



## INTERIM ACTION PLAN

# AGRICULTURE SECTOR STRATEGY

AUGUST 2009

### **BACKGROUND**

Motivated by the impacts of the Mountain Pine Beetle epidemic, the Omineca Beetle Action Coalition (OBAC) was established in 2005 to “work to ensure sustainable development and resiliency” in the north-central region of British Columbia bounded roughly by Smithers, Valemount and Mackenzie. A key function of the OBAC is the development of a series of regional response strategies. When complete, these strategies are expected to address eleven high-priority subject areas ranging from industry sectors to community services.

Each of the regional response strategies will provide an up-to-date profile of the current situation, analyze the opportunities and challenges associated with each subject area, and recommend a series of immediate and longer-term actions. Although each strategy is developed with broad stakeholder involvement, the final product remains advisory in nature – identifying what could be done by senior and local governments, industries, public institutions and others.

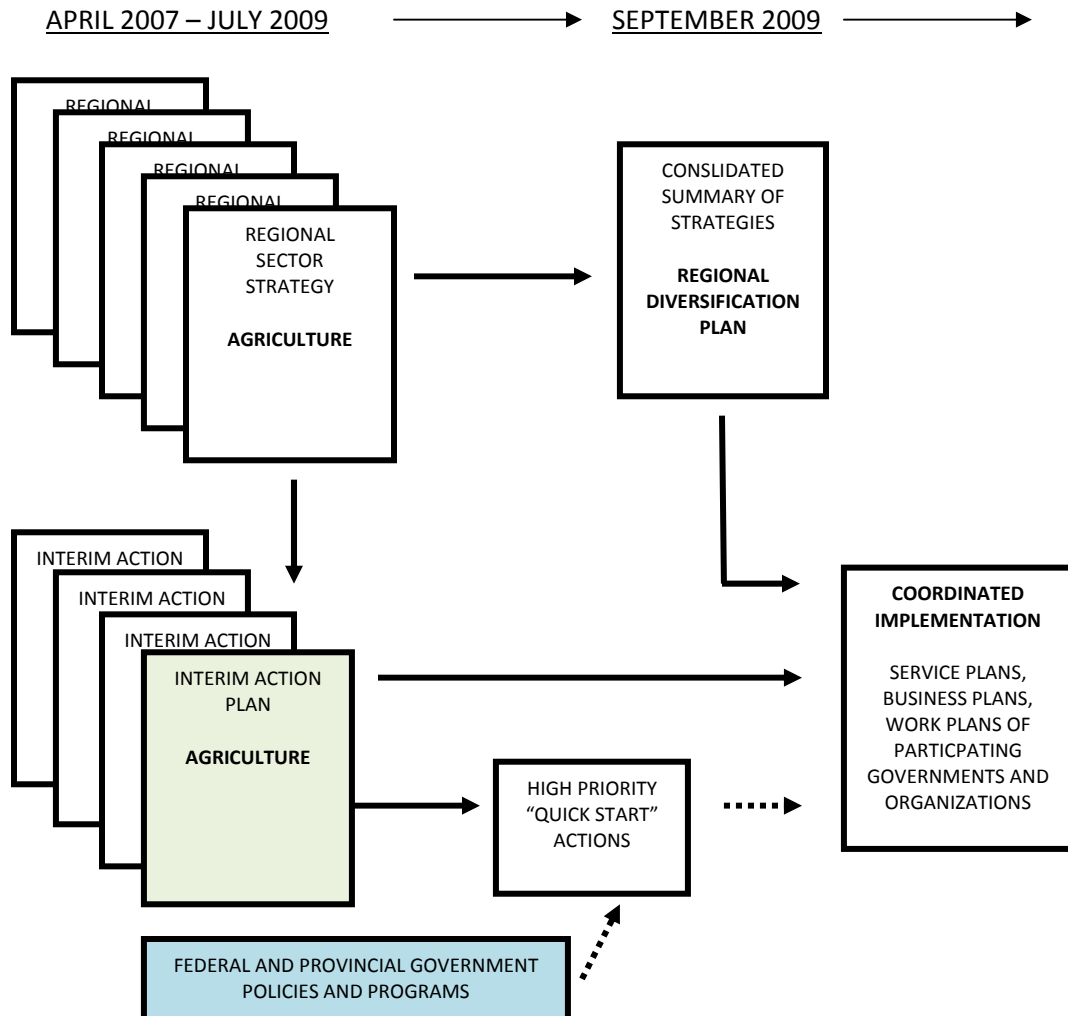
The Agriculture Sector Strategy is the eighth of the regional response strategies to be released (July 2009), and sets out four objectives and five broad recommendations. To support the recommendations, 29 specific actions are proposed. As each successive regional response strategy is developed, it is expected that there will be many common and interdependent recommendations and actions. For example, this strategy has particularly close links to the Integrated Infrastructure Strategy (November 2008)/Attraction and retention Strategy (December 2008), and the Future Forest and Fiber Use Strategy (November 2008).

The impacts of the Mountain Pine Beetle epidemic, combined with the economic circumstances that have developed over the past two years increase the urgency to act on this strategy. Governments at all levels are looking for ways to maintain jobs and diversify the economy in the impacted regions.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this Interim Action Plan is to identify what work can effectively take place now, in order to ensure that

- a. High priority (important and immediate) opportunities are addressed in a timely manner, and
- b. Individuals and organizations whose mandate it would be to undertake specific activities are informed and engaged in implementation.



