducted a telephone survey of 1,470 residents to provide background information for the development of an Agriculture Viability Strategy. The respondents were identified as farmers (221), rural non-farmers (828) and urban residents (421). The survey had a variety of closed questions and open response questions. This report is a summary of the verbatim responses to the open ended questions.

There were four open ended questions:

- 1) Rural non-farmers were asked why they did not farm their land,
- 2) All respondents were asked to identify the key issues facing farmers in the Township,
- 3) All respondents were asked to provide suggestions to strengthen local farming, and
- 4) All respondents were asked what groups or agencies should take the lead role in implementing the Agriculture Viability Strategy.

The open ended question responses were grouped into 'themes' in an effort to characterize the different responses. If a theme had less than 5 comments it was not included in the graphs. If more than one theme was mentioned, all were noted. Not all people completing the telephone survey chose to offer responses to the open questions. The results can be interpreted as follows:

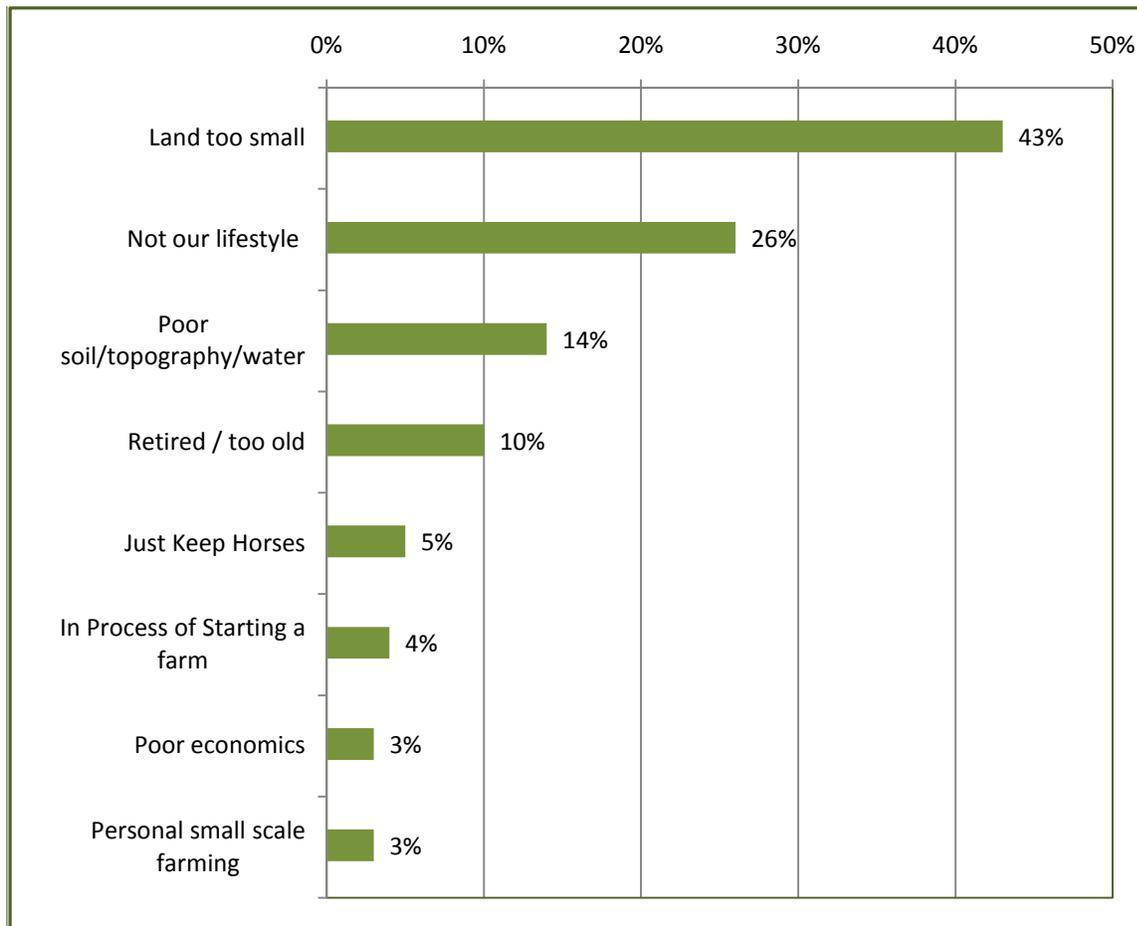
The proportion of respondents that completed the open ended questions is as follows:

Group	% Providing a Response
Farmers	70%
Rural Non-farmers	66%
Urban	62%

Note that the sum of % of respondents in any group (say farmers) will not add to 100% because responses that did not fit a theme are not represented.

