Robson Valley Agricultural Market Analysis, Gaps and Opportunities Assessment and Implementation Plan

SUMMARY

For: Community Futures Fraser-Fort George
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Community Futures Fraser Fort George

McBRIDE B.C. CANADA

CHARLTON consulting PLANNING, MANAGEMENT AND RESEARCH

Northern Development INITIATIVE TRUST

Executive Summary

Scope and Methodology

The Robson Valley Market Opportunity Analysis and Implementation Plan (RVMOA) had three core objectives:

1) To improve our understanding of which markets need to be considered by the Robson Valley agriculture sector,
2) To identify challenges and gaps, and
3) To provide recommendations for overcoming these challenges/gaps.

The project research included a background literature, census data and market data review, a local producer survey with 43 responses and 11 targeted interviews with food system stakeholders from within the region and beyond.

The final report provides a contextual overview of production, processing and sales within the Robson Valley, and describes the barriers and assets to expanding production and broadening sales channels. Using provincial data, provincial and national market research, and census data, market trends and potential consumer demand are described.

Study limitations due to scope constraints and COVID-19 pandemic restrictions result in 4 limitations that inform the 4 following immediate recommendations:

1) **Ground truth findings:** Hold a focus group for local producers and key partners to present report findings, recommendations and opportunities

2) **Institutional purchasing:** Explore the potential of the institutional purchasing market within the Robson Valley as a small follow-up project.

3) **Agri-Tourism:** Explore Agri-Tourism as a small follow-up project. Tourism statistics/ potential were not reviewed as a part of this project, nor were tourism stakeholders and potential partners engaged.

4) **Organic Production:** Follow up with local producers is recommended to confirm that they are not experiencing an information or support gap related to knowledge, or organic markets, or organic transition

Five opportunities and associated actions related to each are recommended for implementation, and an implementation plan elaborates on resources and partners needed to bring the recommendations to fruition.

The five opportunities and sub-actions recommended are:

1) **Increase sales through existing direct local channels.**

    1.1 Further evaluate and ground truth vendor gaps in nearby Farmers Markets
    1.2 Connect with tourism sector and foster Agri-Tourism for farm exposure
    1.3 Coordinate “meet your maker/ meat your produce manager” events
    1.4 Increase box program and delivery sales channels through e-commerce training and support

2) **Increase regional/ extra-regional meat sales and build red meat value chain.**
    2.1 Complete a regional abbatoir feasibility study
    2.2 Coordinate an information session re: grass-fed/ locally finished red meat and certification options

3) **Capture increased market share of adjacent markets and wholesale channels.**
    3.1 Group training to meet wholesaler requirements (e.g. food safety system, packing and grading)
    3.2 Establish CF-FFFG/agricultural marketing liaison and marketing support role
    3.3 CF-FFG led value chain establishment

4) **Establish a broadened Robson Valley cooperative (co-op) or collective.**
    4.1 Coordinate a guest speaker event (in the off-season) from established producer co-operatives
    4.2 Conduct research on the business case for co-operatively growing, marketing or distributing specific crops
    4.3 Complete a feasibility study, in partnership with producers, for co-operative storage of storage crops

5) **Conduct Robson Valley specific production trials/ product research.**
    5.1 Complete applied detailed market analysis, production cost and business case planning for specific crops or goods
    5.2 Co-ordinate on-farm season extension/ variety trials and research

Context

There is high agricultural capability in the region and diverse agricultural production in terms of both farm size and food produced. Many producers are engaged in livestock production, growing hay and growing vegetables. That is also a strong segment of “growers” who may not yet consider themselves “farmers”. Involvement in processing is moderate, while involvement in Agri-Tourism and in certified organic production are quite low. Grass-finished lamb and beef are significant.

