

## **"The Importance of BC's Agricultural Land Reserve"...by Ameena Mayer**

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Sunday, July 17, 2005

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The Importance of BC's Agricultural Land Reserve

- Ameena Mayer

Poor is the man whose pleasures depend upon the permission of another. Indeed, self-sustainability is one of the many roads a country can follow that leads to happiness, and BC's Agricultural Land Reserve plays an integral role in allowing Canada to take this path. Created approximately thirty years ago to eradicate the loss of 13,000 acres of farmland a year to the destructive cause of urban development, it protects 21,000 food processing industries and farms while providing over 200,000 jobs, a strong buffer zone against urban sprawl, habitats hospitable to biodiversity, millions of dollars a year for the economy, and most importantly, BC's ability to be 60% self-sufficient in terms of food. Although the benefits of this reserve are blindingly apparent, the provincial government is considering transforming a portion of it into business parks and subdivisions. In addition, it wishes to let local governments preside over the ALR, which would place its fate in the hands of overly powered individuals.

Imagine all that tender, green life-producing land as pavement, all so a privileged few can hear the empty clank of coins in their coffers. And once one part is dismantled, an ugly precedent will be set, catalyzing the disappearance of even more farmland. This will negatively impact not only the people of BC, but the world at large. A decrease in local food production inevitably leads to a frenetic reliance on the increasingly unstable and corrupt international food market. One only has to glance at the corporate takeover of Latin American countries by the US to witness how globalization and free trade, spawned in part by a refusal to buy local and remain self-sufficient, exploit workers and destroy lives, all the while increasing fossil fuel emissions from the transport of these goods to places thousands of miles away. As it is, the ALR is only 5% of the province, and every precious acre counts toward ensuring Canada's food stability. As members of a democracy, there is much we can do to aid in the protection of our farmlands—purchasing locally grown food, writing letters to the government, circulating petitions and bringing our concerns to our municipal councils to name a few. While the government twiddles its fingers over documents and figures, trying to find a way to add a little more gray to our province, we must decide whether we wish to walk with our own legs or amputate them and those of others to fill our stomachs.

### References

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