
Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act

5. PLANNING FOR FARMING

Building on partnerships – A new era

This new legislation is an important instrument in assisting local governments to plan for farming and move beyond “preservation”.

Starting with several key amendments to the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* in 1994 and the passage of the *Growth Strategies Act* in 1995, farming has been brought into the planning mainstream. B.C. is now in an excellent position to address farming issues in a manner that is sensitive both to local and regional concerns and to important resource and food security considerations.

New planning tools

Local government plans and bylaws have a critical role to play in developing a supportive regulatory climate for farming. In addition to the *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act*, several new planning tools are now in place or are being developed.

- AMENDMENTS TO THE *AGRICULTURAL LAND COMMISSION ACT*

A requirement has been added to the ALC’s mandate to work closely with local governments, provincial ministries and others to encourage plans, bylaws and policies that support farming. Local bylaws must now be consistent with the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* and official plan referrals to the ALC are required. The act has been amended to enable the ALC to delegate some of its decision-making to local governments, where there is mutual agreement and supportive farming policies in place.

- *GROWTH STRATEGIES ACT*

Regional growth management strategies, led by regional governments with support from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, will help protect farmland and identify the needs of B.C.’s aquaculture industry.

- *THE FARM PRACTICES PROTECTION ACT*

This act makes changes to the following acts:

- *The Municipal Act*

Changes to this act state that community plans may include policies that help to maintain and enhance farming and may now designate development permit areas to protect farming (e.g. buffering to separate farming and residential areas). The ALC is preparing a “Planning for Agriculture” guide to suggest practical ways that local governments throughout B.C. can plan for farming at the local level.

Of particular importance is a new division in the *Municipal Act* which provides for development of bylaw standards by the ministry (assisted by local governments, the farm community and the ALC) to help local governments prepare zoning and rural land-use bylaws which support farming.

FACTS



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This new division of the act also enables the regional implementation of a three-year process to review zoning and rural land-use bylaws to meet the minister's standards.

The timing of regional implementation will be based in part on local governments' own planning timetables. Changes to zoning and rural land-use bylaws affecting farming must be approved by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, once these provisions are implemented in a region.

- “The Land Title Act

Approving officers under the Land Title Act will have new powers to assess impacts of new subdivisions on farmland when they consider applications for subdivision. A guide for subdivision approving officers is being developed by the ALC.

- ALC POLICY REVIEWS

The ALC has undertaken policy reviews for activities in the Agricultural Land Reserve. The bed and breakfast, home occupation and farm retail policy reviews have been completed. Policies regarding on-farm processing, agri-tourism and estate wineries are under consideration.

Farming and the environment

Several initiatives have been put in place: the Agriculture and Aquaculture Waste Management Regulations; Environmental Enhancement and Sustainable Practices Programs; the formation of the B.C. Federation of Agriculture's Agricultural Environmental Protection Council; the B.C. Cattlemen's Association's EnvirAlert program; the environmental review of finfish aquaculture under the *Environmental Assessment Act*; and the development of environmental guidelines for farm commodities by the ministry with the assistance of commodity organizations.

Effective partnerships

For the past 20 years, the ALC has worked with municipalities and regional districts to review plans and bylaws. A team approach, drawing upon the ALC's regional planning expertise and the ministry's farm sector experience, is being put in place to work with local governments and the farm community in the development of plans and bylaws affecting B.C.'s important farming areas, particularly the ALR.

During the implementation process, the ministry and the ALC are committed to working with local governments, industry partners, The Union of B.C. Municipalities, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and other provincial agencies.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION,
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Or visit the ministry's home
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<http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/>

This fact sheet is one of a
series on the new *Farm
Practices Protection
(Right to Farm) Act*