



How to complete the **CONTENT ANALYSIS: POLICY**

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Strengthening Farmland Protection Assessment Toolkit

Purpose

This assessment tool is to be used to assess the breadth and quality of the **Policy** documents of legislative framework. Use the documents you listed in the Local-Policy and Regional-Policy cells of the Legislative Framework for your area. The instructions are divided into three parts:

- **Part A: Contents of documents**
This part of the analysis is concerned with the general content of the documents covering background information; vision, goals, and objectives; legislative context; regulations (enforceable policies, procedures); and maps.
- **Part B: Breadth and depth of legislative context**
This part is a more detailed analysis of the legislative context.
- **Part C. Status of agricultural plans**
This part of the analysis identifies the status of any agricultural plans. The premise is that agricultural plans that are named within legislative documents or adopted by the local government have more influence.

Notes:

- a) The tables that appear within the instructions are re-produced as templates at the end of this document. Use the templates to complete the assessment.
- b) The instructions for analysing the contents of policy documents are very similar to the instructions for legislative documents. There are only minor differences.

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Criteria for evaluating level of detail

In Parts A and B, you are required to assess the level of detail for different areas of content of the documents. The level of detail is indicated by checkmarks, as follows, and described in the table below.

✓ - Minimum level of detail included ✓✓ - Moderate level of detail provided ✓✓✓ - High level of detail provided
 [blank] - Not included

	Legislative Context (Provincial)	Background	Vision, Goals, Objectives	Local Policies	Maps
0	None	None	None	None	None
✓	Brief statements that include at least one reference to the main provincial legislation or policy related to agricultural land use planning. Little to no context provided other than perhaps a statement that acknowledges the local governments duty to uphold these acts and policies.	Very brief description of agriculture background. This may include a minimal section or statistics on historical context, background and issues, and demographics on agriculture/farming.	Includes a vision, goal, or objective for agriculture but with minimal explanation or rationale.	Several statements (three to five) about agricultural land use policy presented within local context.	Provides at least one (1) general land use map(s) with agricultural land use shown.
✓✓	Expanded statements that references more than one of the main and policies and provides added context to the above. Multiple statements that outline how provincial legislation and policies “fit” in the local context.	Includes multiple sections dedicated to information and statistics about agricultural background. May also reference an agricultural plan or report.	Includes a good presentation of vision, goal, and objective for agriculture with a statement of explanation, a few recommendation items, and some action items.	Comprehensive section of agricultural land use policy statements (more than five).	Provides at least one (1) general land use map(s) showing agricultural land uses and at least one (1) agriculture specific map showing designated agricultural land.
✓✓✓	Comprehensive that outlines how provincial legislation and policies “fit” in the local context.. May include diagrams to help establish thread of consistency among different levels of government.	Comprehensive account of agricultural background. May also reference an agricultural plan or report.	Includes a detailed section on vision, goals, and objectives for agriculture with an extensive and detailed list of recommendations and/or action items.	Comprehensive agricultural plan. May also refer to background report.	Provides two (2) or more agricultural land use maps including a map showing designated agricultural land. May also include Other maps to illustrate specific issues or policies (future areas of study, development permit areas, current land tenure).

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Part A. Contents of documents

The aim of this part of the assessment is to assess the range of contents of **policy** documents that is directly relevant to agricultural land and farmland protection. The results provide insights to the legislative context that guides agricultural land use decisions. Although the details of actual documents will vary, you will use a common set of key considerations (see below) when assessing the document contents.