Graphs are structured with the farmer's most common responses listed from top to bottom. The graphs represent the number of times each theme was mentioned as a percentage of the number of people in each group that chose to respond to the question.

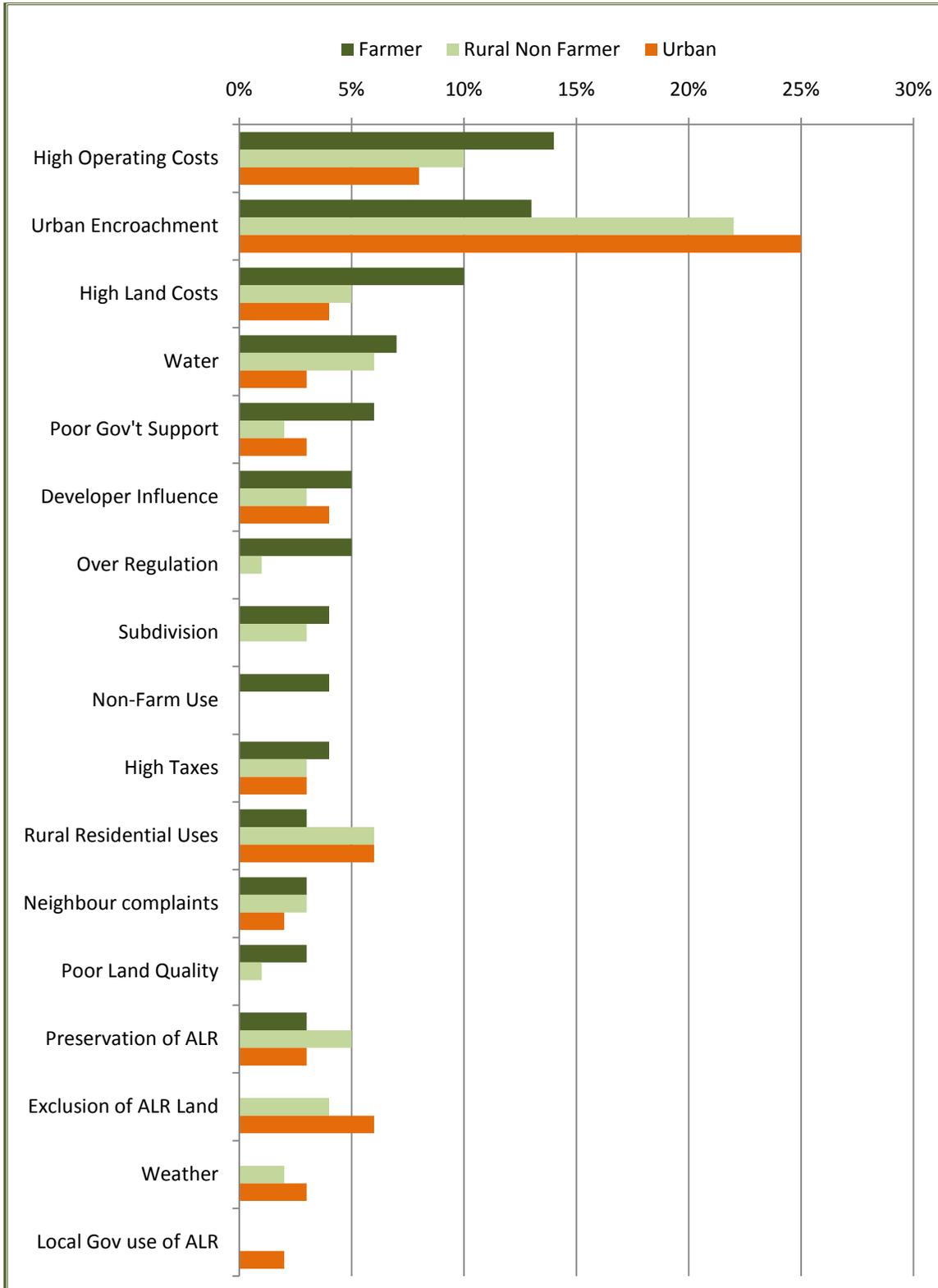
1) Rural non-farmers response to the question - why do you not farm your land.



