



# Food Charter

A Project by Vancouver Island Food Hubs



## BACKGROUND



The Island Region Food Charter emerged as a recommendation from the 2006 Social Determinants of Health Conference. The Charter provides vision & principles that will guide & inform all levels of government, businesses, non-profit organizations, communities, families & individuals in mutual effort toward increasing community food security. The Food Charter was developed through an inclusive process of broad public consultation within the geographic region of Vancouver Island and its surrounding coastal communities. It was updated in 2014.

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## CURRENT SITUATION



The current food system has both strengths & weaknesses. Our region has a significant & diverse agricultural & seafood sector. Our communities are rich in cultural & traditional foodways & many residents can access healthy food. However, communities are challenged by a multitude of food issues, which are exasperated due to vulnerability inherent for Island communities.

### Some key issues include:

- Increased incidence of food related chronic disease;
- Increased reliance on fast & highly processed foods;
- Loss of food knowledge & skills;
- Limited access to safe, healthy, culturally acceptable foods in Indigenous communities and rural, isolated, low-income communities;
- Increased food insecurity for the most vulnerable community members;
- Reliance on food traveling over long distances;
- Challenges for future production due to a retiring farm community & prohibitive cost of farmland;
- Environmental threats to the food system including climate change & pollution

Although the nationally ratified Human Right to Adequate Food has not been fully realized, there is growing interest in & widespread concern about our local food system. Increased coordination & leadership on community food security issues is needed. This Food Charter is intended to express our willingness to collectively & constructively engage in moving forward to address some of these challenges.

## VISION



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:

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



**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 international trade, and vibrant production for the local market.

To achieve a just and sustainable food system in the Island health region commitment to action across sectors is needed with real implications for our policies, programs, practices & personal choices. Our willingness to make this commitment indicates our sense of collective & personal responsibility for the present & future ecological, economic, & social well being of the communities of this unique region.