As more of the regional response strategies are completed the Interim Action Plans will inform the implementation activities of a variety of government and non-government organizations. Through the Regional Diversification Plan a longer-term implementation structure will be developed.

## KEY OBAC ACTIONS SUMMARY

OBAC does not have the mandate or resources to take on implementation of most actions in the regional strategies, including the Agriculture Sector Strategy. However, in line with its role to work for regionally important community interests, it will strive to see they are addressed. In many situations, the OBAC function will be to communicate the opportunity, encourage partnerships and promote action by the appropriate government or organization.

OBAC will actively encourage the appropriate parties to advance all the recommendations and specific actions identified in the Strategy. It is understood, however, that this does not mean that every action will be completed exactly as it is currently described – as work progresses and circumstances evolve, actions are expected to fall into a number of categories:

- a. Addressed through existing initiatives,
- b. Implemented as described,
- c. Intent is achieved, but through different means, and
- d. Deferred or dropped with reasons.

In general, however, the intent of the recommendations will be carried forward.

Concurrent to the completion of regional response strategies, OBAC will work with other levels of government to determine what type of collaborative model is best suited to oversee the implementation, monitoring and adaptation of strategies over the longer-term. This is a fundamental requirement if the benefits from OBAC's investment in strategy development are to be realized.

In the interim, the following actions provide important and immediate opportunities which should be pursued with OBAC leadership:

**1 Work with regional partners and the province to develop a solid business case and proposal for funding of agricultural support officers in the region.**

*Target: Proposal complete and submitted to the province by June 2010. This should be undertaken in concert with the action: "Work with the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, and regional partners to develop a solid rationale for MAL additional staffing dedicated to direct farm activity and technical support". Target: Rationale and regional support in place by August 2010.*

**2 Convene a working group of regional partners to prepare communications material about the opportunities for agriculture in the region.**

*Target: Materials ready for distribution by September 2010.*

**3 Put in place measures designed to:**

- **Encourage consumers to purchase more locally produced food;**
- **Encourage regional producers to direct more of their market production to local markets;**
- **Increase access to affordable healthy food which is produced locally;**

- **Encourage public and private institutions to purchase local foods where possible; and at the local level:**
  - Develop food charters which outline food procurement requirements;
  - Ensure area plans address present and future agriculture needs; and
  - Ensure agriculture is a priority for economic development planning.

*Target:* This will be an ongoing effort but could be advanced greatly through the efforts of the regional working group mentioned above. Work should begin by the working group on scoping needs and opportunities for this as soon as the working group is ready. This should be undertaken in concert with the action: *“Prepare materials for targeted audiences which highlight the advantages of agriculture in the OBAC region and ensure that the material is readily available.”*

**4 Work with the province (several ministries) and local partners to undertake an assessment of the opportunities for expanding the greenhouse industry in the region.**

*Target:* Agreement on the project objectives and timelines by January 2010, with completion of the assessment before the end of 2010.

**5 Establish baselines and track progress.**

*Target:* Put in place a regionally based method to credibly track progress toward the objectives set out in the Agriculture Sector Strategy, including documenting the baseline, by June 2010. (See template below).

Appendix 1 describes each specific action and identifies steps the OBAC will take to communicate and/or support implementation.

**TEMPLATE FOR MEASURES AND TARGETS**

As part of the implementation process, a proposed performance measure and target is identified for each recommendation.

1. Develop infrastructure that supports the agricultural sector and removes barriers to its further development and diversification.

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| <p><u>Proposed success measure:</u> To be determined</p> <p><u>Information source:</u> To be determined</p> <p><u>Proposed target:</u> To be determined</p> |
|---|

2. Attract new entrants to the industry and enable access to training and education for existing and new members of the sector.

Proposed success measure: To be determined

Information source: To be determined

Proposed target: To be determined

3. Strengthen the industry by increasing collaboration across the sector and forging partnerships and communication links with First Nations, local communities, governments, health and education agencies.

Proposed success measures: To be determined

Information source: To be determined

Proposed target: To be determined

4. Support value-added and specialized product development and the development of provincial, national and international markets for these products.

Proposed success measures: To be determined

Information source: To be determined

Proposed target: To be determined

5. Increase the demand for locally and regionally produced foods.

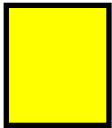
Proposed success measures: To be determined

Information source: To be determined

Proposed target: To be determined

## APPENDIX 1

Appendix 1 is based on the “specific actions” set out in Chapter 6 (pages 46 – 59) of the Tourism Sector Strategy.