NOTES:

- A rural resident was deemed to be farming if their land had farmland classification. To receive farmland classification a farm must generate \$2,500 per year in farm gate sales or be leased to a farmer that meets the threshold for farmland classification.
- Of the respondents that said their land was too small, 12% indicated they had 5 or more acres.
- 3% of respondents indicated they had a personal small scale operation that did not generate enough revenue to meet farmland classification.
- 4% of respondents indicated they were in the process of starting a farm.

2) Responses to the question - what are the issues and challenges facing farmers in Langley?

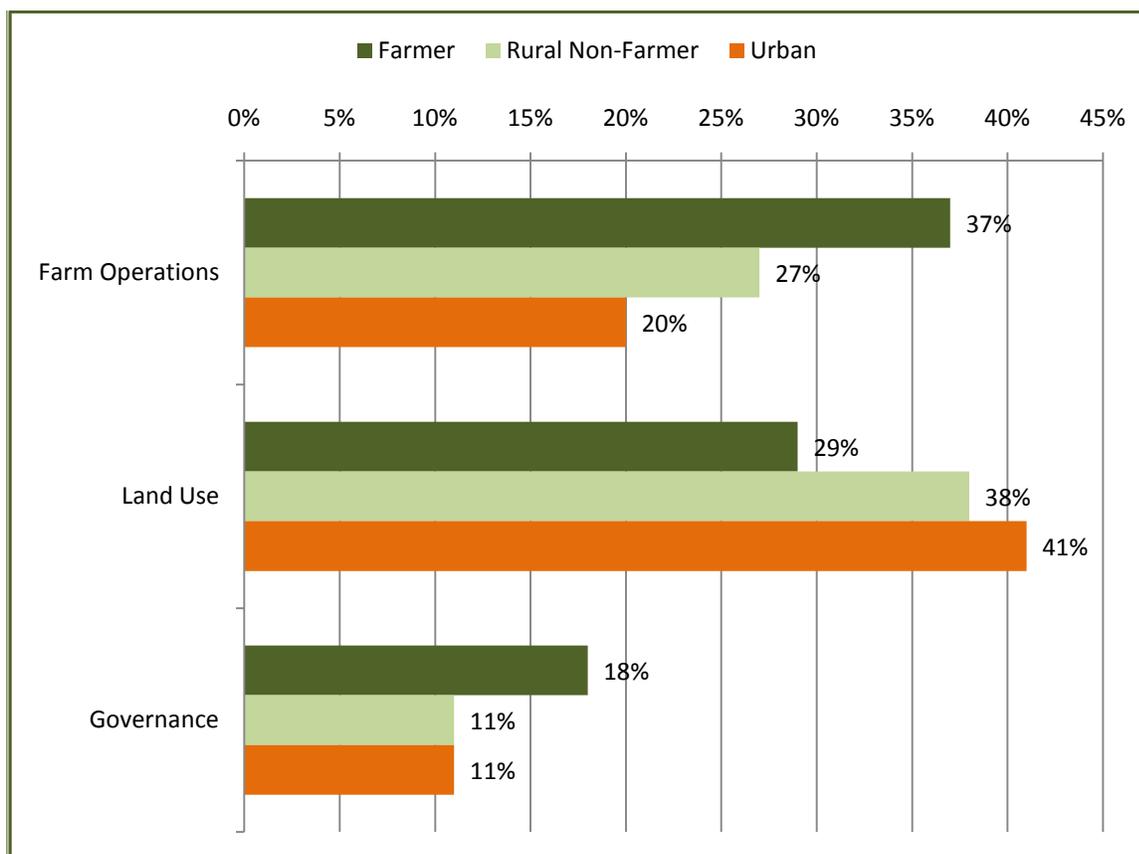


NOTES:

- Encroachment included all general comments as to growth and the impact of growth on the farming area. If a more specific reason was given – such as developer influence, subdivision, exclusion, rural residential or non-farm use – it was broken out into a separate theme.
- High operating costs included references to profitability.

