

INFORMATION

Yukon Agriculture Branch Quarterly Bulletin
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THE FUTURE OF FOOD WORKSHOP

Sustainable agriculture with Dr. Kent Mullinix

On March 4, 2011, the Yukon Agriculture Association (YAA) hosted a workshop on the Future of Food, with keynote speaker Dr. Kent Mullinix. Mullinix was here to present information about sustainable agriculture and to spark an open conversation among Yukon agriculture stakeholders examining local production issues and consumer connections to food.

Mullinix is a director at Kwantlen Polytechnic University's Institute for Sustainable Horticulture and an agricultural scientist, agrologist, educator and producer. Mullinix's research and interest focuses on human scale, productive systems that are critical elements of sustainable agriculture and communities. Mullinix spent his time in Yukon meeting with stakeholders and presenting at the Yukon College, Whitehorse Public Library and was the main speaker at the Future of Food workshop. In his presentation, Mullinix explored the challenges of today's agriculture industry. Two of the many concerns Mullinix touched on are the industry's energy dependence and the lack of community-based agriculture. His presentation sparked a lot of discussion on making changes to the system that supplies our food.

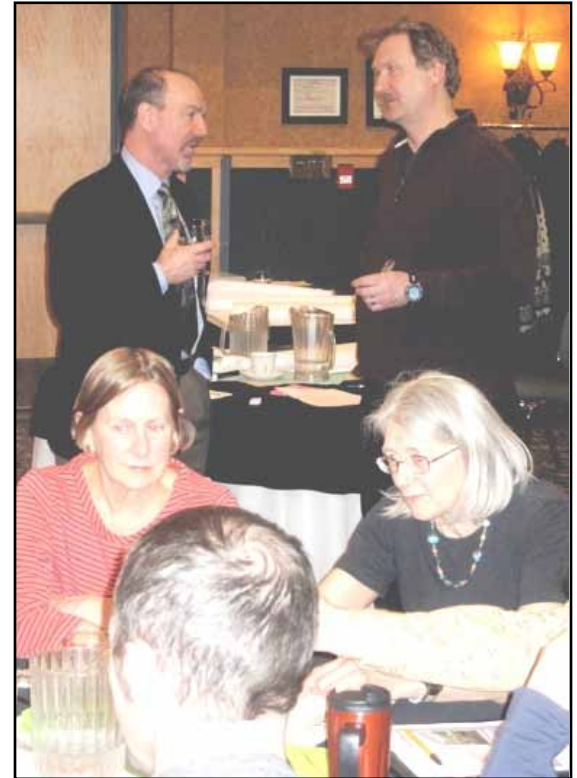
Mullinix's presentation was followed by a panel discussion with representation from YAA, City of Whitehorse, Yukon Agriculture Branch, Yukon Conservation Society and Carcross Tagish First Nation. The panelists showed strong support for local food production but each had their own thoughts on how to further agriculture in Yukon. The panel discussion was followed by a round table workshop in the afternoon. The workshop engaged smaller groups to discuss:

- What are the barriers or obstacles to food security? (Food security being our ability to produce local food for local consumption).
- What are the solutions to food security?

The round table discussion generated a lot of input from the participants at the workshop. YAA has compiled this information and if you would like to learn about the workshop contact YAA through the information below.

Sustainable agriculture connected with the audience and left the discussion groups wanting more time to discuss the concerns and solutions to increase the amount of Yukon food we eat. To continue to move this discussion forward, YAA has agreed to engage Mullinix and his team to develop a terms of reference for a Yukon Sustainable Agriculture plan.

The workshop was funded through the Canada-Yukon Growing Forward Agreement. For more information contact Len Walchuk or Rick Tone at the Yukon Agriculture Association; e-mail admin@yukonag.ca or phone 867-668-6864.



Future of Food workshop hosted by YAA. A round table discussion on food security in the foreground with Dr. Kent Mullinix (left) and Len Walchuk (right) in the background.

