

July 24th, 2008

SJC Food Producers:

Four local and regional agricultural organizations have collaborated to develop the enclosed survey. The Agricultural Resources Committee of SJC (ARC), the San Juan Islands Agricultural Guild (Ag Guild), Washington State University Extension in San Juan County (WSU Extension SJC), and the Northwest Agriculture Business Center (NABC) have each been working to gather information on local food production for the purpose of strengthening local agriculture. The NABC is providing financial support for this effort.

The ARC (<http://www.sjcarc.org/>) is collecting data for a countywide Foodshed Map that will include all acreage in active agricultural use, farm and garden locations, and the food produced. The ARC wants to know how much food is actually being produced in the islands, including how many gardens are feeding how many people. The ARC will have a first draft of the Foodshed Map on display at the SJC Fair.

The non-profit Ag Guild (<http://www.sjiagguild.com/>) is in the planning and development stages of a multi-use agricultural facility on San Juan Island. Phase one of the project is a Permanent Farmers' Market (PFM). The PFM would allow for expansion from the current farmers' market, held on Saturdays in summer and infrequently and at different sites in winter, to a year-round, multi-day-per-week farmers' market at a permanent location. The PFM would serve as both a model for future PFMs in SJC and as a retail outlet for producers countywide. Farmers from all islands who sell at their own farmers' markets on Saturdays could expand their direct sales at the PFM's mid-week and winter markets.

Product storage would also be available to farmers from all islands. Subsequent phases are planned to include refrigeration and frozen storage, distribution space (i.e., for CSAs and/or restaurant pick-up), value added processing, and possibly root cellar storage space. This survey is being conducted to specifically identify processing, storage, and other infrastructure needs of SJC farmers and food processors in order to best serve producers throughout the islands.

The Ag Guild is also working on a farm-to-school project that includes the San Juan Island School District's school lunch program, and may include other school districts in SJC. This survey will help the Ag Guild identify food producers that would be interested in participating in this project.

WSU Extension SJC (<http://sanjuan.wsu.edu/>) is currently working with other county Extension offices around the state on a comprehensive food system analysis. The data gathered from community food assessments will be used to determine local, regional, and statewide food production capacity and to promote local agriculture as a means of feeding local populations and promoting economic development. Surprisingly, comprehensive data of this kind does not yet exist in Washington State.

The NABC (<http://www.agbizcenter.org/>) is surveying food producers throughout the 12-county Puget Sound. A key project of NABC is to help create a regional processing

center to be shared by Northwest Washington agricultural producers. This center would include co-packing facilities for use by local farms and related businesses. Your input is essential in helping NABC assess the feasibility of and demand for a regional processing center.

Each of these organizations is seeking information for the reasons outlined above. Rather than shower you with surveys, however, we have created one comprehensive questionnaire. We sincerely hope that you will make the time to complete and return this form. Your answers will help us to map farmland in San Juan County. It will help to determine our current and potential food production capacity. It will also help to determine specific ways to encourage and expand local agriculture.

The survey is available on-line at <http://www.sjcarc.org/> and <http://www.sjiagguild.com/>.

You may return the completed survey

- In the enclosed, self-addressed envelope (Ag Guild, PO Box 1945, Friday Harbor, WA 98250)
- Via email to Lovel Pratt, Ag Guild PFM Project Director at lovel@rockisland.com
- To the Conservation District office, 540 Guard Street, Suite 150 in Friday Harbor
- To the Ag Tent at the SJC Fair

If you prefer you can complete your survey by calling the Conservation District office at 378-6621 and giving your answers over the phone or making arrangements for a personal visit to your farm from a representative of one of our organizations, and we'll note your survey responses for you. We really do want to hear from you!

Please return your completed questionnaire by August 18! If there is some information you prefer not to share, feel free to skip those questions. We would rather receive an incomplete response from you than no response at all. Please know that ALL SURVEY RESPONSES WILL REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL.

Thank you for your valuable and much appreciated participation!



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