Shaded row = immediate opportunities

## AGRICULTURE SECTOR STRATEGY

**Recommendation 1:** *Develop infrastructure that supports the agricultural sector and removes barriers to its further development and diversification.*

| Specific action (from Strategy)   | Comments and/or tactics   | Contacts and/or responsibilities  | Cost considerations  | OBAC function   |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| <p>a) Establish provincially funded agricultural support officer contact positions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consideration should be given to following the model of the Central Okanagan Regional District.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growth and diversification of the industry on a regionally significant scale requires access to expertise.</li> <li>• The business case will need to be further developed and presented to the Ministry of Agriculture.</li> <li>• The right person in these positions could add significant value to the sector.</li> <li>• To be most effective, three officers and one support person should be considered.</li> <li>• Actual model and functions may be interdependent with the disposition of recommended action 3(c).</li> </ul> | <p>Industry associations and local governments to develop the business case for the provincial government.</p> <p>Ministry of Agriculture and Lands to participate in analysis of business case(s) and implement accordingly.</p> | <p>Business case development / analysis can be done with existing resources however funding of \$10k to \$15k would allow hiring a local contractor to assist with the work.</p> <p>3 officers plus a support person, office and travel costs: \$350k-\$400k per year.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring the recommendation to the attention of the Province.</li> <li>• Encourage regional action to help build the solid business case for the province to act upon.</li> </ul> |

| <b>AGRICULTURE SECTOR STRATEGY</b>  |  |  |  |  |
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| <b>Recommendation 1: Develop infrastructure that supports the agricultural sector and removes barriers to its further development and diversification.</b>  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>Specific action (from Strategy)</b>  | <b>Comments and/or tactics</b>   | <b>Contacts and/or responsibilities</b>  | <b>Cost considerations</b>   | <b>OBAC function</b>   |
| b) Examine the feasibility and interest in a “beef cluster” in the region which would include beef production, processing, and shipping of products. The approach should be at a reasonable scale for the region. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A first step would be to support the stabilization and enhancement of existing slaughter and processing facilities in the region.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The strategy notes that partnering with the Cariboo-Chilcotin and Peace Regions may make this more feasible.</li> <li>• Past studies and assessments should provide a good starting point for this action item.</li> </ul>  | Producer organizations and businesses should take the lead to scope out the requirement and initiate the feasibility work.<br><br>The province could play a key role in examining feasibility. | Some in-kind work by the industry.<br><br>The province may be able to assign a staff member to lead the project. Alternatively, the industry and local governments could approach NDIT for funding to carry out the necessary analysis and implementation proposal (est. \$50k - \$75k). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring this recommendation to the attention of the industry associations and the Province.</li> <li>• Encourage local governments to support the feasibility work as well as existing facilities.</li> </ul> |
| c) Assess the business case for developing improved food storage facilities in the region. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment priorities include, but are not limited to, Smithers, Vanderhoof, Fort St. James, Prince George and McBride.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This appears to be an area where the industry and the province could conduct a gap analysis, identify key priorities, develop options and carry out the investment feasibility work to set the scene for potential businesses, including cooperatives.</li> </ul> | Agriculture industry and the province (MAL)  | Some in-kind work by the industry.<br><br>The province may be able to assign a staff member to lead the project. Alternatively, the industry and local governments could approach NDIT for funding to carry out the necessary analysis and implementation proposal (est. \$50k - \$75k). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring this recommendation to the attention of the industry associations and the Province.</li> <li>• Encourage local governments to support the feasibility work as well as existing facilities.</li> </ul> |

| AGRICULTURE SECTOR STRATEGY  |   |  |   |  |
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| <b>Recommendation 1:</b> <i>Develop infrastructure that supports the agricultural sector and removes barriers to its further development and diversification.</i>  |   |  |   |  |
| Specific action (from Strategy)  | Comments and/or tactics   | Contacts and/or responsibilities   | Cost considerations   | OBAC function  |
| d) Put in place measures designed to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage consumers to purchase more locally produced food;</li> <li>• Encourage regional producers to direct more of their market production to local markets;</li> <li>• Increase access to affordable healthy food which is produced locally;</li> <li>• Encourage public and private institutions to purchase local foods where possible; and</li> <li>• At the local level:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Develop food charters which outline food procurement requirements;</li> <li>– Ensure area plans address present and future agriculture needs; and</li> <li>– Ensure agriculture is a priority for economic development planning.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This action includes a variety of marketing and policy issues. Further work is required to flesh these out and determine how each should be addressed.</li> <li>• Much of the marketing function may be able to build on or borrow from other similar initiatives such as local food security promotion, and the “100 Mile Diet” movement.</li> <li>• Issues of cost, variety, and convenience will have to be dealt with - some of these are “cultural” in nature.</li> </ul> | <p>Several responsible parties depending on which sub-action.</p> <p>Further work to flesh out the actions and identify lead parties can be undertaken by OBAC in conjunction with MAL and local industry.</p> | <p>The immediate work to develop tactical plans has minimal cost.</p> <p>That work will determine the cost of individual sub-actions.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convene a small working group to develop tactical plans for the sub-actions.</li> </ul> |

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| Specific action (from Strategy)  | Comments and/or tactics  | Contacts and/or responsibilities | Cost considerations   | OBAC function  |
| e) Ensure existing productive agricultural land is retained and identify land for future agricultural production. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake capability assessments as identified under LRMPs.</li> <li>• Balance agriculture and forestry needs on Crown land.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There may be a need to carry out a very objective demand analysis within certain key parts of the region.</li> <li>• Is there a good measure of the present utilization of private land that is zoned for agriculture?</li> <li>• The vision for this strategy is focused on food production however several bioenergy crops may straddle the traditional definitions of forestry and agriculture.</li> <li>• Some work was started by the province to assess the issue of balancing forestry and agriculture demands.</li> <li>• There may be opportunities for agroforestry on some lands.</li> <li>• There are policy and zoning issues for the province and possibly for local governments.</li> <li>•</li> </ul> | Province - MAL, MFR, ILMB        | The costs depend on how much new information and analysis the province chooses to do, and how the information will be made available. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring the matter to the attention of the province.</li> <li>• Provide concise local government input at a regional level if required to support the province's work.</li> </ul> |