Local/Regional Challenges

Survey results indicate that the majority of Robson Valley (RV) producers are likely interested in expanding their business, but face barriers including lack of investment capital (including access to necessary equipment), lack of storage or processing infrastructure (in particular to abbatoir capacity), time, climatic constraints, lack of an adequate local market, lack of labour (worker housing), lack of distribution/transportation infrastructure, and barriers associated with age. The key challenges for production in the Robson Valley, from the perspective of food system stakeholders from outside of the region and gathered through targeted interviews, concentrate around consistent and adequate volume of supply, climatic constraints and transportation costs. Access to land, natural capacity of the land, knowledge and agricultural capability were not noted as significant constraints. Policy and regulatory constraints were generally noted as a barrier, but this is not unique to the region.

Local/Regional Assets

An asset map was developed and is available at: https://tinyurl.com/28xm8tv2. This map displays the locations of regional food retail, distributors, processing and distribution infrastructure, lower mainland food retail, foodservice establishments, regional agricultural suppliers, and local farms. In addition to these physical assets, survey results indicate that the top strengths of farming and food production in the RV are the natural environment, human resources and knowledge/information resources.

Sales Channels

Advantages and disadvantages of different direct sales channels are described within the report, including their advantages and disadvantages as they relate to different goods (animal products, produce and value-added). These channels include direct to consumers (via online, email, phone etc.), box or shares programs, Farmers Markets, farm gate, U-Pick. Direct to small retail and direct to foodservice are also described in the report.

Survey results indicate that the majority of RV sales use “other” channels, followed by farm gate retail, box program sand home delivery. “Other” is assumed to include a combination of livestock auctions, animal shares, trading among one another/through a cooperative, E-mail listservs and sales directly to marketing boards for supply-managed operations (dairy, poultry, B.C. Vegetable Marketing Board). Sales to grocer retail, wholesale/distributor, restaurant and other foodservice ranked very low as sales channels for RV survey respondents.

Geographically, a small majority of RV producers primarily sell their products locally. However, there was a fairly even spread between selling locally, regionally, in other parts of B.C. and in other parts of Canada (likely to Alberta).

Selling into wholesale channels, via direct bulk sales or through a distributor or broker comes with many requirements and presents challenges for small to medium producers. Very few RV producers are accessing these sales channels, but it appears that the legal requirements (largely around food safety, packaging and labelling) are not the most pronounced barrier. The key and overwhelming barrier is a low level of production and lack of an economy of scale, leading to an inability to meet necessary volumes and maintain consistent supply. This barrier is followed by a lack of a regional marketing association and support, and being unsure of how to contact or establish relationships with distributors and larger retailers.

Consumer Demand

To get a rough idea of the size of potential local, regional and provincial markets, average household spending on fresh foods was calculated by the number of households in nearby communities, and then further filtered to look at spending of demographic segments with high potential. Demographic segments with high potential include households with no children or fewer children, household income of $100,000 or over, or older adults of 45-75 years of age. Using these metrics, it is clear that the size of high potential consumer segments and the amount they spend annually on fresh food is significant, and has a high likelihood of growing.

The report concludes that there is growing provincial demand for local food (including in rural or northern communities), especially for produce and there is unmet demand for organics (provincially). Excluding potatoes, B.C. is heavily dependent on international imports of vegetables which account for approximately 63% of total consumption of vegetables. British Columbian consumer demand for some meat products is greater than what is produced locally, however, willingness to pay a premium for local meat or grass-fed beef is probably more concentrated in wealthier markets. Multiple sources report that consumers are always in search of more local eggs. While there are challenges to securing egg quota, production for sale at non-quota volumes could be an opportunity.

For small and micro-processing, past research indicates the new products that processors will have the best success with are those that replace gourmet imported food, and with specialty foods that the large processors do not find economically viable to market in large quantities. This is probably still relevant, but some of the products mentioned in more recent trend reports highlight the following as far as processed goods: plant-based proteins, local/ancient grains, semi-processed vegetables, pet products.

The majority of consumers are buying their B.C. product at Farmers Market and there is an opportunity for Farmers' Market vendors to capture additional shopper spending by diversifying their products offered or by selling value added products.

