

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 9, 2021

Cowichan Food Hub to strengthen regional food security and innovation

DUNCAN, BC – Food processors and beverage producers in Cowichan can look forward to more opportunities to innovate and grow their businesses with the announcement of a Cowichan Food Hub coming to the region.

Cowichan Green Community (CGC) and Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) have partnered to secure up to \$750,000 in funding from the Province of British Columbia's Stronger BC economic recovery plan for the development of a food and innovation hub. CGC's Garden Education Centre site on Beverly Street in North Cowichan will be expanded to include a HACCP certified commercial kitchen, as well as a warehouse and aggregation space. The facility will include food processing and storage areas, training and support spaces, and technology services including remote teaching and podcasting capabilities. Educational opportunities will provide skills development, entrepreneurship and business support. The hub will be launched in Spring 2021.

"Recognizing the significance of agriculture and local food for the region, partnership funding for the Cowichan Food Hub is a dream come true, and years in the making," said Barry O'Riordan, Manager of Economic Development Cowichan for CVRD. "Bringing together advanced food processing, testing, and entrepreneurship training under one roof, this facility will help catalyze food processing innovation in the region, supporting expanded employment opportunities while enriching our community's taste buds."

The Cowichan Food Hub will allow small and medium-scale businesses to access shared food and beverage processing facilities and equipment, allowing them to expand existing production and create new innovative products. This business expansion will create jobs, support local farmers, and increase food security in Cowichan.

"Economic Development Cowichan (CVRD) and Cowichan Green Community have been collaboratively working towards this goal since at least 2014," said Aaron Stone, Chair of the Board of CVRD. "This project is a perfect example of how partnerships between different levels of government working together with non-profits can support innovation and job creation in food processing. We are excited to see this work raise the profile and availability of Cowichan foods and its role in providing for better food security in BC."

"All of us at CGC are grateful for the support and collaboration that is allowing this much-needed facility to come alive," said Judy Stafford, Executive Director of CGC. "We're encouraged by the level of commitment from all levels of government including North Cowichan who are leasing us the land and supporting us through the permitting process. The working group has been connecting behind the scenes and a lot of hands are coming together to break ground and support our local agriculture community with this innovation project."

CGC and CVRD gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries.



Supported by the Province of British Columbia

“The Cowichan Valley is home to a vibrant farming community whose work strengthens food security here on the Island,” said Lana Popham, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries. “With the new food hub coming to Cowichan, I’m excited to see how local farmers and food processors are going to work together and create new exciting products for B.C. families here and across the province.”

The Cowichan Food Hub is one of seven new additions to BC’s Food Hub Network, bringing the provincial total to 12 hubs. The network is part of the Province’s Feed BC Initiative, which aims to increase the use of BC foods and opportunities for BC’s food system.

- 30 -

For more information, please contact:

Barry O’Riordan
Manager, Economic Development Cowichan
250.709.1119
barry.oriordan@cvrd.bc.ca