



Food Resilience Alliance



Southern Gulf Island
Community Resource
Centre

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The **Food Resilience Alliance** is a collaborative initiative dedicated to strengthening local food systems and enhancing agricultural resilience in the Southern Gulf Islands. By supporting growers, producers, and food-based enterprises, the FRA works to increase regional food security, improve market access, and address critical infrastructure gaps. Through knowledge-sharing, promotion, and innovative solutions, the FRA fosters a sustainable, community-driven approach to food production and distribution.

SGI GROWER NETWORK INITIATIVE (GNI)

Over the past six months, the initiative has focused on strengthening local food distribution, exploring solutions for livestock processing, and identifying financial and structural support strategies for growers. Through these actions, GNI has worked to create stronger market access, facilitate producer-to-consumer engagement, and lay the groundwork for long-term food resilience strategies.

KNOWLEDGE SHARING	ENHANCED FOOD NETWORKS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Design and launch an engagement strategy for Southern Gulf Island Growers.• Implement the Farmgate Plus Awareness Campaign.• Organize online and potential in-person workshops on key agricultural topics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Initiate a farmstand mapping solution to enhance consumer access.• Identify and assess potential solutions for regional meat processing infrastructure gaps.• Create a framework for a livestock processing service to meet a critical need in the region.

Executive Summary

The **Southern Gulf Islands Grower Network Initiative (GNI)** is dedicated to strengthening local food resilience, sustainability, and economic opportunities for growers across the region. By enhancing food security, expanding market access, and fostering collaboration, GNI has improved distribution networks and addressed critical challenges in livestock processing. Through direct connections between growers, consumers, and food programs, the initiative has created new economic opportunities and laid additional groundwork for long-term food security strategies.

Despite significant progress, GNI faces ongoing challenges, including financial constraints for small-scale agricultural projects and the complexities of coordinating efforts across multiple islands. Findings from the initiative highlight key areas for future investment, such as a **localized micro-granting program, enhanced digital infrastructure for farmstand mapping, and sustained regional funding for livestock processing solutions.**

Key Findings:

Workshop Engagement

- **Unlocking Agriculture Funding (Facilitated by Taryn Danford)** – 47 registrants from across SGI and Salt Spring participated in this session, co-presented with the Sustainable Funding Initiative. Due to overwhelming demand, attendees expressed strong interest in a follow-up session focused on advanced grant writing.
- **Integrating Regenerative Systems for Climate Resilience & Sustainability (Facilitated by Shellie MacDonald)** – 12 participants engaged in discussions on regenerative farming practices, biodiversity, and climate adaptation strategies.

Livestock Processing Challenges

- **Regulatory Barriers:** SGI producers face significant hurdles in obtaining Farmgate licenses, including compliance with water testing and processing regulations. The requirement that licensed farmers process at least 50% of total animal numbers has led to a shift in strategy—prioritizing financial support for bringing the mobile processing trailer directly to farms rather than centralizing processing at a single site.
- **Capacity & Sustainability:** The Food Resilience Alliance (FRA) has emphasized the need for project autonomy among grower groups.

However, limited capacity remains a barrier, making **external funding and structural support critical for long-term project viability.**

As GNI continues to evolve, sustained investment in financial and operational support will be essential to overcoming these challenges and ensuring the long-term success of SGI's growers and producers.



KNOWLEDGE SHARING & WORKSHOP ENGAGEMENT

Workshops have played a central role in the GNI's knowledge-sharing objectives, fostering peer-to-peer learning and practical skill development among growers and food producers. These sessions covered two primary topics: **sustainable farming techniques** and **agricultural grant application strategies.**

Workshop 1: Unlocking Agriculture Funding (Facilitated by Taryn Danford)

Taryn Danford, a funding strategist with extensive experience in agricultural grants and non-profit funding, facilitated a workshop aimed at equipping growers with the skills to access financial resources for their projects. The session provided an overview of available grants, key components of successful applications, and practical strategies for developing compelling proposals. Participants gained insights into structuring budgets, aligning projects with funding priorities, and leveraging partnerships for long-term sustainability.

This session was co-presented with the Sustainable Funding Initiative and attracted 47 registrants from across the Southern Gulf Islands and Salt Spring. Due to high

demand, attendees have requested a more in-depth grant writing workshop as a future offering.

Workshop 2: Integrating Regenerative Systems for Climate Resilience & Sustainability (Facilitated by Shellie MacDonald)

Shellie MacDonald, an experienced agroecologist and food systems strategist, led a workshop focused on climate change adaptation in small-scale agriculture. The session covered

- ☑ Building soil health & sinking carbon
- ☑ Multi - species cover cropping & relay cropping
- ☑ Integrating livestock into produce production
- ☑ Pasture forage planning for better soil & animal health

To enhance farm resilience in response to shifting climate patterns. Participants engaged in discussions on biodiversity, and closed loop farming systems, with a strong emphasis on actionable strategies for SGI growers.