Gaps

Gaps are defined as a challenge identified in the report with no clear matching local asset/resource to resolve or address it.

Key gaps identified are:

Marketing and Distribution	• Consistent/adequate volume of supply • Lack of local market • Aligning with consumer values/ transitioning to higher value channels • Low access to wholesale/distribution markets • Low involvement in Agri-Tourism
Infrastructure	• Lack of distribution/transportation infrastructure • Lack of abbatoirs (especially Class A and B) • Lack of equipment • Lack of storage infrastructure
Human	• Age of farmers (succession planning and mentorship) • Lack of labour (skilled farm labour) • Worker accommodation
Natural	• Growing season, northern climate
Financial	• Cost of production/ profit margins (including small economies of scale)
Policy and Regulatory	• Support with policy and regulatory barriers

National/Global Market Trends

Food trend reports were reviewed from 2020 and prior, as well as forward looking reports making predictions of what will become lasting trends post-pandemic. COVID-19 has caused economic volatility in global markets and presented rapidly changing circumstances and disruptions to the agri-food supply chain. It has also changed consumer habits and preferences; accelerating existing trends, and causing new trends to emerge. Six key trends related to food consumption are discussed in the report: health and wellness, trust/quality of food, identity and community, local food/ food security, direct to consumer and ethical/sustainable food and packaging. Sales channels have also been affected. Spending ratios have move from a food retail/foodservice ratio of 62.38 to approximately 74/26 in late 2020. Online sales and e-commerce have skyrocketed.

Opportunities

Farmers Market opportunities are market-specific, demand on competition, and market policies regarding location of vendor farms. Preliminary research indicates there may be gaps in eggs, meat and value-added products. Retailers indicated an interest in carrying local produce, if they do not already have a local source of a specific vegetable. Interest was also expressed in carrying local grain, more "shelf stable" vegetables (like broccoli or root vegetable as opposed to leafy greens) and a consistent source of local honey. Some local retailers were interested in carrying local meat, but indicated they would have to change their insurance coverage to do so.

Based on targeted interviews completed, grocery chains are looking for items they don't currently offer that are local, or local products that are available earlier or later than their current suppliers, or superior items (e.g. better flavour) to replace an item that is currently carried. Late season and high-quality, and/or or frozen fruits/berries, and storage crops outside of the typical season were emphasized as potential produce opportunities. Unique/novel items would only be an opportunity if associated with a well-resourced marketing campaign. Early season greens and local asparagus were also mentioned. Season extension infrastructure and emerging varieties for early or late production would be needed for the RV to compete in this arena at an extra-regional/provincial and/or wholesale level.

Limitations and Recommendations

Due to scope and time limitations, this project could not explore each and every potential market opportunity within the Robson Valley, the broader region, and across the province. In addition to recommending the 5 top opportunities (in the following section), this section presents a set of recommendations for future small market scoping projects to ensure no opportunities are left unexplored.

The recommendations and the proposed opportunities following need to be discussed and vetted with local producers in a focus group setting, or other interactive facilitated event. This normally would have been a part of the RVMOA but was not possible due to COVID-19 restrictions.

1) **Ground truth findings:** Hold a focus group for local producers and key partners to present report findings, recommendations and opportunities. At this session, gaps could be re-scored and opportunity ranking could be facilitated.

2) **Institutional purchasing:** Explore the potential of the institutional purchasing market within the Robson Valley as a small follow-up project.