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| Specific action (from Strategy)  | Comments and/or tactics   | Contacts and/or responsibilities   | Cost considerations   | OBAC function  |
| f) Develop a provincial vision for agriculture and policies which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourages the growth and expansion of production in the OBAC and other regions.</li> <li>Encourages entrepreneurs to develop and grow new markets and utilize innovative farming and production practices.</li> <li>Address the issue of food security for the province.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The BC Agriculture Plan, which has five key themes and 23 strategies, states the following vision: <i>Continued development and growth of an economically viable and resilient agriculture and food sector which contributes significantly to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>the health of British Columbians;</i></li> <li><i>climate change mitigation;</i></li> <li><i>environmental sustainability; and</i></li> <li><i>a growing BC economy.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>The work that may be required here is to determine the "fit" and application for the BC plan within the OBAC region.</li> </ul> | <p>The province (MAL) will be the lead player for this, although local governments and producers have a role.</p> <p>There are also likely links to federal policies and programs.</p> | <p>Mainly a policy activity so no major program costs.</p> <p>There could be some work done to determine regional priorities within the provincial framework.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage the province to work with regional organizations to ensure the provincial framework is serving the OBAC region adequately.</li> </ul> |

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| Specific action (from Strategy)   | Comments and/or tactics   | Contacts and/or responsibilities  | Cost considerations   | OBAC function  |
| g) Evaluate existing and new regulation and policies through a “rural lens” which places the continued viability of both small and large agriculture producers as a high priority and remove or modify government policies that unnecessarily impede the development of the agriculture industry in the region. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meat regulations which restrict local food production.</li> <li>Policies related to the Agricultural Land Reserve including the reassessment of parcels that may be marginal for agriculture.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is very closely linked to recommendation 1(f) above.</li> <li>The “rural lens” concept is consistent with one of the key functions of the Ministry of Community and Rural Development.</li> <li>There will likely be a need to identify more specifically what policies and regulations are constraining (or could assist) agriculture in the OBAC region, and then conduct an objective analysis of options, including the potential risks and benefits.</li> <li>Food safety has been a priority issue for both the provincial and federal governments recently, and there is some risk of new policies with unintended consequences for smaller or more rural producers.</li> <li>Process for collaborative regional input to policy making is addressed elsewhere in the OBAC Agriculture Sector Strategy.</li> </ul> | <p>MCRD should be encouraged to apply a “rural lens” to all provincial policies and regulations.</p> <p>Agriculture Canada should be encouraged to consider the viability of small and rural agriculture in all its policy decisions.</p> <p>Industry organizations and local governments can work with the province to more specifically identify key policy issues and solutions.</p> | <p>Mainly policy work. Possibly a need for some contract work to convene key parties and carry out regional assessment work (e.g., \$40k - \$50k). This may be eligible for NDI grant funding or federal support.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring the issue to the attention of the province.</li> <li>Facilitate regional level input from local governments where appropriate.</li> </ul> |

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| <b>Recommendation 1: Develop infrastructure that supports the agricultural sector and removes barriers to its further development and diversification.</b>       |   |   |   |   |
| Specific action (from Strategy)  | Comments and/or tactics   | Contacts and/or responsibilities  | Cost considerations   | OBAC function   |
| h) Review the future application of the ALR and decisions with respect to it in the region are consistent with the unique needs and circumstances of the region. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is closely linked to the recommendations above - by identifying the unique needs and interests of the region in a collaborative manner with senior governments, and finding the “fit” with provincial and federal plans (and gaps), as well as the policy of a “rural lens”, this can be done without appearing arbitrary or having individual decisions become politicized.</li> </ul> | Province and ALC<br><br>Local governments and industry to identify region-specific policy considerations. | Mainly in-house and policy work.<br><br>Some contract support may be needed to facilitate and document local government and industry input (\$10k - \$15k). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring the recommendation to the attention of the province and ALC.</li> <li>Facilitate regional level input from local governments where appropriate.</li> </ul> |

| AGRICULTURE SECTOR STRATEGY  |   |  |  |   |
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| <b>Recommendation 2: Attract new entrants to the industry and enable access to training and education for existing and new members of the sector.</b>                              |   |  |  |   |
| Specific action (from Strategy)  | Comments and/or tactics   | Contacts and/or responsibilities                       | Cost considerations  | OBAC function   |
| a) Establish and expand existing training and education programs relevant to agriculture. This includes, for example, slaughter and processing, marketing and management training. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An assessment may be needed to determine whether there is critical mass sufficient for program expansion, or if partnerships can be arranged to increase access for regional students (e.g., a partnership between the Vanderhoof campus of CNC and the</li> </ul> | Colleges<br>Producer organizations<br>Province (AELMD) | To the extent the need can be addressed through partnerships with existing programs, the costs may be moderate.<br><br>New programs or facilities will require detailed analysis and | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate the recommendation to education providers and the province.</li> </ul> |