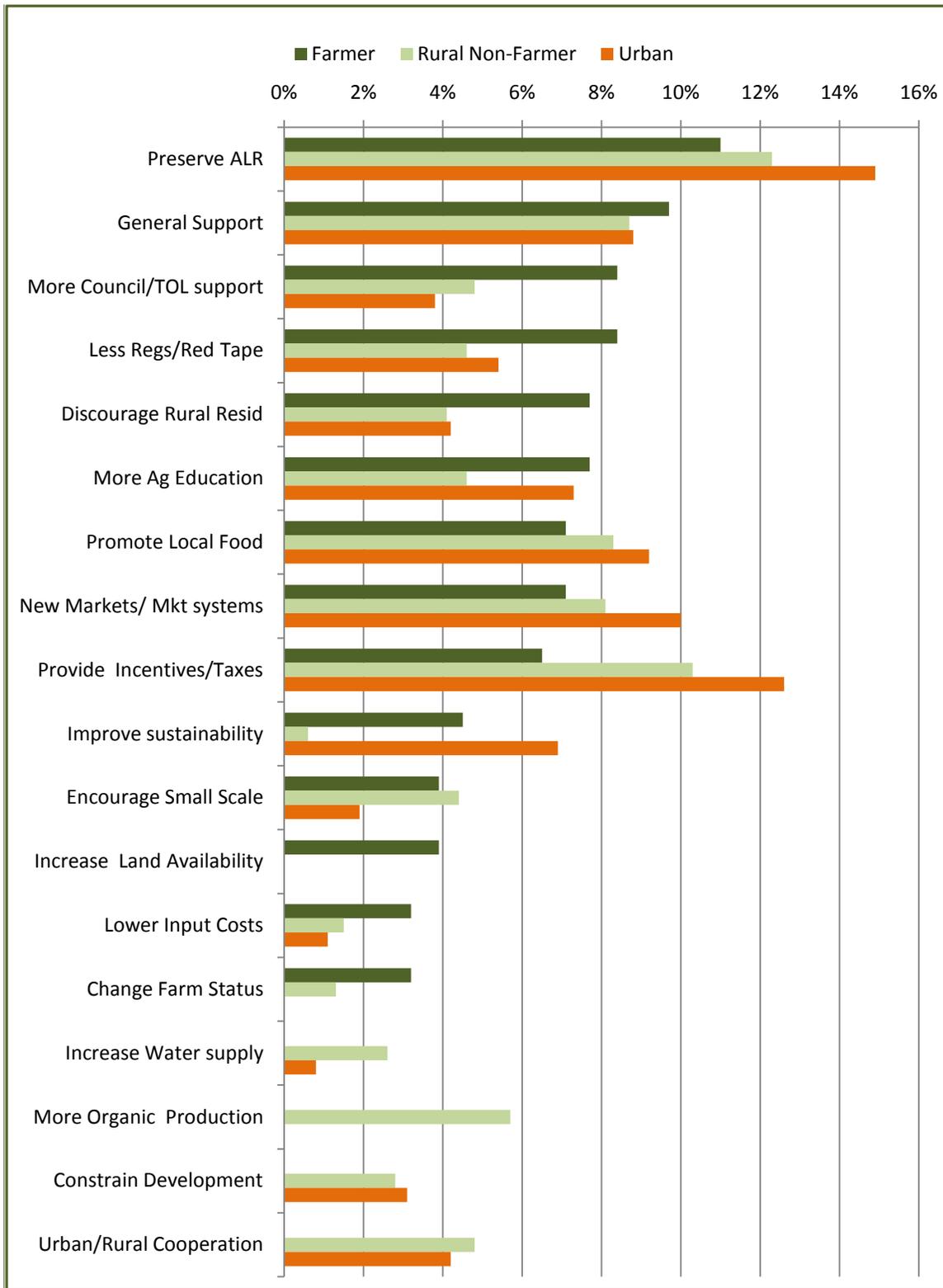
The themes in the chart above were further summarized into three main areas, land use, farm operations and governance.