3) **Agri-Tourism:** Explore Agri-Tourism as a small follow-up project. Tourism statistics/ potential were not reviewed as a part of this project, nor were tourism stakeholders and

potential partners engaged.[1]

4) **Organic Production:** Confirm the current status of organic producers in the Robson Valley, their needs, and/or their information gaps. There is a high unmet demand for organics in B.C., and this demand/potential is growing. Meanwhile, there were only 4 certified organic producers in the Robson Valley at the time of the 2016 Census. The costs and benefits of certification were not specifically reviewed as a part of this project, nor was local producer interest in the certification process confirmed. The Certified Organic Association of B.C. has a wealth of resources and support information for the organic sector and interested producers, such as the Small Scale Certification Research Project and three business guides for making the switch to organic (Certified Organic Associations of B.C.). Follow up with local producers is recommended to confirm that they are not experiencing an information or support gap related to knowledge, or organic markets, or organic transition. Demand/potential for organics and for B.C. vegetables is enormous and is growing, particularly in retail/distribution markets (certification is less important to Farmers Market consumers)

Top 5 Opportunities

The five opportunities proposed focus primarily on gaps and opportunities associated with marketing and distribution. However, since the 7 categories utilized throughout this report overlap and interact (see text box page 24), the opportunities also include actions that touch upon infrastructure and connect to other production-oriented challenges. It is important to note that these 5 opportunities are not exhaustive, and have been heavily filtered and prioritized through subjective ranking criteria (Section 10.4). This list does not fully address all of the various production challenges, financial challenges and succession challenges identified as important to local producers and local production, and there is much complementary work to be done by other partners and other governmental agricultural agencies.

The following proposed opportunities should be discussed and vetted with local producers in a focus group setting, or other interactive and facilitated event. This normally would have been a part of the RVMOA but was not possible due to COVID-19 restrictions. The top 5 opportunities identified are to:

1) Increase sales through existing direct local channels.
2) Increase regional/ extra-regional meat[2] sales and build red meat[3] value chain.

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[1] Lillooet agriculture and food society completed a feasibility study on Agri-Tourism which could serve as a good reference. In the East Kootenays, Fields Forward is also currently working on Agri-Tourism for the Creston area.
[2] All types of meat.
[3] Red meat includes: beef, lamb and bison.

3) Capture increased market share of adjacent markets and wholesale channels.
4) Establish a broadened Robson Valley cooperative (co-op) or collective.
5) Conduct Robson Valley Specific Production Trials/ Product Research.

1) Increase sales through existing direct local channels (Farmers Markets, Box programs, U-Pick, local retail) to assist small and medium operations to scale up.

Description:
Small and medium-scale farmers are not able to supply larger markets due to numerous barriers described within this report. Supporting gradually increased sales through existing direct farm to consumer channels can support small and medium-scale farms to increase production levels to a point in which they can overcome obstacles. These activities aim to utilize channels that are already common and successful, and expand market share within these channels, to gradually build producer readiness, which is a proven way to scale up to other market types. Market trends and consumer information suggests that there is high potential to sell more local product in the Robson Valley and beyond. Land availability is not a pronounced barrier in the Robson Valley, so these actions focus on other supports to meet identified gaps.

Actions:

1.1 Further evaluate and ground truth vendor gaps in nearby Farmers Markets

- Identify product gaps or missing products
- Support RV producers to experiment with secondary products and diversify what they are bringing to markets
- This action connects to Opportunity #4 because a collective or cooperative model would allow RV Farmers to reach broader markets and save time.

1.2 Connect with tourism sector and foster Agri-Tourism for farm exposure

- There is currently a strong interest in Agri-Tourism locally and low involvement.
- People are staying closer to home during the pandemic and travelling regionally/intra-regionally.

1.3 Coordinate "meet your maker/ meat your produce manager" events

- Local retailers and the chef contacted have shown interest in sourcing local products.
- Further discussion with local retail, foodservice (heli-chef, high-end restaurants) and directly with local produce purchasers should be facilitated directly with producers.
- These events have proved to be successful in other parts of B.C and led to new direct relationships and increased regional sales in the Beyond the Market project.

1.4 Increase box program and delivery sales channels through e-commerce training and support

- These channels are already strong.
- Support with setting up or improving e-commerce could amplify these channels or streamline their efficiencies.