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| <b>Recommendation 2: Attract new entrants to the industry and enable access to training and education for existing and new members of the sector.</b>                 |  |   |  |   |
| Specific action (from Strategy)   | Comments and/or tactics  | Contacts and/or responsibilities  | Cost considerations  | OBAC function   |
|   | <p>Vermilion campus of Lakeland College in Alberta.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There will need to be a credible business case developed if organizations are expected to develop new programs.</li> </ul>  |   | cost estimates.  |   |
| b) Establish an agriculture mentoring program for the region to support new entrants and established farmers who wish to diversify or expand their operations.        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This could be tied to Recommendation 2 (b) but could also be established separately. Producer organizations could play a key role, as could experienced government staff.</li> <li>One example may be the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada program, particularly the model used in Manitoba.<br/><a href="http://www4.agr.gc.ca/AAFC-AAC/display-afficher.do?id=1177690244430&amp;lang=eng">http://www4.agr.gc.ca/AAFC-AAC/display-afficher.do?id=1177690244430&amp;lang=eng</a></li> </ul> | <p>Producer / industry organizations</p> <p>Province of BC (MAL) and Federal Government (AAF Canada)</p> <p>Agriculture support officers (recommendation 1a) and an Agricultural Advisory Committee (2e) could play a direct role to establish and implement a program.</p> <p>Education organizations may be able to host or support the program</p> | <p>Existing programs should be examined for support.</p> <p>Volunteer participation can be encouraged.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring the recommendation to the attention of potential partner organizations.</li> <li>Be available to convene an initial meeting of potential partners</li> </ul> |
| c) Update existing information resources for agriculture including a manual for new entrants; ensure relevant regional research reports are available electronically. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some of this information may be available at a provincial level, and the function may be suitable to be addressed on a provincial scale.</li> <li>These types of activities require on-going capacity. The proposed Agricultural Support Officers could</li> </ul>  | <p>Province - MAL to look at providing provincially with regionally relevant components.</p> <p>Post secondary institutions.</p>  | <p>May be possible to do with existing resources however a contractor may add value in bringing together information from multiple sources (\$20k).</p> <p>Federal, provincial or NDIT</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make the province and post-secondary organizations aware of the recommendation.</li> </ul>   |

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| <b>Recommendation 2:</b> <i>Attract new entrants to the industry and enable access to training and education for existing and new members of the sector.</i>    |   |  |   |   |
| Specific action (from Strategy)   | Comments and/or tactics   | Contacts and/or responsibilities   | Cost considerations   | OBAC function   |
|   | <p>play a role to see this happens, but would need some administrative support to ensure they remain available to visit producers on site.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This might be done initially through a contract.</li> <li>• If one of the post secondary education providers is going to be the lead agricultural school in the region, it may be able to carry out this function.</li> </ul>   |  | <p>funding may be available for this.</p> <p>On-going costs to keep the material current.</p>   |   |
| d) Prepare materials for targeted audiences which highlight the advantages of agriculture in the OBAC region and ensure that the material is readily available. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is linked to the Attraction and Retention Strategy, but is much more specific to the Agriculture Sector.</li> <li>• Materials will need to contain up to date information about land, climate, potential crops, etc.</li> <li>• If one of the targets is outside Canada, information will be needed about culture, immigration etc., and the material may need to be in more than one language.</li> <li>• This activity requires not only good information, but also marketing expertise.</li> <li>• Need to decide if the follow-up is passive (information available) or more active (proactive promotion).</li> </ul> | <p>Economic development officers within the region.</p> <p>Support from the province.</p> <p>Industry organizations.</p> | <p>Subject to preparation of a tactical plan and more detailed concept design.</p> <p>Materials could likely be compiled and put into a suitable marketing format for \$30k - \$50k. Periodic updating costs would also be incurred (possibly under 2f).</p> <p>If proactive marketing is to occur, the costs will be additional.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring the recommendation to the attention of potential implementation partners.</li> <li>• Offer to convene a small working group to develop a more detailed concept design and tactical plan for implementation.</li> </ul> |

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| <b>Recommendation 2: Attract new entrants to the industry and enable access to training and education for existing and new members of the sector.</b>  |   |  |   |   |
| Specific action (from Strategy)  | Comments and/or tactics   | Contacts and/or responsibilities   | Cost considerations   | OBAC function   |
| e) Establish an agricultural advisory committee to engage with local education and research facilities including UNBC and the College of New Caledonia.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NWCC should also be included on this list. Although outside the region, Northern Lights may also be a good partner.</li> <li>Need to confirm the skill types, level (i.e., technical or executive) and range of individuals required.</li> <li>Terms of reference should be drafted and committee candidates approached.</li> <li>It is not uncommon for a research or education program to have an external advisory committee, however what is envisioned here may be unique in that it would advise several institutions, either collectively or individually.</li> </ul> | Province (MAL)<br>Federal Government<br>Education and research providers<br>Industry organizations | Much of the work can be done on an in-kind basis however a small budget would be required to provide the committee with secretariat support (e.g., \$25k/year) from within one of the participating organizations or independent. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring the recommendation to the attention of potential participants.</li> <li>Offer to convene a meeting of potential participants for further scoping and development of a tactical plan for implementation.</li> </ul> |
| f) Establish a regional agricultural resource centre in cooperation with the region's post-secondary institutions to house resources that provide information specific to agriculture in the region. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This might typically be housed in an agricultural school within a post-secondary institution or in conjunction with a government research facility.</li> <li>It could reasonably be expected that to be effective the center will require 1 - 1 ½ staff.</li> <li>This action may address the on-going aspect of 2d.</li> <li>When implemented, the advisory committee (2e) could play a role to see this implemented.</li> </ul>  | Province (MAL, MAELD)<br>Ag and Ag-Food Canada<br>Post-secondary organizations                     | <p>Establishment (site, equipment, initial organization of resources, recruitment etc) \$50 -\$75k</p> <p>Annual operation \$100k</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring the recommendation to the attention of potential participants.</li> </ul>  |

