

GULF ISLANDS Co-op Proposal
2nd Co-op Presentation and Discussion
Sunday, October 29, 2017 (1:00-3:30pm)
Galiano Island, South Hall

PRESENT:

Zorah Staar – Project Coordinator, Gulf Islands Co-op Proposal
 Colleen Doty – Food Producer Outreach Coordinator, and Food Producer
 Marty Frost – Co-op Developer
 Jane Wolverton – Director of the Galiano Club, Member of the SGI Ag. Strategy Steering Committee
 Mathias Clearsky – Food Producer
 Krista - Food Producer
 Pat van Holderbeke – Food Producer
 Thomas Schnare - Food Producers/Ag Services
 Henny Schnare - Food Producers/Ag Services:
 Helen Tsepnopoulos – Home Gardener, Orchardist
 Elizabeth Latta – Food Producer
 Doug Latta – Food Producer
 Errol Beckford (Becky) – Food Producer
 Dan – Supporter of Food Producers

1. **Gulf Islands Co-op Proposal**

Project Coordinator Zorah Staar presented an overview of the proposal, available online [here](#). She noted the co-op could serve as the **inter-island collaborative organization** recommended by both the 2017 Southern Gulf Islands Food & Agriculture Strategy, and the broader SGI 2020 Strategic Plan.

2. **Presentation on the Co-op Model**

Co-op Developer Marty Frost presented: “The Concept: A Cooperative Established to Meet the Needs of Growers and Food Producers on the Southern Gulf Islands,” available [online](#).

3. **Discussion:**

Participants identified some of the challenges/needs they were facing in their work:

- a) Guidance on succession planning for retiring farmers
- b) Marketing of produce (to local markets and on larger centres on Vancouver Island), tied to educating restaurants/shops about the value of their produce
- c) Increased information/education on price structures
- d) Access to expensive, large equipment:
 - apple press
 - rock crusher for creating mineral-rich soil
 - manure spreader
 - abattoir
- e) Housing for farmers and their families
- f) Transportation of goods to market (both on/off island)

- g) Access to labour
- h) Access to bulk-purchasing of supplies and inputs such as:
 - manure or other inputs
 - soil testing
- i) Absence of a “local-only” store for produce grown on Galiano
- j) Loss of agricultural knowledge due to realities of supply chain
- k) High degradation of soil due to decades-long fibre mining (haying) and other stressors
- l) Information-sharing both within Galiano and between SGI’s generally.
- m) Communication and logistical challenges in working with other islands
- n) Advocacy in dealing with local governments
- o) Increased access to land

Zorah read out the list of similar items identified by food producers at the co-op presentation that occurred Oct. 14th on Pender:

- Demand exceeding supply
- Increased access to land
- Increased access to cold storage
- Increased access to shared hub such as a community kitchen?
- Advocacy
- Advocacy about restrictions, and pursuing opportunities
- Educating public about value of food
- Sharing equipment
- Making selling easier

Zorah mentioned how a co-op might help Southern Gulf Islands farmers and food producers of various sizes, even those who are currently selling all that they produce, for example:

- as a means for education and knowledge sharing between growers, about how they could increase productivity in food production (e.g. education re: soil building, growing and harvesting techniques, how to use certain equipment, etc.);

- educating the public about the importance of healthy local food, the cost of producing it, and why they should pay more for it than they are right now;

- in future, offering easier ways for interested Co-op growers to sell their food, rather than always having to do the Saturday market for 4 or 5 hours, or do other marketing that they may not enjoy or have time for;

- advocating with government about how regulations are applied to local value-added food products, so that it could be easier for growers of all sizes to create and sell them if they like (plus advocating about other regulations, and food producer needs and opportunities);

- seeking infrastructure funding for a local certified kitchen that smaller and bigger growers could use to produce their value-added products, so that there is no issue with selling them (\$25,000 grants for something like this have been available in the past);

- seeking other funding for food producer equipment that Co-op member growers could use (e.g. a refrigerated truck, apple presses, etc.);

- arranging for the sharing of equipment between growers, in a way that is organized and fair;

- arranging for and supporting the sharing of agricultural/growing land, between growers and also from those whose land is not in production, but who would be willing to share it if an organization like a co-op handled the negotiation of agreements with acceptable terms, insurance, etc."

4. **What's Next?** Co-op meetings with Food Producers on Saturna and Mayne