2) Increase regional/ extra-regional meat sales and build red meat value chain

Description: Livestock ranching and hay/forage production are prominent in the Robson Valley and it is important to support expansion of hay/forage production to meet local feed needs in years with low hay production and/or increase herd size to reach new markets. Increasing hay production is also an insurance policy against risks from climate change and wildfire.

Consumers will pay a premium for special beef but interest for RV local consumers is unknown. Larger and wealthier markets outside of the Robson Valley should be the focus for marketing premium meat, but activities can be undertaken to simultaneously build local markets. Lack of slaughter capacity and associated issues were ranked as a major gap in this study.

Actions:

2.1 Complete a Regional abattoir feasibility study

- Complete a review and interviews regarding the Salt Spring Island Regional abbatoir, the Robson Valley mobile abbatoir and the Port Alberni abbatoir as a first step.
- Complete a feasibility study/ cost-benefit analysis for a Robson Valley regional abbatoir.
- The time is ripe for small-scale meat production due to closures of larger plants and news articles raising awareness of shortcomings of industrial meat production.

2.2 Coordinate an information session related to grass-fed/ locally finished red meat and certification options

- Engage a small number of producers (through interviews or a small focus group) to define the sectors' primary information gaps.
    - Do producers want help marketing grass-fed meat?
    - Does the livestock sector in general need support in increasing their direct sales vs. commodity sales?
    - Are producers aware of branding and certification programs/ opportunities through the B.C. Cattlemen's Association/ B.C. Beef Producers (including Verified Beef Production Plus and Genuine B.C. Beef Branding)?

- Coordinate experts in the field, including successful grass-finished producers, to speak with RV producers and provide information.
- Source and distribute a simple cost/benefit and market analysis of conventional vs. grass-finished red meat.
- This action is connected to 1.3

3) Capture increased market share of adjacent markets and wholesale channels

Description: Few farmers from the RV, likely only a small sample, sell to wholesalers/distributors or grocery retail as a primary, secondary or tertiary component of overall sales. This represents a massive opportunity if quality, volumes and criteria can be met to provide extra-regional and urban markets with Robson Valley products. This set of actions is designed to make use of existing supply chain infrastructure (existing processors/distributors and transportation services) rather than creating a parallel infrastructure system (such as creating a physical food hub). These actions rely on creating partnerships and collaborating with existing physical supply chain infrastructure rather than attempting to create and/or invest capital in developing new infrastructure which would need to be financed through grants. These actions aim to begin to shift the ratio of RV sales channels to see more farms and ranches selling bulk sales. Scaling up first requires increasing sales through local/existing channels (Opportunity 1), to the point where a threshold is reached.

The trends documented in this report should be leveraged to promote RV products (i.e. local food , direct to consumer, ethical foods, environmental impact based eating, re-generative farming, grassland stewardship/carbon, growing produce consumption, trust in farmers).

Actions:

3.1 Group training to meet wholesaler requirements (e.g. food safety system, packing and grading etc.)

- B.C. Ministry of Agriculture resources (fact sheets and webinars) on these topics could be shared directly with Robson Valley producers through in-person training.
- Existing materials could be edited to be catered to a small farm context.
- In-field training at a small or medium farm that has it's GAP certification and associated systems in place would be the most effective.

3.2 Establish CF-FFFG/agricultural marketing liaison and marketing support role

- This role would serve a food broker role but would be fully subsidized, rather than obtaining a profit margin.
- This role would serve as a marketing/communications role for medium-scale farmers ready for larger markets and would facilitate their connection to retail/distribution.

- This role could work one-on-one with producers and help them troubleshoot/plan
- This role could also explore the feasibility of a regional brand or regional marketing, or even facilitate join marketing initiatives between 2 or more producers.
- This role would need to be filled by an agricultural and marketing expert to be effective.

3.3 CF-FFG led value chain establishment

- This activity is tied closely to 4.1 and 5.2.
- CF-FFG would bear the labour cost of establishing a value chain around a certain product.
- CF-FFG would negotiate and administer the value chain/vertical coordination arrangements.