- Farm Operations – High operating costs, high land costs, water, land quality, neighbor complaints, weather.
- Land Use – rural residential use, urban encroachment, developer influence, subdivision, non-farm use, preservation of the ALR.
- Governance – Poor government support, over regulation, high taxes, exclusion of ALR, local government use of ALR.



A higher proportion of urban residents feel that land use, and in particular encroachment, is a much bigger issue/challenge for agriculture than do the proportion of farmers.

3) What should be done to strengthen farming in the Township of Langley?

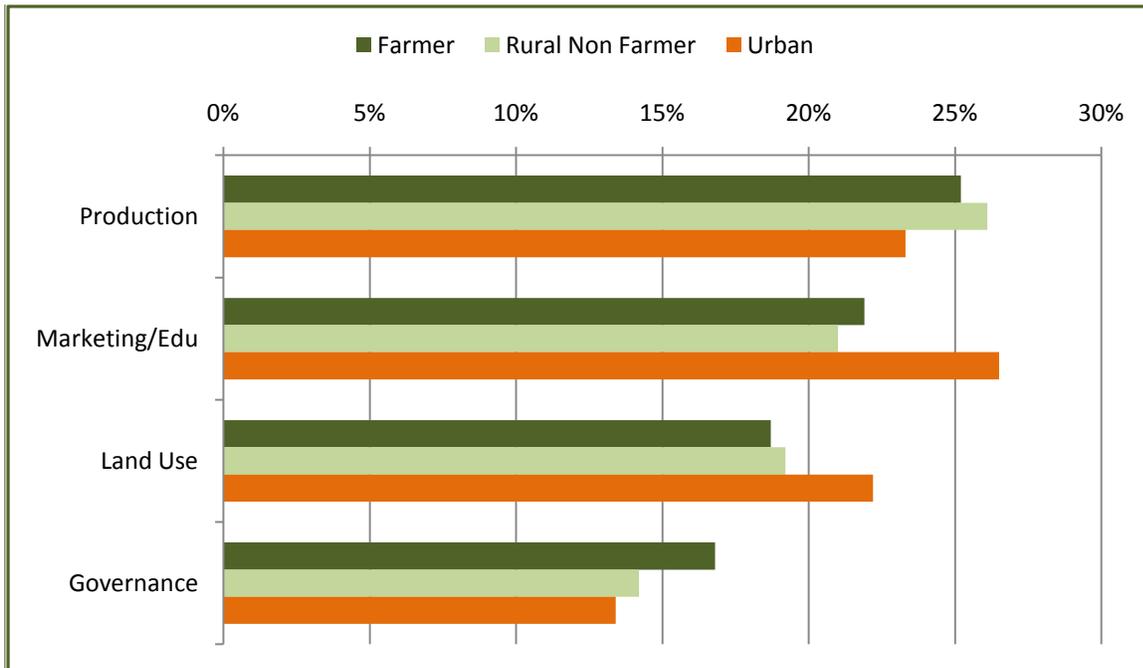


NOTES:

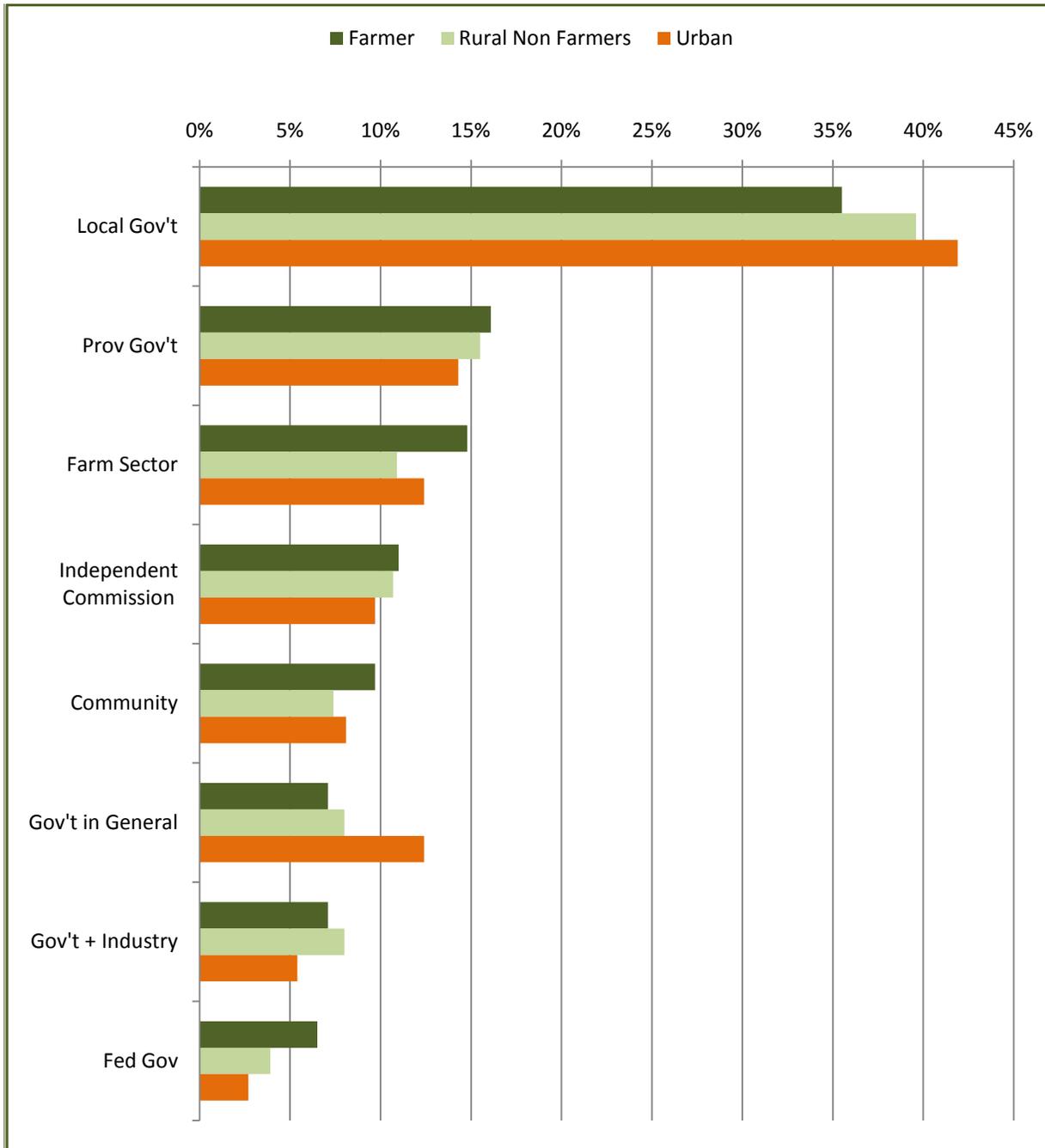
- New markets/marketing systems included all comments related to new approaches to selling locally, including farmer's markets.
- Farm status included both comments that getting farm status was too difficult and getting farm status was too easy. The number suggesting it was too hard getting farm status outnumbered 2 to 1 those thinking it was too easy.
- Preserving the ALR was identified most frequently by all groups.

The themes in the above chart were summarized into four main areas:

- Production - Incentives/taxes, improve sustainability, encourage small scale, increase land availability, lower input costs, change farm status.
- Marketing/Edu - Local food, ag education, new markets/mkt systems
- Land Use - Preserve ALR, discourage rural residential
- Governance - More council support, less regs/red tape



4) Who should take the lead in strengthening farming in the Township of Langley?

