



Shuswap  
Community  
Farm Coop

Grown in the Shuswap,  
Naturally!

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## Farmers Roundup – Feb 21, 2026 Strategic Summary Report

Hi, and thanks for your interest.

The Farmers' Roundup brought together over 70 farmers, food producers, and farm friends from across the Shuswap for a straight-up conversation about what's working, what's not, and what we could build together. We didn't come to debate theory — we came to collect practical ideas. With strong turnout and a lot of honest input, the message was clear: people want a stronger local food system, but they also want it done in a way that's realistic, affordable, and built for our region.

The notes that follow are organized around our four pillars: **Farmers Exchange**, **Collaborate/Cooperate/Advocate/Educate**, **Create Infrastructure**, and **Productive Land**. Each pillar summary captures the main themes we heard, where there was strong support, where concerns were raised, and what people see as the most urgent barriers. Think of these reports as a snapshot of where our community is at right now — not the final plan, but a solid starting point based on what people actually said.

Next steps are simple: we're going to focus on early wins that don't require big budgets or paid staff. That means choosing one or two actions we can realistically deliver in the next few months, measuring participation, and building from there. As we move forward, we'll keep working with farmers first, keep the scope under control, and keep sharing updates so people can see what's happening and decide how they want to be involved.

Keep reading to see some of the details we discovered and let us know your thoughts and suggestions. We're listening!

The Board of the Shuswap Community Farm Coop  
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## Farmers Roundup – Feb 21, 2026

### Strategic Summary Report – Pillar 1 Farmers Exchange

#### Overview

Thank you to everyone who attended the Roundup and contributed ideas to Pillar 1 – Farmers Exchange. With over 70 people participating, there was strong engagement and thoughtful input. The responses show strong support for developing some form of locally governed exchange infrastructure. However, there are clear tensions around funding model, governance structure, and delivery method (online vs physical).

This is not simply a “build a website” request. The feedback reflects a desire for controlled, locally owned market infrastructure.

Here’s what we heard.

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#### Question 1 – Online Platforms

Many participants are frustrated with platforms like Facebook and Kijiji. They are not well suited to agricultural products, especially livestock. A majority expressed support for a local online exchange designed specifically for the Shuswap.

However, not everyone relies on internet tools. Some prefer physical bulletin boards or in-person methods. There was clear support for a hybrid approach that includes both digital and physical options.

What was not strongly supported: reliance on American-based social media platforms as the long-term solution.

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#### Question 2 – Stay Local or Expand?

There was strong consensus that any Farmers’ Exchange should start in the Shuswap and focus locally. Many emphasized strengthening local relationships and protecting smaller farms before considering expansion.

Expansion was only supported if it happens later and does not dilute local producers.

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#### Question 3 – Structure

Opinions were split on structure.

Many felt that membership creates commitment and accountability. Others preferred minimal fees or a free system. Some suggested a hybrid model where co-op members receive benefits and non-members pay different rates.

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There was no clear support for high commissions or heavy fees.

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#### **Question 4 – Seasonal Live Auctions**

Support for seasonal live farm auctions was strong. Many suggested spring and fall events and mentioned the Salmon Arm Fairgrounds as a possible venue.

Live auctions were seen not just as sales events but as opportunities for community connection and networking.

A small number of participants raised concerns about animal stress and disease spread.

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#### **What Was Not Supported**

- Immediate expansion beyond the region
  - Heavy commission-based models
  - Dependence on generic social media marketplaces
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#### **What Happens Next**

Directors will now:

- Clarify governance structure (who can sell and under what conditions)
- Explore a Shuswap-only pilot model
- Assess feasibility of seasonal live auctions
- Examine sustainable funding options

Before building infrastructure, we will ensure the purpose, structure, and sustainability are clearly defined.

Thank you for helping shape this direction.



## Farmers Roundup – Feb 21, 2026

### Strategic Summary Report – Pillar 2 Collaborate/Cooperate/Educate

#### Overview

Thank you to everyone who contributed to Pillar 2 – Collaborate, Cooperate, Advocate, Educate. Your responses reveal strong economic stress among small producers, combined with a clear mandate for advocacy, coordination, and practical support.

This pillar is not primarily about training workshops. It is about reducing friction and increasing viability for small-scale farming in the Shuswap.

The tone of feedback indicates pressure — financial, regulatory, and cultural.

Here's what we heard.

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#### Top Challenges

The strongest concern across responses was cost.

Farmers identified rising prices for feed, seed, equipment, land, insurance, and regulatory compliance as the most pressing pressures.