| AGRICULTURE SECTOR STRATEGY  |  |   |  |  |
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| <b>Recommendation 3: <i>Strengthen the industry by increasing collaboration across the sector and by forging partnerships and communication links with First Nations, local communities, governments, health and education agencies.</i></b> |  |   |  |  |
| Specific action (from Strategy)  | Comments and/or tactics  | Contacts and/or responsibilities                                      | Cost considerations                                | OBAC function  |
| a) Provide resources which allow the Farmers' Institutes or equivalent local organizations to effectively promote agriculture and agriculture development.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The agriculture support officer recommendation (1a) could be a key resource to these organizations, as could several of the actions under recommendation 2.</li> <li>This should be seen as part of an overall collaborative network of support.</li> </ul> | Farmers' Institutes and other sector organizations.<br>Province (MAL) | Costs would likely be covered under other actions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage agricultural organizations to identify specific needs and potential solutions.</li> </ul> |
| b) Encourage commodity-specific producer organizations and associations are (to be) adequately represented in Farmers Institutes or equivalent local organization(s).  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The purpose is to strengthen the ability of a local organization to effectively represent the interests of the sector in the area.</li> <li>Is there a need to change the charters of some organizations? Dues or funding formulas?</li> </ul>              | Farmers' Institutes and other sector organizations.<br>Province (MAL) | No direct costs                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring the recommended action to the attention of appropriate organizations.</li> </ul>              |

| AGRICULTURE SECTOR STRATEGY   |   |  |   |  |
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| <b>Recommendation 3: Strengthen the industry by increasing collaboration across the sector and by forging partnerships and communication links with First Nations, local communities, governments, health and education agencies.</b>                                       |   |  |   |  |
| Specific action (from Strategy)   | Comments and/or tactics   | Contacts and/or responsibilities   | Cost considerations   | OBAC function  |
| c) Provide the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands with additional staffing which will allow it to increase its level of direct farm activity in the OBAC region including technical support for new entrants and for farmers wishing to expand their existing operations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These “extension officer” positions are closely linked to recommendation 1a. They provide technical capacity and information transfer in a hands-on manner.</li> <li>• There is a particular value in having a government staff person who is seen to be a technical expert with no vested business interest - objective.</li> </ul>   | Province (MAL)   | Staff positions would be part of the Ministry budget - approximately \$100k per year per person for salary, expenses, etc.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring to the attention of MAL and work with partners to develop options and business case.</li> </ul> |
| d) Examine the business case for establishing a local brand for marketing both primary and value-added agricultural products from the region.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This raises the question about overall “branding” for the region, which will need to be dealt with elsewhere.</li> <li>• This action proposes initial groundwork to answer the question: “Will investing in a regional brand yield a positive return in sales, profits and sector growth?”</li> <li>• Experience in other regions and sectors may provide some insight.</li> </ul> | <p>Industry / producer organizations</p> <p>Expertise may be available from the provincial or federal governments, or from regional post-secondary institutions.</p> | This activity is likely done most effectively by either an in-house specialist (if available in one of the organizations) or a consultant with the appropriate expertise. Just examining and reporting on the business case (not the actual brand development) would likely cost \$25k - \$30k. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring the recommended action to the attention of appropriate organizations.</li> </ul>                |

**AGRICULTURE SECTOR STRATEGY**

**Recommendation 3: *Strengthen the industry by increasing collaboration across the sector and by forging partnerships and communication links with First Nations, local communities, governments, health and education agencies.***

| Specific action (from Strategy)   | Comments and/or tactics   | Contacts and/or responsibilities                                     | Cost considerations  | OBAC function   |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| <p>e) Convene a series of regional forums to review ways to partner on agricultural initiatives.</p> <p>An initial step would be a forum which included the ranching industry, other regional agricultural industry stakeholders and provincial ranching industry leaders to explore the benefits of cattle production targeted to specialty markets. Options to be explored include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beef that is produced in a completely humane and environmentally sustainable manner.</li> <li>• Grass fed or finished beef.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An ongoing series of regional forums may be an implementation tactic for several other recommended actions.</li> <li>• The specific forum suggested on specialty beef production could occur at any time if a sponsoring organization is prepared to take the lead.</li> </ul> | <p>Industry organizations (e.g., local Cattlemen’s Associations)</p> | <p>There would be a cost to organizing and conducting the forum, even with considerable in-kind contributions. If kept modest, \$15k may cover the basic organizational costs.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring the recommended action to the attention of appropriate organizations.</li> </ul> |

