

Farming and food security

Address immediate food security needs while creating a vibrant, sustainable food system that values farmers and strengthens community resilience.

HOW WE'RE THINKING ABOUT THIS

Ensuring all British Columbians have access to nourishing food is essential to the health and wellbeing of our communities, and it is a key priority for our party. We are committed to working with farmers and other stakeholders to transform our food and farming systems so that we are producing healthy, nutritious food at fair prices for consumers, while also ensuring fair wages for growers.

Over 50% of our food comes from California, a region suffering from drought and wildfires. BC's reliance on food imports leaves us vulnerable if exporting jurisdictions decide they need to keep their food at home. Farmers are on the front lines of climate change, and the provincial government must step up to support the resilience of our food systems in the face of these challenges.

We urgently need to invest in food security, protect our farmland, and support our farmers. When elected, our focus will be on building a food system that strengthens local and regional economies rather than serving corporate interests. By protecting agricultural land, expanding local food production, and investing in processing infrastructure, we can fortify our regional food networks and reduce reliance on distant sources.

This approach will create a more resilient, self-sufficient, and sustainable food system for all British Columbians.

PROBLEM DEFINITION:

Food insecurity is a pressing issue affecting communities across the province. We can see this in the rising use of food banks by families. Climate change impacts like flooding and droughts threaten our food security now, and are only expected to worsen in both severity and frequency in the coming years.

For too long, provincial agriculture policies have benefited large corporations and prioritized exports at the expense of local food systems and the economic wellbeing of family farmers. These policies have undermined the foundation of our food security, making it clear that we need to shift our focus toward strengthening local food networks and supporting those who produce our food.

POLICIES FOR ANNOUNCEMENT

Protect Farmland

- Expand the area of land under food production by providing \$90 million in funding for a publicly owned agricultural land bank - available for lease by new farmers.
- Make food production and food security part of the Agricultural Land Commission's (ALC) mandate to protect and prioritize agricultural use.
- Restrict and regulate foreign ownership of Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) land to ensure that farmland remains in local hands and supports food security.
- Investigate how to mitigate the impacts of oil and gas operations on agricultural land in the northeast region of the province.

Promote Regenerative Farming Practices

- Incentivize regenerative farming practices that build healthier soils, improve water management (e.g., rainwater harvesting systems), reduce energy use and sequester carbon.
- Streamline the approval processes for water storage dugouts on farms to improve drought resilience and water availability.
- Commit the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship to work with farmers to ensure the protection of food crops during drought periods.

Support Farmers

- Improve access to credit and capital for new farmers to make it easier to start and sustain farming operations.
- Identify options to make farming a more attractive and sustainable endeavor, including exploring a Basic Income Guarantee for farmers to secure income and encourage the next generation of farmers.

Local Food Systems

- Invest \$9 million to bolster local food systems.
- Rebuild our local food processing, storage and distribution systems.
- Support small-scale, cooperatively-owned infrastructure and businesses, including grocery retailers.
- Develop policies to facilitate public institutional procurement of local food, ensuring schools, hospitals and other institutions prioritize locally produced food.
- Invest in farmers markets, community-supported agriculture, and non-profit food hubs.
- Increase support for the Farmers' Market Nutrition Coupon Program.

Address the Root Causes of Food Insecurity

- Create a universal school food program that provides:
 - **Equal Access:** Ensuring every child in British Columbia has access to healthy meals, regardless of their family's financial situation.
 - **Nutritional Standards:** Meals will meet nutritional guidelines to support children's health and development.
 - **School and Community Collaboration:** Work with schools, organizations, and local farmers to promote sustainable practices and educate children on healthy eating habits.

Indigenous Food Sovereignty

- Support the development of systems to address food insecurity in First Nations communities that honour Indigenous knowledge, values, harvesting areas and practices.
- Support Indigenous communities' access to and use of traditional foods.
- Invest in Indigenous food sovereignty programs that promote community-led initiatives and sustainable food systems.