Regulatory complexity and red tape were also frequently mentioned, along with challenges accessing markets and labour shortages.

This tells us small producers are feeling squeezed on multiple fronts.

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#### Representation & Advocacy

There was overwhelming support for stronger representation for small-scale farmers.

Participants want:

- Less red tape
- More effective advocacy with government
- Easier access to grants and programs
- Recognition of the value of small farms

However, there was also caution expressed about government overreach. Farmers want advocacy that produces results.

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#### Education & Mentorship

Education was seen as essential at multiple levels:

- Early exposure for children in schools
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- Intergenerational mentorship
- Public education about the value of local food

There is strong support for mentorship between experienced and new farmers.

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### **Attracting New Farmers**

Land access is the biggest barrier.

Participants highlighted:

- Leasing solutions
- Housing shortages
- Tiny home policies
- Mentorship and transition from retiring farmers
- Market access for new producers

Making farming viable for new entrants requires addressing these structural barriers.

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### **What Was Not Supported**

- Heavy new regulations
  - Increased bureaucracy
  - Broad, unfocused advocacy
  - Solutions that ignore financial realities
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### **What Happens Next**

Directors will now:

- Identify 2–3 friction points that can be reduced locally
- Explore bulk purchasing and grant navigation options
- Consider structured mentorship and farmer transition programs
- Clarify the coop's advocacy role and scope

The focus will be on practical, achievable steps that strengthen small producers in the Shuswap.



## Farmers Roundup – Feb 21, 2026

### Strategic Summary Report – Pillar 3 Infrastructure

#### Overview

Thank you to everyone who contributed to Pillar 3 – Create Infrastructure.

This pillar generated strong support for infrastructure development, particularly a year-round retail market and shared cold storage. The responses show ambition, but also a realistic understanding of cost, operational complexity, and risk.

The most consistent operational theme across all questions is cold storage.

Retail is strongly supported — but cold storage appears foundational.

Here is what we heard.

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#### Year-Round Retail Market

There was strong support for a year-round Shuswap Farm Co-op retail market. Many see it as:

- A way to strengthen the local economy
- A tool for food security and resilience
- A central place for shopping and connection
- A way to keep farm income flowing year-round

However, participants also emphasized:

- The need for competitive pricing
- A convenient and accessible location
- Professional management and sufficient funding
- Consistent product supply from farmers

Support is strong — but realistic.

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#### What Must Be in Place for Retail to Succeed

The most common requirement was consistent supply and product variety from day one.

Other essentials included:

- Reliable open hours
- Cold and dry storage
- Farmer commitment to supply
- Appropriate capital and location

Retail success depends on reliability.

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### **Storage & Processing Challenges**

Cold storage was the most frequently mentioned infrastructure need.

Participants identified:

- Freezer and cooler space
- Backup power
- Root cellar-type storage
- Slaughter access
- Commercial kitchen space

Storage is seen as a major bottleneck for expanding production and extending seasons.

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### **What Should Be Prioritized First?**

Two priorities emerged most clearly:

1. Cold storage
2. Retail market

Many suggested retail should follow strong supply and storage infrastructure.

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### **What Happens Next**

Directors will:

- Assess production volumes and storage needs
- Explore feasibility of shared cold storage
- Study viable retail models
- Evaluate phased infrastructure development

The goal is to build infrastructure that strengthens farms long-term and matches our region's scale and geography.



## Farmers Roundup – Feb 21, 2026

### Strategic Summary Report – Pillar 4 Productive Land

#### Overview

Thank you to everyone who contributed to Pillar 4 – Productive Land.

Pillar 4 responses show strong belief that land is available in the region. However, the dominant barriers are not acreage — they are capital, labour, infrastructure, and trust.

Land access is financially and socially constrained.

This pillar carries emotional weight around food security and generational transition, but execution risk is high without structured frameworks.

Here is what we heard.

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#### Is There Underused Land?

Many participants believe there is unused or underused land in the region.

However, the biggest barriers are:

- High land prices
- Startup costs
- Irrigation and infrastructure needs
- Housing shortages
- Lack of access to capital

Land alone is not enough. Infrastructure and financial viability are essential.

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#### Barriers to Land Sharing

While there is interest in shared farming arrangements, participants highlighted:

- Trust concerns
- Legal complexity
- Conflict risk
- Labour shortages

Successful land-sharing requires clear agreements and aligned expectations.

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#### Interest in Leasing & Greenhouses

There is openness to:

- Leasing arrangements
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- Shared land use
- Greenhouse projects

Greenhouses were seen as a practical way to extend the growing season and reduce risk. However, participants stressed the need for structured agreements and legal clarity.