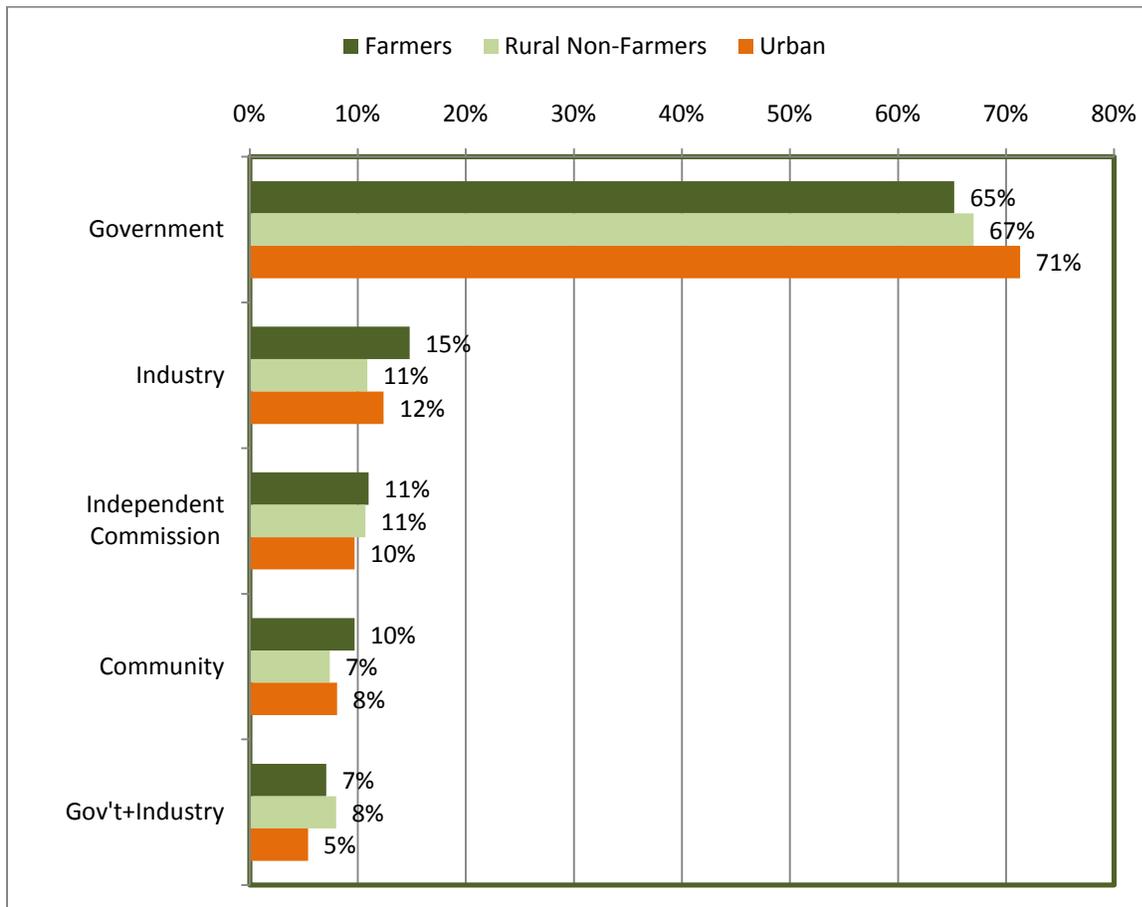


NOTES:

- If respondents mentioned two governments, both were noted. If they mentioned all three governments their response was noted under 'Government in General'.
- If people suggested it should be a cooperative effort between industry and government it was noted under Government + Industry.
- Responses that suggested everyone must be involved were noted under community.
- Independent commission referred to a new independent commission – not the ALC

The responses in the chart above were further summarized into five areas;

- Government – local government, provincial government, federal government and government in general
- Industry – farm sector
- independent commission
- government + industry and
- community.



Appendix C: Vision Statements

Before the close of each Focus Group meeting, participants were asked to provide a short vision statement by completing the phrase: *My dream for the future of agriculture in Langley is...* The responses will be used to help create a vision statement for the AVS. Verbatim responses are provided below.

FG1

- Small acreages are back in production as hobby farms, not just estates.
- Agriculture will become a major part of rural Langley.
- To have lots of help for agriculture.
- A strong agricultural industry, variety of commodities (berries, poultry, horticulture etc...). Strong agri-tourism component to educate and enhance the experience of Langley residents as well as bringing visitors to Langley.
- A viable specialty market driven sustainable activity that supports youth employment and rural values while servicing an urban community.
- Economically viable sustainable farming. Support from Township for drainage issues. Support from the Township for manure disposal.
- Retention of the ALR, and survival of viable and diverse agriculture that is economically sustainable.
- A fully developed agricultural sector that includes involvement of small acreage owners who are able through their own efforts or through a leasing program to bring their land into sustainable food production.