Lessons from these sessions highlight the value of continued educational programming and the need for financial support mechanisms to enable broader participation.

ISLAND FARM STANDS MAPPING

One undertaking of the Grower Network Initiative was to develop or initiate a comprehensive farmstand mapping platform for SGI growers and producers, connecting them with both local consumers and visitors. During this process, GNI research led to the discovery of [Island Farm Stands](#), a platform built by Alan Brown that already meets all the requirements identified by FRA member groups. This platform includes a Google Maps function, photos of each stand, easy updating capabilities, and searchable features that allow users to find farmstands by region—or, in the SGI, by island. Currently, Island Farm Stands hosts **over 320** farmstand listings, demonstrating its effectiveness as a well-established resource for local food access.

Recognizing the connection between this initiative and the region's visitor economy, the Southern Gulf Island Tourism Partnership Society (SGITPS) actively promotes the 'farmstand culture' as a key attraction. A potential partnership with SGITPS could further promote the Island Farm Stands website to visitors, integrating it into tourism marketing efforts to enhance awareness and drive engagement.

Future efforts should focus on strengthening these partnerships, expanding the interactive features of the digital map, ensuring regular updates, and further integrating it into regional tourism and food sustainability initiatives.

FARM TO MARKET SERVICE

Over the past several months, feasibility research has been conducted to assess the potential for a mobile abattoir or regional processing facility in the Southern Gulf Islands. This process involved engaging key stakeholders, including livestock producers, regulatory bodies, and livestock agencies, to evaluate challenges and opportunities.

Findings indicate that while there are significant regulatory and logistical barriers, foundational partnerships have been established to support future solutions. The Small Scale Meat Producers Association (SSMPA) provided guidance that assisted GNI in concept development, while Ben Glassen of the [Good Place Abattoir](#), has expressed willingness to bring his mobile slaughter trailer to the SGI for a base fee, with individual producers covering costs per animal unit.

One major requirement for using the slaughter trailer is obtaining a [Farmgate Plus](#) license. While the provincial Farmgate license is technically cost-free, associated expenses—including [Premises ID](#), [Slaughter Right](#) training, a Food Safety Plan, and on-site water testing—pose financial and logistical challenges for local producers.

Without the participation of larger-scale producers, the requirement that **50% of processed animals must be raised by the Farmgate Plus license holder** presents a significant challenge in establishing a viable regional **Farm-to-Market** processing system. While foundational progress has been made, further investment and producer engagement are essential to advancing this initiative.

GNI STRATEGIC PRIORITIES & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Micro Granting Program Development

A structured micro-granting program should be established, with potential funding from the Capital Regional District and administration by the SGI Community Resource Centre. This initiative would offer financial support to grower groups such as the Gulf Islands Food Co-op, Pender Island Farmers Institute, Galiano Food Program and Mayne Island Agricultural Society, assisting them in the delivery of their community-driven projects.

To ensure broad participation, the program should feature an accessible application process with clear eligibility criteria and transparent funding guidelines. A reporting structure should also be implemented to track the impact of funded projects, ensuring continued support and accountability.

Key funding categories should include:

- **Livestock Growers** – Support for farmgate license applications, including fee assistance.
- **Climate Strategy** – Funding for projects focused on climate resilience and sustainable agricultural practices.
- **Community Event Planning** – Assistance for hosting "**Meet Your Maker**" events and other networking opportunities.
- **Education & Training** – Support for workshops, seminars, and skill-building initiatives.

By providing targeted financial assistance, this program will strengthen local food systems and enhance collaboration among grower groups across the Southern Gulf Islands.

Enhancing the Farmstand Mapping Project

Expanding the Farmstand Mapping Project with interactive online tools and strengthened partnerships will increase grower engagement and usability. Keeping the directory updated and accessible will further facilitate connections between consumers and local producers, promoting regional food resilience.

Integration with local tourism initiatives will enhance outreach and engagement while creating new economic opportunities for SGI food producers.

Livestock Processing & Regulatory Support

Securing funding for livestock processing remains a top priority. Encouraging compliance with regulations while seeking grants and partnerships is essential to advancing this initiative. Continued stakeholder engagement will help refine feasibility assessments and implementation strategies to ensure long-term success. Additionally, support efforts should focus on reducing regulatory barriers and increasing provisions for small-scale producers navigating the Farmgate Plus licensing process.

CONCLUSION

The SGI Grower Network Initiative has played a pivotal role in strengthening food security and economic sustainability across the region. While financial and regulatory challenges persist, continued investment in digital tools, micro-grants, and sustainable livestock processing solutions will help address these barriers.

By fostering regional collaboration and securing sustainable funding, this initiative can serve as a model for supporting small-scale agriculture, providing a replicable model for other rural communities navigating similar agricultural and economic challenges. With the right investments, partnerships, and regulatory support, the SGI Grower Network Initiative has the potential to support the continuation of a resilient and thriving regional food system that benefits both producers and consumers for years to come.