4) Establish a broadened Robson Valley cooperative (co-op) or collective

Description: The advantages to working together as a legal cooperative or some other form of producer collective apply to many aspects of production, marketing and distribution. Co-ops or other collective arrangements were frequently referenced through the RVMOA research as a way to meet supply demands for larger buyers while also collaborating to meet quality, packing and food safety requirements. Cooperatives/collectives can choose to take on various responsibilities, from joint crop planning, to shared transportation/ distribution, to shared storage or processing infrastructure, to collective marketing and leading a regional brand initiative. Elsewhere in B.C co-ops have been used to mentor and support smaller/newer producers by the co-op contracting them for certain crops.

There is interest in the Robson Valley in learning more about cooperatives, and there is a precedent in the RV. Cooperatives are widely used in other parts of B.C. from informal arrangements, to legal cooperatives, to being the entity who is a registered agency with the B.C. Vegetable Marketing Commission. The following actions are potential steps to further explore this type of arrangement and provide information and support to local producers. Any of the following actions could be led by the CF-FFG, or the CF-FFG could secure the funding for a local producer to spearhead the actions.

Actions:

4.1 Coordinate a guest speaker event (in the off-season) from established producer co-operatives (e.g. Discovery Organics, or Glen Valley Co-op)

4.2. Conduct research on the business case for co-operatively growing, marketing or distributing specific crops

4.3 Complete a feasibility study, in partnership with producers, for co-operative root vegetable storage and other storage crops

- Collect any past documentation from previous discussion of shared storage
- Review the Maple Ridge Garlic Storage and Processing Feasibility Study
- Engage potential buyers identified in this RVMOA report in the feasibility study
- Re-engage the Ministry of Agriculture in this project

5) Conduct Robson Valley Specific Production Trials/ Product Research

Description: Cost of production and the price squeeze was one of the most highly rated gaps and biggest issues that emerged. Many provincial resources exist on cost of production, but these are truly farm-specific and RV cost of production calculations for specific crops and farms would be useful. Specific emerging processed goods were flagged in the report and it would be interesting to investigate these further, as well as other early and late season products/crops of interest to local producers. Producers have said that they don't have time for market research, so these actions look to fill that gap and also ultimately provide farm-specific recommendations to reduce costs of production, and increase profit margins through local research and local business planning support.

5.1 Complete applied detailed market analysis, production cost and business case planning for specific crops or goods (including Non-Timber Forest Resources).

- This could be done separately from activity 4, as this does not need to be done in a co-operative context.
- The Columbia Basin Business Advisors program has an exceptional agriculture-specific model and resources.

5.2 Co-ordinate on-farm season extension/ variety trials and research.

- Trials and research should be conducted for berries, fruits, and greens in particular.
- Funding programs exist for this type of work, which would likely be keen to see Robson Valley sites and representation.
- Any trials should include 5.1, as field trials are very challenging to fund and maintain in B.C. without being connecting to additional facets of research/analysis.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

1. Increase sales through existing direct local channels.

Action	*Immediate Steps*	*Project timing/ length*	*Estimated Cost*	*Potential Partners*	*Funding Opportunities*
1.1 Further evaluate and ground truth vendor gaps in nearby Farmers Markets	• Evaluate vendor lists in nearby markets • Access or complete Farmers Market consumer surveys • Share results with producers and encourage action	Fall 2021 to strategize for next season	Low: $0-$5,000.00	B.C. Association of Farmers Markets Nearby Farmers Markets UNBC	None identified. Seek a student researcher or volunteer to complete this research
1.2 Connect with tourism sector and foster Agri-Tourism for farm exposure	• Add Agri-Tourism layer to asset map and turn this into a farm map • Connect with regional tourism to promote map of local farms that accept visitors and have retail operations	Immediate. Spring-Summer 2021	Low: $0-$5,000.00	Northern B.C. Tourism Village of McBride Village of Valemount	Northern Development Initiative Trust (Marketing Initiatives stream)
1.3 Coordinate "meet your maker/ meat your produce manager" events	• Coordinate a workshop to prepare producers for these events including how to prepare a sell sheet, refining their ordering processes, determining the products and volume they can offer • Host events to connect producers to chefs, and local/regional grocery managers	Fall 2021/Winter 2022	Low: $5,000.00-$10,000.00	Entrepreneurial local producers Farm Folk/City Folk (for their event model).	Government of B.C. Community Economic Recovery Infrastructure Program (Rural Economic Recovery Stream)

