

Getting Started

- Identify and contact local agricultural groups.
- Discuss with MAF and ALC staff.
- Draw upon the experience of other jurisdictions that already have an AAC.
- Seek the advice of farm groups on possible appointments to the Committee.
- Assign a specific staff person to assist the Committee with implementation, as well as providing on-going support to the Committee.

Support

- MAF and ALC staff.
- Planning for Agriculture—Resource Material including a Model Terms of Reference.
- Sample: City of Surrey Volunteers' Contract

Things to Consider

- Foster a clear, effective relationship between the Council or Regional Board and the AAC.
- Obtain a strong commitment from the farm community.
- Appoint a Council or Board member to sit on the committee to ensure a solid link between the AAC and Council or Regional Board.
- Assign a staff person to work closely with the Committee.
- Encourage the AAC to consider broader issues as well as day-to-day proposals.
- Clarify the relationship between the AAC and other farm organizations.
- Ensure a strong, committed Chair person is available to lead the AAC.
- Schedule meetings so they are sensitive to demands on farmers' time, particularly to the seasonal changes in workload.
- Provide secretarial assistance during meetings.



Other Ideas to Link With Your Farm Community

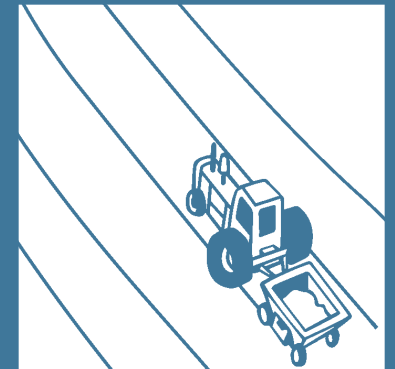
- ✓ Appoint farm reps. to Advisory Planning Commissions & other Committees.
- ✓ Seek the advice of farmers' institutes and commodity groups.
- ✓ Maintain contact with staff of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Agricultural Land Commission and Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada.
- ✓ Appoint a Council member as a "farm/ranch liaison" person.
- ✓ Designate a specific staff person to focus on farm issues.
- ✓ Get 'down on the farm' through tours, workshops and seeking out your local direct farm marketers.



BRITISH
COLUMBIA
Ministry of
Agriculture and Food

For more information please contact:
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AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES



A link to your farm
community



Agriculture Advisory Committee (AAC)

Linking with your Farm Community

BC is a highly urbanized province. Over 82% of British Columbians live in cities and towns. Less than 2% live on farms and ranches, yet farmers and ranchers represent major land owners. Over 70% of privately owned land in BC (excluding private forests) is owned by farm and ranch families. From these lands, locally produced food and agricultural products are generated and satisfy a most basic human need while making an important contribution to the economic well being of local communities and the province.

But agriculture is more than this. It is a defining characteristic for many regions. The orchards and vineyards of the Okanagan, fields of grain in the Peace River are inseparable images of these areas.

Yet, many of us have lost a direct connection with farming and food production. With this reality comes the challenge of maintaining on-going links with our farm communities in order to ensure an understanding of how day-to-day policies, proposals, and long term goals might affect the business of farming. In short, it is important to ensure agriculture has a place in the planning mainstream and that farming continues to be part of the fabric of our communities.

Making the Connection

To meet the challenge of ensuring farm connections, a growing number of municipalities and regional districts have established Agriculture Advisory Committees (AACs). An AAC is appointed and functions similarly to other advisory committees of council or the regional board. The key difference is that the AAC members will be predominantly drawn from the farm / ranching community and the committee will have a focus on agricultural issues. To date about a dozen local governments have appointed AACs to work with councils and regional boards and their staff.

An Important Contribution

With an Agriculture Advisory Committee, council or the board can seek the advice of knowledgeable members of the farm community at any time, on any issue that might affect agriculture. Most AACs advise local governments in two broad areas:

- day-to-day issues
- broader initiatives



Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting

Types of Advice

Day-to-Day Issues:

- proposed bylaw and official plan amendments;
- applications under the *Agricultural Land Commission* and *Soil Conservation Acts*;
- parks & recreation, transportation, and growth management plans and other land use proposals;
- water management issues;
- the effectiveness of programs such as insect and weed control; and
- major reviews of official plans and bylaws.

Broader Initiatives:

- steer to completion agricultural studies and agricultural area plans;
- assist with the development of 'edge' policies to enhance land use compatibility;
- advise on the need and appropriateness of farm bylaws;
- study and report on farm infrastructure needs;
- improve opportunities for joint funding of drainage or irrigation works;
- study long-term impacts of transportation corridors and park and recreation proposals;
- raise agricultural awareness;
- assist with farm tours and on-farm visits; and
- contribute to Agricultural in the Classroom initiatives.

Who Should be Involved?

To gain the best advice on agricultural issues, the Committee should draw heavily upon **individuals from the farm community**. Diversity is a hallmark of BC agriculture. As a result it is important that as many different commodities as possible are represented on the AAC.

While the majority of the AAC members should come from the farm community, other participants may be considered:

- a member of council or the board
- a representative from the processing or distribution sector;
- a 'cross-over' member from another municipal or regional board committee to provide linkage
- university or community college representative involved with agricultural courses or research.

Non-voting participants/resource people:

- municipal or regional district planning staff
- Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAF) and Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) staff
- secretarial staff services