

Wendy Holm



Food, Land, and Community

BC's productive farm land is considered natural capital.

In limited supply in this mountainous province, it is our responsibility to add to this capital. This is accomplished through stewardship practices that enhance soil fertility, protect water resources, and ensure the resilience of the farming community, whose job it is to feed our cities. Without that, food security is impossible.

As populations increase and fossil fuels deplete, food shortages will become a problem not only for "poor" nations but for "rich" nations as well. As today's affordable food becomes tomorrow's economically rationed resource, communities with no farm land will be the clear losers as the new game of "find the food" spins out of control in a wildly cycling global economy. Those who can pay the most, will. Those who cannot will go hungry.

Presently, there are over 120 global funds dedicated solely to the buy-up of farm land. Canada is the number one target because our farm land is considered cheap, our infrastructure solid, and our economy stable.

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This silent erosion of natural capital begs the question: How will future generations feed themselves?

In 2010, an estimate of the public amenity benefits and ecological goods provided by farm land in Metro Vancouver asked residents what they were willing to pay to preserve farm land for future generations. Ten times market, they said. According to the study, such results are typical when natural capital is valued by the public.

Responsible to the public good, perhaps it's time professionals talk amongst ourselves about ways to mandate more appropriate legal, accounting, and regulatory stewardship of natural capital. In all its forms.

Practised at protecting the capital interests of clients, we need to protect with equal vigour the legitimate interests of natural capital holders not yet in the room. In the interim (and beyond!), one excellent way to accomplish that goal is to respect and support BC's Agricultural Land Reserve and those who farm it. ▲

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Fertile land of third-generation farmers Ken and Arlene Boon, Peace River, British Columbia