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MESSAGE FROM THE AGRICULTURE BRANCH
Developing Sustainable Agriculture North of 60°

Over the past year or so there has been increased interest in food security and food sovereignty in Yukon. Last September, we had a presentation by Melissa Zapisocky from the Canadian Center for Community Renewal on her research project Strengthening Yukon Local Food. Through the winter, the Potluck Community Co-op held a situation mapping day to link local food producers with community groups and consumers. Earlier in March, the Yukon Agricultural Association hosted the Future of Food workshop featuring an informative and thought provoking presentation on agriculture sustainability and food security.

What I find important about the food security and sustainable agriculture discussion is that it involves all stakeholders, not just the farmers and it is largely driven by the consumers. At the Future of Food workshop it was encouraging to see consumers, First Nations, Renewable Resource Councils, conservation societies, seniors and all levels of government working with both organic and conventional Yukon farmers to discuss agriculture sustainability and food security and what that means in our unique environment. As Kent Mullinix pointed out, 98% of the population in this country does not live on farms yet they have a big role to play in securing and supporting a sustainable agriculture industry that they can count on. These discussions will aid in the development of Yukon agricultural policies, programs and plans to come in the future.

Urban food production is an important component of food security so we are pleased to assist Yukon College in offering both the traditional Yukon Master Gardener program this year and a new Organic Master Gardener program starting in May. The organic version of the program is a pilot project and if successful may be offered in the future using local instructors to add Yukon-specific experience and techniques.

If you are interested in buying locally this year make sure you get out to your community markets this spring or contact your local producer.

Let's hope that the snow goes early and that your gardens are productive. Have a good spring.

Tony Hill
Director, Agriculture Branch

PLANNED AGRICULTURE LAND
SALE NEAR HAINES JUNCTION
THIS SUMMER

The Agriculture Branch will be offering five lots ranging in size from 9.8 ha to 29.1ha (24 acres to 72 acres) as part of phase II of the Haines Junction Agriculture Land Subdivision development. The land sale will take place at the end of June so that prospective applicants will have ample opportunity to inspect the lots and familiarize themselves with the topography and soils of the parcels. To view a map and additional details go to www.agriculture.gov.yk.ca and follow the links to the Haines Junction agriculture land subdivision.

These parcels will not be sold by lottery. Instead, a prospective purchaser will be required to put together a detailed farm development plan laying out all the steps to create an economically viable farm operation. All the projects proposed for a specific lot will be compared and evaluated by the Agriculture Branch with the offer of sale made to the applicant who shows the clearest understanding of farm business in Yukon. This planned land disposition process increases the emphasis on developing economically viable agriculture in Yukon, an important objective of the 2006 Yukon Agriculture Policy.

The Agriculture Branch is developing an application package that will outline the process and the information required. For updates visit www.agriculture.gov.yk.ca or contact David Murray at david.murray@gov.yk.ca or phone 867-667-3699.

GROWING INTEREST IN GARDENS AND LOCAL FOOD

Maybe it is the higher costs for food, the long distances some of our food travels or the demand for better, fresher food that has led to more interest in local agriculture. Whatever the reason, there is increasing support for growing as seen by the number of community gardens around Yukon and the increasing number of Yukoners interested in ripping up their lawns and planting gardens.

In the past few years community garden projects have garnered renewed support, highlighted by the increasing interest in established community gardens and with the success of new community gardens such as the Dawson Community Garden.

First Nations also continue to build and support community gardens for the health of their citizens. First Nation community gardens are located across Yukon from Beaver Creek to Teslin and Carcross to Old Crow. Funding to support these community gardens is coming from a range of government bodies

including the Yukon Community Development Fund, the Canada/ Yukon Growing Forward Agreement and the Northern Climate Exchange.

The growing community connection with agriculture is also evident by the influx in the number of courses being offered.

Along with the Yukon Master Gardener's course there have been a number of other offerings, including:

- a new Organic Master Gardeners Course to be offered through the college this spring;
- the City of Whitehorse gardening series courses offered through the Parks and Rec Department;
- individual companies such as Foodscapers and Deeproots Permaculture offering workshops (see page 4 for more details); and,
- the Dawson Community Garden summer long workshop series.

The City of Whitehorse is supporting the local food movement by planting berries in a new roundabout

on Rhine Way in Takhini North. The roundabout will be growing saskatoons, strawberries and raspberries for local harvest. This is the city's first roundabout designed to be a place to grow food.