**AGRICULTURE SECTOR STRATEGY**

**Recommendation 3: *Strengthen the industry by increasing collaboration across the sector and by forging partnerships and communication links with First Nations, local communities, governments, health and education agencies.***

| Specific action (from Strategy)  | Comments and/or tactics   | Contacts and/or responsibilities   | Cost considerations   | OBAC function  |
|--|---|--|---|--|
| <p>f) Develop stronger linkages among purchasers and suppliers in the OBAC region.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The general awareness resulting from other recommended actions should assist with this.</li> <li>• There may be value in attempting to quantify the potential benefits.</li> <li>• An information exchange(s) could assist with initial contacts.</li> <li>• Local agricultural fairs could reach out specifically to potential local purchasers and create forums that bring producers and purchasers together - a business fair within the agricultural fair.</li> </ul> | <p>Economic development officers and local governments can support the process.</p> <p>Local agricultural organizations can plan and carry out the information exchange and networking forums.</p> | <p>Minimal cost if activities are combined with other events.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring the recommended action to the attention of appropriate organizations.</li> <li>• Work with partner organizations on a pilot project if there is sufficient interest.</li> </ul> |

| AGRICULTURE SECTOR STRATEGY   |   |   |  |   |
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| <b>Recommendation 3: Strengthen the industry by increasing collaboration across the sector and by forging partnerships and communication links with First Nations, local communities, governments, health and education agencies.</b> |   |   |  |   |
| Specific action (from Strategy)   | Comments and/or tactics   | Contacts and/or responsibilities                      | Cost considerations  | OBAC function   |
| g) Ensure that consumer protection and food safety requirements are applied in balance with the effort to encourage small-scale economic opportunities for producers.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The recent incidents with food safety make this a delicate but important balancing act.</li> <li>A key aspect may be related to requirements to provide information about products, rather than restricting them.</li> <li>A more detailed assessment of the issue as it impacts the OBAC region is advisable.</li> <li>Other areas will be facing the same challenges and may be allies.</li> </ul> | Province (MAL)(Health)<br>Federal (CFIA)<br>Producers | If there is to be an in depth dialogue on interests, options and solutions, then in-house (e.g. MAL) or external resources will be needed to manage the process and follow up with policy recommendations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring the recommended action to the attention of appropriate organizations.</li> </ul> |

| AGRICULTURE SECTOR STRATEGY  |   |  |  |   |
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| <b>Recommendation 4: Produce value-added and specialized products and develop provincial, national and international markets for these products.</b>   |   |  |  |   |
| Specific action (from Strategy)  | Comments and/or tactics   | Contacts and/or responsibilities   | Cost considerations  | OBAC function   |
| a) Undertake market research to identify the potential market for products that are or may be grown and/or processed in the OBAC region. Producers need to be directly involved in this work.                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There should be (and is) a significant amount of information about markets and potential products. What may be needed are a gap analysis and then a feasibility assessment relative to opportunities to fill gaps.</li> <li>The greater challenge may be in getting from the information stage to the implementation stage. Policies, programs or incentives that remove some of the risk from innovation should be considered. Entrepreneurs should be sought out (not only from the traditional agricultural sector) to develop new business opportunities.</li> </ul> | Province (MAL)<br>Federal Government<br>Producer associations                      | In-house or contract staff could assemble a gap analysis and feasibility assessment with participation from producers and potential purchasers (\$50k - \$75k).  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring the recommended action to the attention of potential partners.</li> </ul>  |
| b) Develop stronger communication links among producers to facilitate identification of potential markets that could be accessed by producers. A series of interactive workshops would be a good first step. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This action forms part of the follow-up on 4a. One approach would be a series of information exchanges / networking sessions involving producers, purchasers, and market analysts.</li> <li>To achieve adequate participation and coverage,</li> </ul>   | Producer associations<br>Marketing organizations<br>Province<br>Federal Government | Organizing and implementing a series of 5 facilitated workshops and doing basic 6 and 12 month follow-up with participants will cost approximately \$50k.<br><br>Some funding may be available through NDIT and WD, as well as | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make potential implementation partners aware of the recommendation.</li> <li>Offer to help convene an initial partners meeting to flesh out the concept and develop a tactical implementation plan.</li> </ul> |

| AGRICULTURE SECTOR STRATEGY  |  |  |  |  |
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| <b>Recommendation 4: Produce value-added and specialized products and develop provincial, national and international markets for these products.</b>   |  |  |  |  |
| Specific action (from Strategy)  | Comments and/or tactics  | Contacts and/or responsibilities   | Cost considerations  | OBAC function  |
|  | <p>workshops would likely be required in: Robson Valley, Prince George, Vanderhoof, Lakes District, and Bulkley Valley.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In addition to information, workshops should involve some “take-away” actions and follow-up for participants.</li> </ul>  |  | through provincial programs.   |  |
| <p>c) Assess the potential for expanding the greenhouse industry in the OBAC region.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include the possibility of using beetle-killed wood as a fuel source.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is closely linked to the Future Forest and Fiber Use Strategy and the Alternative Energy Strategy.</li> <li>The potential competitive advantage provided by the availability of wood as an energy source needs to be fully explored. There are economic issues, however they may be overcome if greenhouses can be located in clusters with other wood using facilities (e.g., sawmills).</li> <li>Good information about feasibility, including projections for bioenergy availability and costs would provide a basis for entrepreneurs to make investment decisions.</li> </ul> | Province (MAL, MFR, MEMPR)<br>Federal Government (Agriculture and Natural Resources) | <p>With in-kind support from staff and stakeholders an contractor could likely assemble the necessary information and produce a user-friendly analysis for \$50k - \$75k.</p> <p>NDIT and WD are logical sources for funding such a study.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet with government departments to firm up the concept and develop a tactical implementation plan.</li> <li>Participate as a partner in the assessment project on behalf of regional local governments.</li> </ul> |