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### **Supports Needed to Increase Production**

The strongest theme was labour. Farmers consistently identified a shortage of reliable, affordable help.

Other key supports include:

- Financial assistance or low-interest financing
  - Greenhouses and season extension
  - Marketing coordination
  - Incentives for cooperative arrangements
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### **What Happens Next**

Directors will now explore:

- Structured lease templates in collaboration with Young Agrarians and other groups.
- Land inventory mapping
- Greenhouse feasibility
- Labour coordination discussions
- Risk-mitigation frameworks

The goal is to increase production while reducing financial and social risk for farmers.



## Farmers' Roundup – “The Time is Now” Exercise Dystopia Scenario

As part of the Farmers' Roundup, we gave everyone a tough scenario: **no power, no internet, no fuel, and no modern machinery—only hand tools and mechanical options**. Then we asked a simple question: *How would we organize a small community to get food to people?*

What came back wasn't panic or fantasy. It was practical. People didn't start by talking about big projects. They started with **how to work together**, how to keep people steady, and how to make the most of what's already here. The ideas clustered into a few clear themes: take stock of resources and skills, preserve what you have before it spoils, organize labour and leadership, protect water and heat first, and lean on shared knowledge—especially “old ways” that work without technology.

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### How the Ideas Fit the Four Pillars

#### Pillar 1: Farmers Exchange

In a no-fuel, no-internet world, the “exchange” becomes even more local and more essential. People talked about **pooling resources, sharing food, bartering, and creating simple ways to communicate farm-to-farm and neighbour-to-neighbour**. Several ideas pointed to the need for a trusted system that helps match needs with what's available—food, tools, seeds, labour, and supplies—without relying on outside platforms.

#### Pillar 2: Collaborate / Cooperate / Advocate / Educate

This pillar showed up everywhere in the exercise. People repeatedly emphasized **working in groups based on skills, assigning leaders, teaching each other, passing knowledge to youth, and supporting mental and emotional health**. The underlying message was clear: a community's ability to feed itself depends as much on cooperation and shared knowledge as it does on land or equipment.

#### Pillar 3: Create Infrastructure



Even in a stripped-down scenario, infrastructure mattered—but not shiny infrastructure. The focus was on **basic, practical systems**: preservation (canning, drying, smoking, salting), simple storage, local processing, and small-scale growing structures like **greenhouses and microgreen setups built from salvaged materials**. People also raised the importance of water storage, sanitation, and backup methods to keep food safe and usable longer.

#### **Pillar 4: Productive Land**

A big takeaway here was that “productive land” isn’t just acreage. It’s **seeds, soil knowledge, labour, and the ability to grow with hand tools**. People talked about turning every available patch into production, starting seeds early, using heritage seeds, prioritizing high-yield basics, and supplementing with **foraging, fishing, hunting, and wild plant knowledge**. Several responses highlighted that without skills and community coordination, land alone doesn’t feed people.

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#### **Why This Exercise Matters**

This wasn’t about predicting the future. It was a way to test instincts under pressure—and what came through is that our region already has the most important ingredient: **people who think practically and understand the value of working together**. The exercise reinforced that resilience starts with coordination, skills, preservation capacity, and trusted local systems. Those are exactly the kinds of strengths our four pillars are meant to build—step by step, in a way that matches our volunteer capacity and real-world budgets.



## Farmers Roundup – Feb 21, 2026

### Conclusion

The Farmers' Roundup was a strong reminder of what this region can do when people show up and speak honestly. We had great participation, a wide mix of farmers and farm supporters, and no shortage of practical ideas. The four pillar discussions gave us clear direction on what matters most right now: reducing costs and friction for producers, improving coordination and communication, and building the foundation for bigger infrastructure decisions only when the need and commitment are proven.

The dystopia exercise was a useful reality check. Faced with a “no power, no fuel, no internet” scenario, people didn't jump to big projects. They focused on what actually keeps a community functioning: knowing what resources and skills are available, organizing work, preserving food, and taking care of each other. It reinforced the same message we heard throughout the day — resilience starts with cooperation, shared knowledge, and trusted local systems.

Over the next year, our focus will be on achievable steps that fit a volunteer-led, budget-conscious organization: a bulk purchasing pilot, problem-solving roundtables, simple listings and directories, and a clear plan for partnerships that help activate land and support new growers. Thank you to everyone who attended, contributed, and offered to help. We're looking forward to keeping this momentum going — and to the next Roundup.