The City of Whitehorse has also recognized the growing interest in agriculture by including support for local food production in the City's Official Community Plan (OCP).

The OCP identifies agriculture as a land use designation and local food production as a priority. The city is looking to support local production by providing space for community gardens and greenhouses, and in the future allowing non-soil based agriculture such as backyard chickens or apiaries, which will allow residents to offset the cost of importing some of their foods. The OCP identifies promoting local food production and supporting the local farmer's market as ways to diversify and strengthen the local economy. Although the OCP identifies these priorities, there is still work to be done on city bylaws to allow for this.

BUY YUKON GROWN

Because.....

- I want to be a part of a community that supports local production.
- I want to know where my food comes from, how fresh it is, and what processing it has gone through.
- I want to reduce the distance my food travels. If food can be grown in my backyard, that's where my food should come from.
- I want to enjoy in-season food. I want to be excited for berry season, and then I want to do so much picking and storing, that I savour it all year round.



Share your reason to buy Yukon Grown with us by emailing agriculture@gov.yk.ca

Currently the City of Whitehorse allows minor agriculture activities in country residential. Country Residential 1 & 2 allows for activities such as the raising of crops or livestock, animal pasturage, horticulture, apiculture, market gardening, nurseries and similar agricultural pursuits that are secondary to the residential nature of the lot. Details on zoning can be found at www.city.whitehorse.yk.ca

BACKYARD GARDENING
Not sure where to start?

Two new companies in Whitehorse are targeting food production in your backyard. These new businesses are kind of like landscaping, but as one business name describes it, it is foodscaping. Foodscapers and Deeproots are the two companies looking to increase food production from backyard gardening by providing expertise in building and maintaining an edible garden. Although these two new businesses are similar in many ways they have a number of unique features. Both companies align with the growing demand for food security and sustainable agriculture. This is allowing Yukoners the opportunity to become more connected with food through growing.

FOODSCAPERS: *Let's get growing!*

Foodscapers has a ground up approach to growing, with a strong focus on showing customers how to grow organically by building healthy gardens through soil development with composts. Heidi Marion established Foodscapers in 2009 after farming for six years. You realize from her workshop series that she has a passion for building soil life. Foodscapers' series of workshops include:

- Compost for Greenhorns
- Potions 101: teas and brews to feed your soil
- Mulching and Fungi for Soil Life

Foodscapers also offers a range of services which includes consulting, design and installation services. Foodscapers also delivers a full-season course for growers. Foodscapers consultations services include consulting on garden health with plans to increase yield and nutrition of your garden harvest. Consultations on garden improvements including raised beds, cold frames and/or green-

houses are also offered. Custom soil amendments are available as well as local soil by the yard, with amendments for that specific soil also available. Foodscapers will visit customers at their gardens to develop a food cycling program tailored for individual circumstances.

Foodscapers' Let's Get Growing! gardening course meets once a month starting in February right through to freeze-up. This course starts with seed selection, and moves with the grower during the season touching on compost through to harvest and food preparation (there are still three spots remaining).

For more information about Foodscapers contact Heidi Marion by email at heidi@northwestel.net or by phone at 867-456-7644.

DEEPROOTS PERMACULTURE,
Edible garden design and permaculture

Deeproots is a new local business operated by new energetic Yukoner, Marlon Davis. Marlon is a certified permaculture designer, trained by Ron Berezan (the Urban Farmer) and Barb Hazenveld (Gorgeous and Edible Landscaping). Marlon has also completed the Organic Master Gardeners course through Gaia College in B.C. and has been involved in the Transition Town movement (learn more at www.transitionnetwork.org).

Deeproots is dedicated to helping Whitehorse residents create resilient, sustainable and highly productive edible garden and home spaces. Deeproots achieves these goals through thoughtful design and assisted installation of gardens and home systems based on Permaculture principles.

Permaculture is a design system based on ecosystems or to put it simply, a system that is able to receive and cycle the elements it needs (sun, water and organic matter) without much help.

