

From: [Heather Young](#)
To: [Council](#)
Subject: Farm building permits
Date: Wednesday, August 21, 2024 11:47:58 AM

Dear North Cowichan Council and subsequently the North Cowichan staff in planning and permits,

Food security is becoming more and more of an issue: in general, due to inflation, but additionally on the island because of a lack of storage facilities and a drop in the number of farms. At the 2024 Food security summit in Port Alberni, it was determined that the Island currently has capacity for food for one week and this decreases to 2-3 days during the winter months. We are at risk because we are vulnerable to transportation interruptions due to natural disasters, fuel shortages and chain disruptions. The farms on the Island simply do not have the capacity at this time to feed everyone.

We are a small restorative agriculture farm focusing on providing a wide range of products and working towards a year-round production of seasonal products. At this point, we provide the community with eggs, potatoes, herbs/spices, foraged foods, fruit, and vegetables. We bought our land in 2015, moved into the house in 2016, and finally got our farm status in 2019. We have an established following at our farm stand, as well as online through the Cow-op and we have received our environmental farm status this year. Our land had nothing; we have built it up as money has allowed but we are at a point where we are needing infrastructure. We are in need of a walk-in fridge, a commercial kitchen, a farm workshop, barn, signage and permits/infrastructure for trailers for passive income as well as workers.

We would like to propose a deal for all new and developing farms where this municipality helps the development of small local farms and local food security by enabling each farm a large discount on permits and a five-to-ten-year window in which to do these improvements. It would be lovely to see more thriving farms rather than the steady decline that we have been witnessing. I imagine our barriers to success are like most small farms and if we had a community that worked towards mitigation of barriers we would see a rise in successful farms. Research says that most barriers are higher production costs, lack of infrastructure, scale, access to markets, availability of water, increased land values and wildlife damages. I would like to add access to cash as well as lack of knowledge base. We are seeing many new farmers coming from non-farming backgrounds and this results in many new farmers not having the knowledge base of those raised on a farm and the resulting skills of maintenance, repairs and building. A longer building period allows for farmers to accumulate supplies from recycled sources as well as natural building processes which all take longer to construct.

It would be up to this council and staff to figure out the threshold for access to these "farm" building permits, but I also believe this would increase the adherence to the permitting process. And perhaps with a library of plans being built up and some acceptance of shipping containers, new builders would be able to achieve safer and more robust buildings rather than some of the ramshackle builds I have seen in rural locations.

Our region is quickly growing with an increase in urban and rural populations, yearly increases in tourist traffic and an increase in our government supported infrastructure, I believe an increase in farms would increase income locally as new farms, nurseries, food processing and agri-tourism would subsequently rise.

Thanks so much for your time,
Heather Young of Under the oak farm.