Action	Immediate Steps	Project timing/ length	Estimated Cost	Potential Partners	Funding Opportunities
	• Provide follow-up support to negotiate agreements				
1.4 Increase box program and delivery sales channels through e-commerce training and support	• Poll local producers to find out who is using e-commerce and who would like to • Host a workshop and/or invite a guest speaker to provide information and training on setting up e-commerce • Secure a producer subsidy to cover the costs of setting up their online store	Fall 2021/Winter 2022	Low $0-$5,000.00 *(for coordination. Not including subsidy)* Subsidy= $1,000 per farm for tech/design support	BCAFM B.C. Markets Online program Regional farms already using e-commerce Shopify (solicit in-kind contribution)	Government of B.C. Community Economic Recovery Infrastructure Program (Rural Economic Recovery Stream) Innovation and technology funding

2) Increase regional/ extra-regional meat sales and build red meat value chain

Action	Immediate Steps	Project timing/ length	Estimated Cost	Potential Partners	Funding Opportunities
2.1 Complete a Regional abbatoir feasibility study	• Complete a review and interviews re: Salt Spring Island Regional abbatoir, Robson Valley mobile abbatoir, Port Alberni abbatoir as a first step. Abbatoir feasibility study for the Capital Regional District of British Columbia	Immediate	Low: $5,000.00-$10,000.00	B.C. Ministry of Agriculture B.C. Association of Abbatoirs and B.C .Meats Robson Valley Cattlemens' Association	Northern Development Initiative Trust (Economic Infrastructure stream)

Action	Immediate Steps	Project timing/ length	Estimated Cost	Potential Partners	Funding Opportunities
	• Complete a feasibility study/ cost-benefit analysis for a Robson Valley regional abbatoir				Investment Agriculture Foundation
2.2 Coordinate an information session re: grass-fed/ locally finished red meat and other certification options	• Engage a small number of producers (through interviews or a small focus group) to define the sectors' primary information gaps • Coordinate experts in the field, including successful grass-finished producers, to speak with RV producers and provide information • Source and distribute a simple cost/benefit and market analysis of conventional vs. grass-finished red meat.	Fall/Winter 2021/2022	Low: $0-$5,000.00	McBride Farmers Institute B.C. Cattlemen's Association (Verified Beef Production Plus Program) B.C. Beef Producers B.C Ministry of Agriculture B.C. Bison Association B.C. Sheep Association B.C. Meats for B.C. Families Initiative	Canada-B.C. Knowledge Transfer Events Program under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership

3) Capture increased market share of adjacent markets and wholesale channels

Action	*Immediate Steps*	*Project timing/ length*	*Estimated Cost*	*Potential Partners*	*Funding Opportunities*
3.1 Group training (food safety system, packing and grading etc.)	• Determine number of interested parties • Identify trainers		Low: $0-$5,000.00	Young Agrarians Canada GAP B.C. Ministry of Agriculture.	Canada-B.C. Knowledge Transfer Events Program under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership
3.2 Establish CF-FFFG/agricultural marketing liaison and marketing support role	• Identify B.C or Canada food brokers • Develop job/contract description • Source funding for role		High: ½ to full-time position per year (position could serve all of RD-FFG not just the Robson Valley)		None identified Recommended to utilize CF-FFG core funding.
3.3 CF-FFG led value chain establishment	• Shortlist the potential products identified in this report as having demonstrated demand • Host a brainstorming session with producers to reduce list to top 3 • Determine quantity currently produced in RV • Identify value chain partners • Meet with partners to develop planning/solutions around top 3	Begin fall/winter 2022/2023 after pre-cursory actions in plan are completed (actions 1, 2 and 4)	Medium: ~$50,000.000	B.C. Ministry of Agriculture	None identified Recommended to utilize CF-FFG core funding