Some of the strategies in a permaculture garden include:

- no-till gardening methods that help you spend more time enjoying your garden and less time watering
- water Conservation
- soil building
- simple, easy-to-use technologies to extend the growing season.

Deeproots offer a selection of services opportunities including consulting, garden design and garden and landscape installation. Deeproots also provides learning opportunities via workshops on permaculture. For more information on workshops or services visit www.deeprootspmaculture.com or contact Marlon by email at marlondavis@gmail.com or phone 867-335-3364.



WHERE HAVE YOUR BOOTS BEEN?

What Biosecurity means for you and your farm.

Dr. Mary VanderKop, Yukon Chief Veterinary Officer

Livestock diseases make the news when a major outbreak occurs but disease can impact production and hurt your profitability on a daily basis. Biosecurity helps reduce your risk of bringing disease onto your farm – and it is as basic as cleaning your boots.

Biosecurity is like insurance – it requires a bit of investment but it will contribute to keeping your livestock healthy.

Biosecurity is about separating your animals from anyone or anything that could carry disease. Control of animal movement and manure is the key to biosecurity because this is how most disease is spread. A biosecure farm has defined zones to separate the livestock from traffic, people, vehicles or equipment, especially ones that have been in contact with other livestock.

House livestock in a secure area, away from exposure to new animals or manure. Control who and what comes in contact with your livestock to protect their health and your investment.

Here's a quick checklist to assess your level of risk:

- Who is allowed access into your barn?
- Can you recall who visited in the last week, in the last month?
- Do you borrow machinery from your neighbour to work in your corrals?
- Do you bring new heifers into your herd without knowing their disease status?
- Do you visit other farms or livestock facilities with the same boots you wear in your barn?

Here are some biosecurity basics to follow:

1. Change or thoroughly clean your boots after visiting other farms or areas where livestock are held before working with your own animals. Don't bring manure home with you.
2. Designate a specific parking zone for visitors well away from livestock. Don't let visitors drive all over your farm or pasture.
3. Have a sign to direct visitors to your house or office. Don't let them wander through your farm yard or barns unattended.
4. Provide a visitor log book that asks whether the visitor was on another farm in the past 48 hours. If yes, keep those people away from your livestock.
5. Keep livestock areas free of garbage and debris that can attract or harbour wildlife. Store feed securely to prevent wildlife and birds from contaminating feed with their manure.
6. Clean any borrowed equipment that enters your barn or livestock areas. Ensure it is washed clean of visible manure and disinfected before and after you use it.
7. Purchase new livestock from reliable sources that provide health and vaccination records. New animals will expose your herd to different strains of disease and they will be susceptible to what your herd carries – it's like mixing kids in kindergarten. Animals from a good health background are least likely to introduce disease to your herd.

8. Quarantine new livestock before adding them to your established herd. Animals that have been transported are often stressed and are more likely to be shedding bacteria or viruses. Keeping the groups separate for up to four weeks can allow new stock to recover from stress before being mingled with resident stock.

Biosecurity, along with traceability, is increasing in national importance and supports food safety and market access. By improving your biosecurity practices, you help protect your industry as well as your bottom line.

The Government of Canada has detailed information about biosecurity on its website at www.inspection.gc.ca and click on *Animals* then *Biosecurity*.

You can reach Dr. VanderKop by e-mail: mary.vanderkop@gov.yk.ca or phone 867-456-5582 or (1-800-661-0401 ext. 5582) if you have any questions.



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YUKON PRODUCER PROFILE
*Highlighting producers and their
agri-businesses*

This column is an opportunity to introduce readers to some of the interesting farm operations in Yukon. This segment will feature a variety of Yukon's amazing producers, farm products and how farmers are overcoming some of our climate, production and market obstacles.

EARTH WISDOM FARM

On the bank of the Takhini River, about 50 km west of Whitehorse off the Alaska Highway, lies Earth Wisdom Farm, a relatively new venture that is taking shape under the direction of Enrica Nadalini and Peter Zimmermann.

Earth Wisdom Farm is an organic operation based on the principles of biodynamic agriculture which treats the farm as a unified organism, emphasizing the interrelationships of soil, plants and animals and limiting, as much as possible, external inputs.

