

**Information from the Agricultural Alliance  
farmers meeting  
Sunday, February 12, 2012  
Farmers Institute**

**Purpose of the Meeting**

To discuss the proposed plans for a farm produce centre on the Beddis Rd site

**Small Group Discussions**

The groups were asked to address specific questions

**1. What is the significance of these services for your farm & for food security generally on the island?**

**Primary produce handling & functions**

- Greater cold & dry & freezer storage capacity—e.g. blueberries, fruit trees, squash, apples, meat (freezer). (21)
- Commercial kitchen for value-added (soup packages, dehydrated, sauces, tomato, juicing, pressing, drying, pureed squash (11)
- Better year-round access to SSI food –grocers, restaurants, tourists (3)
- Food safety aspect (HACCP, insurance, clean water to process & wash (3)
- Apples—storage so that processing timing can be managed (3)
- Possibility of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) (4)
- Grow regular crops & unusual crops (1)
- Equipment tools, rental, sharing, co-operative buying (15)
- Distribution centre link to off-island distribution; shared network system (6)
- Common dehydrator (4)
- Bean dryer, grain dryer (8)
- Access to equipment, e.g. use of kitchen, general
- Turkey freeze (flash freezing) (11)
- Frozen retail (1)
- Retail spot, storefront (2)
- Covered market (2)
- Combine, bean sheller, seed cleaning, drum washing (7)
- Food safe for ready to eat and value-added (5)

**Secondary functions**

- Promote expansion of production
- Provide infrastructure cost, to complement land trust, making agriculture land available
- Part of the whole infrastructure chain (1)
- Offset loss of capital, potential farmers
- Transportation—how to get produce there; central location?
- Could reduce on-farm infrastructure requirements & the time a farmer has to spend marketing (1)
- Pick up service
- Labour-sharing (7)
- Design, no-load bearing modular (6)

### **Marketing functions**

- Marketing access (on island; off-island); SSI branding (7)
- Learn new ways to market and develop new markets, supporting organic sustainable farming (1)
- Support SSI brand (5)
- Co-branding with Bruce & other chefs, joint ventures (3)

### **Communication-type functions**

- Linking with other farmers, networking (6)
- Building community within farm community (6)
- Mentoring and training—colleagues on island (2)
- Education—awareness, conscious living
- Information centre for suppliers (1)
- Learning opportunities, clearinghouse for land available (lease, buy)
- Coordinating moving problem & for processing communications (1)

## **2. How can we make this work?**

- Approval of permit applications
- Governing model
  - system/organization
  - steering committee/leadership who?
  - volunteer
  - creation of governance group
- Public Notice/Meeting -different talents: accounting; marketing; professionals
- Identify all skills needed for success
- Fundraising
- Clear identification of needs – farmers
- Invitation to the conversation:
  - bigger farms
  - value added processors
  - potential farmers
- Networking
  - other similar ventures
  - Farm Folk City Folk
  - Galiano food program
  - Learn from them – did well or not so well (communication. marketing)
  - Connect with ING
  - New market project in Vancouver
- Government funding & government funding for capital costs
- Understand capacity and potential of various possibilities – drying ; storage etc -
- Who is using this facility
  - bigger farmers
  - farmers that can do value added products
  - value added producers- jams, preserves
- Feasibility study , market research
- 5-10 yr sustainability very important
- Don't know because we don't know how it will develop
- Needs to be flexible

- Identify 2 or small number of immediate needs and implement; prioritize other needs
  - Caretaker on site ( mobile prefab)
  - Community society coop farmers in majority to drive the bus
  - Board = 2/3 farmers; 1/3 food related
  - Trials in existing facilities on SSI
  - Business case
    - What is most needed?
    - What can we done w/o losing money
    - Costs & benefits
  - Student (grads?) who can P.....?? (cant read) BC e.g. UVIC
  - Farm grants (where are the \$)
  - Community Buy –In
    - Marketing strategy
    - Build and they will come – show me
  - Phased development – barn first
  - Figure out priorities effective first
  - More grower engagement
  - Cost pricing for service – labour
  - Operating requirements - organic certification
  - How to increase production -viability
  - Link centre to broader farming agenda – land, housing and accessibility
- Does the centre buy product or is it flow-through or something else?

### 3. What are the farmers' roles?

- Production scaling up, grading of produce
- Step up production
- Increase primary production
- SSI brand
- Supporting farmers so they don't have to work more, taking care of farmers
- Hearing farmers
- Standards, organic
- Networking
- Firm commitments
- Crop plan coordination
- Priority list management
- Farmers want to stay on the farm

### 4. What other services could be considered?

#### Functions

- Sales service – weekly distribution (2)
- Direct sales (2)
- CSA box delivery (1)
- Best function to increase value (2)
- Fermented products (1) /facility (5)
- Build building for seed bank (5)
- Seed cleaning (1)
- SSI brand sprouter seed sales (1)

Composting (2)  
Vacuum packing (3)  
Coordinator on site (5) living would be part of \$package  
Outdoor?? storage - root cellar (2) potato Seed storage(5)  
Local delivery cooperative buying for farm supplies/inputs (6)  
Bulk amendments (4)  
Retail sales - fresh, frozen, dry, ferment  
Education (accounting, marketing, dehydrating, food safe, HACCP, canning) classrooms  
for all types of workshops (4)  
Demo garden – raised gardens (1)  
100% organic, safety – group certification  
SSI Brand (3)  
Blue box systems cooperative CSA  
Meeting place - connect producers  
Tanning hides  
Labour Pool Hub – day labour, woofers (8)  
Link available land with those wanting to farm (2)  
Leadership demythologising local food production, supporting local of local farmers

### **Equipment**

Threshing (6) – grain mill?  
Large farm equipment (combine etc) (2)  
Different storage environment for apples; garlic; potatoes (3)  
Apple festival funds for apple equipment ? Storage (1)  
UV processor, heat pasteurization for juice (2)  
Honey equipment (2) & extractor w funds from Bee Group (2)  
Nut sheller & storage (2)  
Nut oil production/veg oil production (2)  
Compost tea (1) ( nut shell crusher , oyster shell crusher (10 )  
Freezer storage IQF equipment & flash freezer (4)  
Solar, wind, microhydro demos Free ( 2)  
Pulverizer (mill – Hammer mill, Bone meal, Oyster shell (11)  
Oil pressing – veggie oil (4)  
Fermentation facility (3)  
Cidery -- Apple cider vinegar (1)  
Smoker (6)  
Canning shed (1)  
Chamber vacuum packaging (1)  
Sous vide (1)

**Post-meeting**

**At the end of the meeting farmer participants were asked to respond to 5 questions posted on the walls. Number of respondents est. 10 – 13**

- 1. How would you see such a centre operating? As**
  - a) Farmer coop: 7
  - b) Society set up for the purpose: 7
  - c) management/oversight by Ag Alliance (although Ag alliance does not want to take on responsibility for operations) 3
  - d) management/oversight by Farmland Trust (the potential owner of the property) 2
  
- 2. Would such a facility encourage you to grow more crops for winter sales?**  
9 yes  
1 No
  
- 3. Would such a facility encourage you to diversify your markets?**  
7 yes  
4 no
  
- 4. Are you are thinking of increasing production in the next**  
2 years: 9  
5 years: 2  
10 years: 0  
not at all: 1

**Would a facility like this help – 9 yes; 1 No**

- 5. Are you aware of any duplication of the services being considered? Please write in details:**  
Adam/Rebecca  
Laughing apple  
Harry Burton dehydrator  
Merchant Mews Kitchen
  
- 6. Are you currently using facilities elsewhere?**  
5 No