Action	Immediate Steps	Project timing/ length	Estimated Cost	Potential Partners	Funding Opportunities
	products and refine to 1-2 RV niche product • Complete Action 5.1 for these 1-2 crops with each producer who produces them				

4) Establish a broadened Robson Valley cooperative (co-op) or collective

Action	Immediate Steps	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Potential Partners	Funding Opportunities
4.1 Coordinate a guest speaker event (in the off-season) from established producer co-operatives	• Connect with the Robson Valley Growers Cooperative to gauge their interest and to identify a point person for collaboration • Connect with the appropriate B.C. Ministry of Agriculture Regional Agrologist re: event funding	Fall 2021/Winter 2022	Low: $0-$5000.00	Robson Valley Cooperative Discovery Organics Glen Valley Co-op Hope Farms B.C. Cooperatives Association	Local Credit Unions Canada-B.C. Knowledge Transfer Events Program under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership
4.2. Conduct research on the business case for co-operatively growing, marketing or distributing specific crops	• Connect with the Robson Valley Growers Cooperative to gauge their interest and to identify a point person for collaboration • Complete a research review on relevant models from elsewhere in B.C. or other jurisdictions	After, or in parallel to Activity 3.3.	Dependant of # of crops. Low: $5,000.00-$10,000.00	Robson Valley Cooperative UNBC Discovery Organics B.C. Cooperatives Association	None identified

Action	Immediate Steps	Timeline	Estimated Cost	Potential Partners	Funding Opportunities
	• Choose crops based on analysis in 3.3				
4.3 Complete a feasibility study, in partnership with producers, for co-operative storage infrastructure (roots and other storage crops)	• Collect any past documentation from previous discussion of shared storage • Review the Maple Ridge Garlic Storage and Processing Feasibility Study • Engage potential buyers identified in this RVMOA report in the feasibility study • Re-engage the Ministry of Agriculture in this project		Low: $5,000.00-$10,000.00	Former owners of Twin Meadows Farms UNBC B.C. Ministry of Agriculture	Investment Agriculture Foundation Northern Development Initiative Trust (Economic Infrastructure stream)

5) Conduct Robson Valley Specific Production Trials/ Product Research

Action	Immediate Steps	Timeline/ Project Length	Estimated Cost	Potential Partners	Funding Opportunities
5.1 Complete RV-focused detailed market analysis, production cost and business case planning for specific crops or goods	• Share program information and consultant list with local producers • Facilitate funding applications and consultant recruitment • Share general/non-confidential results in a local forum	On-going, crop-by-crop as interest arises or opportunities identified	Medium: $5,000.00 per crop	B.C. Ministry of Agriculture Qualified Program Consultants Community Futures Central Kootenay and Columbia Basin Business Advisors (for information on their models)	Agri Food Development Farm Business Planning Program

Action	Immediate Steps	Timeline/ Project Length	Estimated Cost	Potential Partners	Funding Opportunities
5.2 Co-ordinate on-farm season extension/ variety trials and research	• Connect with industry representative or industry specialists to identify new varieties of berries, fruits, and greens to trial • Identify season extension techniques to trial • Identify interested producers • Secure stable 3-year funding	Initiate later 3-year project	Medium/high: $20,000-$80,000	Ministry of Agriculture Industry Specialists UNBC Climate Agriculture B.C. B.C. Agriculture and Climate Adaptation Research Network (to identify researcher partners) Relevant commodity groups	Farm Adaptation Innovator Program Agri Food Development Farm Business Planning Small farm accelerator program