Beginning this past fall, Earth Wisdom Farm offers consumers certified organic eggs care of their 100 chickens. The eggs are primarily marketed through the farm's Happy Hen Egg Club, a community supported agriculture (CSA) initiative. CSA is an alternative producer-consumer relationship, where the consumer shares in some of the upfront risk ahead of receiving the product.

Customers join the Happy Hen Egg Club for a \$20 membership fee. With membership comes the opportunity to buy 60 dozen eggs for a reduced price of \$6.50 per dozen (non-members pay \$7 and their orders will only be filled once members' orders have been met). Members are asked to prepay for 10



Enrica Nadalini of Earth Wisdom Farms, sharing information about her Happy Hen Egg Club.

dozen at a time. Eggs are delivered weekly to the Yukon Made Store in Whitehorse where members can pick them up.

Earth Wisdom Farm currently produces around 50 dozen eggs a week. Through the Happy Hen Egg Club and non-member farm gate sales, they sell an average of 30 dozen leaving 20 dozen eggs a week still needing buyers. Having left over product has made Enrica question why her own experience is not matching what she has heard as far as the many people wanting to buy fresh local eggs.

"How can the sky be the limit if that is not my experience?" asks Enrica.

In trying to answer her own question, Enrica wonders how big the market for her product actually is and what customers are willing to pay. One of the contributing factors to the price tag is the tonnes of organic feed that is brought in from Vancouver. Although Earth Wisdom Farm currently joins several other farms in buying bulk organic feed, it still costs \$900 per tonne, approximately \$250 of that being

the cost of shipping. With looming fuel hikes and the possibility of an associated rise in shipping costs, there are worries that the cost of production may translate into a price buyers are not willing to pay.

One of the things that could keep prices at a level consumers are willing to pay is reducing the cost of shipping by having a source of organic feed grown right here in Yukon. With operations such as Earth Wisdom Farm, not to mention the many backyard farmers that might be looking for organic feed, this may be an opportunity for someone willing to investigate it further.

Plans for the 2011 season will see Earth Wisdom Farm expand to include organic vegetables and herbs. Over the past season, a greenhouse frame was built and stakes driven into the ground to hold high tunnels. Building of the hoop framing will continue this spring so as to be ready for summer growing.

(Continued on next page...)

The farm will have a stall set up at this summer's Fireweed Market in Whitehorse and will also sell its organic produce through a community supported u-pick initiative.

To get help with looking after the chickens and building the greenhouse and high tunnels, Earth Wisdom Farm participates in World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF). WWOOFers volunteer to help out with farm duties five to six hours a day, five days a week in exchange for room and board. With hiking trails surrounding the area and bicycles and a canoe to use on days off, participants are sure to have a great summer while learning about organic farming in Yukon.

As Earth Wisdom Farm moves into its second year of production, Whitehorse area residents can look forward to tasty local food grown, as their website states, with a focus on "working in harmony with the living landscape." To learn more about the farm visit www.earthwisdomfarm.ca

We are currently looking for our next producer to profile. If you want to suggest a Yukon farmer or even volunteer to be featured in an upcoming issue, contact the Agriculture Branch through the information on the last page.



YUKON CATTLE, HOG, SHEEP AND POULTRY PRODUCERS WILL REQUIRE PREMISE IDENTIFICATION IN 2011

Over the course of 2011, the Agriculture Branch will be registering premises where cattle, hogs, sheep or poultry are kept as part of the National Agriculture and Food Traceability System.

While Yukon has been fortunate not to have experienced an animal disease emergency to date, recent events in other parts of Canada, such as outbreaks of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (mad-cow disease) and chronic wasting disease in cervids (deer, elk, moose), have highlighted the need for reliable and quickly retrievable livestock information.

In 2006, federal, provincial and territorial ministers committed to phase-in a national traceability system and in 2009 that commitment was reaffirmed with 2011 being set as the target for implementation.

The Canada-wide system is based on three pillars: animal identification (led by industry), premise identification (led by provinces and territories), and animal movement (led by the Government of Canada). Many livestock sectors already have solid foundations for traceability, often built with industry leading. For example, animal identification is already mandatory in the cattle, bison and sheep sectors.