FG2

- Preserve all ALR land - no more subdivision of land within the ToL. Save it for future generations.
- Transforming talk in to action.
- That land is used in a responsible stewardship by all people - rural and urban.
- A development and realization that both urban and rural can co-exist harmoniously.
- A re-activated BCE [BC Electric] rail system, many eco-village hubs, 3 vibrant farmers markets, 15% of Langley population involved in farming, fair livelihoods for farmers.
- Help farmers stay on the land
- Keep urban development at bay and land prices down.
- Actual growth of the industry where the land use is not seen as green space, but as providing food.
- Embracing the concept of centralization, Langley becomes a community in which people have become aware of food production and are connected to local supply, by enhanced knowledge of the producers and by local markets. Producers are creative “out-of-box” thinkers - we bring new products, services, and experiences to the market.
- The working of future councils closer with the agricultural community.

FG3

- My kids have the chance to farm here if they choose to.
- That owning and operating a farm is economically sustainable.
- A thriving agricultural sector which can serve the needs of the community through products, while respecting environmental challenges using technology such as anaerobic digestion, composting etc. A community that embraces its agriculture.

- See Langley 20 years from now with a vibrant agricultural sector that feeds our people in an environmentally responsible way.
- Have a thriving prosperous industry that is the first choice for food by its citizens and is held in high regard for its forward thinking by the rest of British Columbia.
- Build an agricultural centre of excellence to educate the public, training programs, hold agricultural and horse events. It would be an economic and social generator.
- For every citizen to know how food is grown, produced, and where it comes from!
- A sustainable farming system that is economically viable, environmentally responsible and socially beneficial that provides a high quality of food and agricultural products to the Township of Langley.
- For Farmers to have a higher profile in the food chain - as primary producers.
- Less urban sprawl. Existing farms left to farm in harmony within the community. An “agrodome” to train and enjoy our Horse Capital of BC.

FG4

- The produce that is cultivated in Langley is consumed mostly by the consumers of the GVRD.
- To see farmers able to earn a living with their crop and local people look for their food locally first.
- Wal-Mart leaves the country because we no longer want to buy just the cheapest food possible.
- That it be recognized and appreciated, less environmentally destructive, economically viable, involve more local people, there be less discount between farms and consumers.
- To have it seen as a viable career where agriculture can pay a decent wage to raise a family, provide food for Metro Vancouver by using Township lands for the purpose they need to be used for - food production, not land speculation!
- Children will grow up knowing where their food comes from and the location, if not the name of the farmer.
- Food for the future.
- There still is viable farming in Langley.
- That those involved in the industry become involved in mitigation of and develop adaptation plans to deal with the implications of climate change.
- Keep farming and agriculture strong. Plan it!
- To maintain the land that is in the ALR and not over developed sprawled out city with little possible maintainable farmland.
- To flourish and prosper and provide fresh produce to those in the area and beyond.
- More farmers markets. Locally grown produce sold in local stores. More organic produce available. Continuing existing farms through generations. Encourage community participation in farming/markets. Educating students on where their food comes from and how it is produced.
- To one day make it viable for the average person to produce a locally grown product and make a profit.
- That farming becomes economically viable maybe dual use of land - industrial on ground with large roof gardens on top. Industrial buildings should be designed to support roof top gardens.
- A place where agricultural land is preserved for future young farmers and available to people who want to farm - not speculators. A place where the urban and farming

environments co-exist together through strong community bonds through education and preservation of land in the Township.

- Totally sustainable food production eliminating need for California.
- To see it thriving, to see my children buying food right here, to see the marriage of urban and rural with both sides thriving.
- Fewer city planners - more rural planners.
- Farm-gardening in every backyard.
- Community gardens in every townhouse complex.
- Our ALR land is farmed
- That the produce that is grown on land that is consumed by locals. That farming and farmers are held in high regard. Put the word culture back in agriculture!
- To have cohesive relationship from community and government with respect for farming developing into urban growth.
- Keep the legacy