## AGRICULTURE SECTOR STRATEGY

### **Recommendation 4:** *Produce value-added and specialized products and develop provincial, national and international markets for these products.*

| Specific action (from Strategy)  | Comments and/or tactics  | Contacts and/or responsibilities                    | Cost considerations  | OBAC function   |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| <p>d) Provide funding to support existing and undertake new pilot projects, crop trials and other activities designed to increase the range of crops produced in the region for identified markets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess emerging demand and opportunities for entering new markets with crops which can be produced efficiently here (see action 4a) above.</li> <li>• An initial pilot which involved greenhouse and field production of vegetables, the use of bioenergy, and the production of at least some specialty products should be considered.</li> <li>• Over the long term pilots may be needed to assess the potential for new crops which can be grown in the region as a result of climate change.</li> <li>• Provide support to test the viability of agricultural development in “non-traditional” areas such as</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This will have to be incorporated into current or future provincial and federal government programs.</li> <li>• Education and research organizations (recommendation 2) may have a role to play.</li> </ul> | <p>Federal Government<br/>Provincial Government</p> | <p>There are ongoing program costs, some of which could be partially covered by other actions (e.g., 1a and 3c), and others that would require specific project funding.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate the recommendation to the Federal and Provincial Governments.</li> </ul> |

| AGRICULTURE SECTOR STRATEGY   |  |                                  |                     |  |
|---|--|----------------------------------|---------------------|--|
| <b>Recommendation 4: Produce value-added and specialized products and develop provincial, national and international markets for these products.</b>                            |  |                                  |                     |  |
| Specific action (from Strategy)   | Comments and/or tactics                            | Contacts and/or responsibilities | Cost considerations | OBAC function  |
| Mackenzie and vicinity.   |  |                                  |                     |  |
| e) Support the efforts of the BC Government ranching task force where they will strengthen the industry and allow it to move successfully through the current difficult period. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul> | Province (MAL)                   | No direct cost      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor the work of the Task Force and provide comment where appropriate to support the objectives of the OBAC region.</li> </ul> |

| AGRICULTURE SECTOR STRATEGY  |   |   |  |  |
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| <b>Recommendation 5: Increase demand for locally and regionally produced foods.</b>  |   |   |  |  |
| Specific action (from Strategy)  | Comments and/or tactics   | Contacts and/or responsibilities  | Cost considerations  | OBAC function  |
| a) Ensure all OBAC region schools participate in programs established by the Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation and support Farms to Schools initiatives. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Several industries in the region (e.g., mining, forestry) are also competing for time in the school curricula.</li> <li>It may be useful to convene some sort of "summit" between school boards, administrators, government and industry to undertake a dialogue on how</li> </ul> | Province (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, MAL)<br><br>School Boards and Administrators<br><br>Industry<br><br>BC AITC Foundation | Costs may be incorporated into existing programs.<br><br>Considerable in-kind contributions can be expected.<br><br>Some funding may be required once for specific activities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make potential partners aware of the recommended action.</li> <li>Investigate the feasibility and interest in a multi-sector summit with educators, industries and governments to develop a coordinated approach consistent with the region's overall interests and objectives</li> </ul> |

## AGRICULTURE SECTOR STRATEGY

### Recommendation 5: Increase demand for locally and regionally produced foods.

| Specific action (from Strategy)  | Comments and/or tactics  | Contacts and/or responsibilities                                  | Cost considerations   | OBAC function   |
|--|--|---|---|---|
|  | this and similar actions in other sectors are incorporated into school activities <u>and resourced</u> .   |   |   | (see Capstone Objectives - Regional Diversification Plan).  |
| b) Develop regional guides and support websites (similar to work done by the Nechako Valley Food Network) designed to make consumers aware of local food products and where to buy them. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This work could be done through a regional marketing initiative undertaken by producer organizations.</li> <li>Community TV channels could be used as one way to initially direct the public to the web sites, as could various weekly community newspapers and flyers.</li> <li>Regional and local information / marketing programs should be encouraged.</li> </ul> | Producer organizations with support from staff proposed under 1a. | This could be done by volunteers  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage community level organizations to collaborate regionally.</li> </ul>        |
| c) Prepare appropriate materials, for distribution through health and education facilities, which outline the benefits of consuming locally produced food.                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Producer organizations could collaborate with the health authority and school boards on this.</li> </ul>  | Producer organizations<br>Health authority<br>School boards       | There is a cost to preparing, printing and updating materials (e.g., \$15k/year) plus considerable effort in the meaningful distribution - most of which could be in-kind contribution. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate the recommendation to potential implementation organizations.</li> </ul> |