In the coming months, the Agriculture Branch will be engaging producers to assign a unique identifier to their location as part of this program. Information collected as part of premise identification will be kept strictly confidential and will only be shared with those authorized to assist in the event of an emergency.

Benefits of participation in the National Agriculture and Food Traceability System include:

- assisting in the response to disease outbreaks and other livestock emergencies;
- enhancing food safety and consumer confidence;
- reducing economic impacts of animal health emergencies for producers;
- ensuring that developments in other jurisdictions do not affect the import of livestock into Yukon;
- providing producers with the option to receive tailored information from Yukon's Chief Veterinarian Officer on traceability and food safety;
- improving access to international markets that demand traceability for livestock and livestock products; and,
- creating future possibilities for value-added activities such as optimized breeding decisions and on-farm efficiencies.

At this time, the Agriculture Branch is only registering locations where cattle, hogs, sheep and chickens are kept. To register or for more information go to www.agriculture.gov.yk.ca or contact Kevin Bowers at 867-667-3043.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

FIREWEED COMMUNITY MARKET

Will return to Shipyards Park on Thursdays starting May 19, 2011. Visit fireweedmarket.yukonfood.com for more information.

YUKON MADE STORE

Open 11 am to 5 pm Tuesday to Saturday, Frank Slim Building, Shipyards Park. More information is available through email at yukonmadestore@yukonfood.com

CANADIAN YOUNG FARMERS FORUM (CYFF)

Yukon now has a representative on the Canadian Young Farmers Forum Board. Congratulations to Cain Vangel, CYFF board member at large.

Cain was voted to the board in February at the CYFF annual general meeting. Cain was among four Yukoners attending the four day AGM which also included presentation from industry leaders and a day long farm tour. For more information about CYFF visit their web site www.cyff.ca or contact any of the Yukon representatives: Vanessa Fall, Ann-Marie Stockley and Warren Zakus.

FOOD SECURE CANADA (FSC)

Food Secure Canada (FSC) is a Canadian organization working to unite people and organizations involved in food security across Canada and globally. Their vision is based on three commitments to create:

- zero hunger,
- a sustainable food system, and
- healthy and safe food.

Yukon representatives Tom Rudge and Joan Norberg participated in the 2010 Food Secure Canada's Conference on Weaving Together Food Policy and Community Action. Joan is also on the steering committee for FSC. For more information, contact Tom or Joan or visit www.foodsecurecanada.org

DAWSON COMMUNITY GARDEN
WORKSHOPS SERIES

Dawson Community Garden continues to advocate food security in the community by offering workshops to encourage more people to start their own backyard gardens. Everything kicks off the weekend of April 8th and 9th with a movie screening on Friday night and the Seedy Saturday seed exchange. Following the kick-off event, weekly workshops will be held covering everything from seed starting to canning. For more information email communitygardendc@gmail.com

RENTAL EQUIPMENT

Yukon Agriculture Association has a no till seed drill, aerator, manure spreader and plough available for rent. For more information contact the Yukon Agricultural Association at (867) 668-6864 or admin@yukonag.ca

YUKON AGRICULTURE LAND LINK

Connecting the next generation of farmers to existing agriculture parcels.

The Yukon Agriculture Land Link is an opportunity to connect landowners looking for alternative uses for their idle agriculture property and new farmers looking for land to start their agriculture farm enterprise.

The Agriculture Branch is enrolling those interested in the Yukon Agriculture Land Link by collecting the names of land owners and new farmers. As contact information is gathered, the Agriculture Branch will exchange this information. Only those enrolled in the service will have access to the information.

Interested landowners and new farmers can register with the Yukon Agriculture Land Link service by e-mailing agriculture@gov.yk.ca or by calling (867) 667-5838, toll free in Yukon 1-800-661-0408 extension 5838. Visit our website for more information on the Yukon Agriculture Land Link at www.agriculture.gov.yk.ca

InFARMation is:

A Yukon government newsletter published by the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, Agriculture Branch. If you would like to add or remove your name from the newsletter mailing list, comment on an article or contribute a story, please feel free to contact us.

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