Instructions:

1. Use the CONTENTS OF DOCUMENTS template.
2. List the **policy** agricultural land use planning document(s) listed in the Local-Policy cell of the Legislative Framework table for your area. Include the date the document was completed/published. This list might include two levels of government (e.g., local and regional). Do not include provincial documents. Identify the policy document as enforceable [**bold**] or aspirational [plain text].
3. Analyse the content of the documents under the headings provided. A brief description of each heading is provided below.
4. Assess the relative detail of the content of the document under each heading as per the following criteria.
 - ✓ - Minimum level of detail included ✓✓ - Moderate level of detail provided ✓✓✓ - High level of detail provided
 - [blank] - Not included

Contents of documents

Name of document	Legislative Context	Background	Vision, Goals, Objectives	Regulations (enforceable policies, procedures)	Maps

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Descriptions of content areas

Drawing from Smith¹, use the following content areas when assessing each document.

- *Legislative backdrop*
The main legislative elements of the agricultural land use planning framework should be clearly stated to ensure that local policies are presented in the context of broader local and regional objectives. For example, the contents might include references to provincial acts and a local government's comprehensive land use plan (e.g., Official Community Plan in BC). A legislative backdrop provides a thread of consistency among different levels of government.
- *Background*
A background report is often completed as part of an agricultural planning process. This might include a historical overview, a general description of the physical area, the state of agriculture, and a summary of key issues. Not all of this information needs to be included in every policy document. For example, it may be more appropriate to include a summary of a background report in a strategic development plan. If a background report was completed and referenced in the policy then this should be regarded as a high level of detail (as if the report was included in the policy document).
- *Vision, goals, objectives, and recommendations*
The goals, objectives, and recommendations of the local agricultural sector, including an expression of a vision for agriculture, provide a sense of the breadth and depth of the policy document. These elements should be focussed on agriculture but also document relations with other land uses and local priorities. A recommendation to adopt a regulation fits here.
- *Regulations*
Policy documents can include regulations (e.g., rules, procedures, policies) that, if adopted, must be enforced by the local government. The regulatory statements should be directly related to issues and opportunities that were identified in the policy document. Possible regulations include: land use designations and policy, minimal parcel sizes, environmental considerations, transportation, farm bylaws, and references to other jurisdictional issues and policies. This also includes agricultural land use planning tools such as development permit areas, agricultural impact assessments, and covenants.
- *Mapping*
Maps of the agricultural area relevant to the policy document should be included. Other maps as required to illustrate specific issues might also be included, such as land status and tenure; current land uses; floodplains; key resources; development permit areas; transportation networks, and future study areas. A large number of maps is not required; many of these are more likely to be included in background reports.

¹ Smith (1998), *Planning for Agriculture*, pp. 7-29 to 7-34.

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Part B. Breadth and depth of legislative context

The aim of this part of the assessment is to (a) assess the breadth and extent of the legislative context and (b) assess the level of vertical integration. Within agricultural legislative frameworks it is important for local governments to include direct references to upper-tier, regional, and provincial governments, as applicable. A range of statements is necessary in order to create a legislative context that vertically integrates public priorities across jurisdictions.

Instructions

1. Use the BREADTH AND DEPTH of LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT table template.
2. List the same documents used for Part A.
3. In the column headings:
 - a. Legislative context: list the names (or abbreviations) of the most important provincial agricultural land use policies and legislation for your area. These policies and legislation will be listed in the Province-Policy and Province-Legislation cells in your completed Legislative Framework table. You may also include here additional (secondary) policies and legislation that are relevant. For example, perhaps a water act or nutrient management act was not included in the legislative framework but should be included here. Add columns as needed.
 - b. Agricultural land use planning tools: list any tools (e.g., agricultural impact assessment tool, development permit area policies, covenants) that are identified in the local/regional legislative framework.
 - c. Governance (last column): List the name of the body responsible for governing the use and protection of agricultural lands, if one exists. This body will be listed in the Province-Governance cell in your completed Legislative Framework table. For example, in BC there is an Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) in most areas.
4. For each **policy** document:
 - a. Under each heading, assess the detail of the legislative content as per the following criteria.
 - ✓ - Minimum level of detail included ✓✓ - Moderate level of detail provided ✓✓✓ - High level of detail provided
 - [blank] - Not included

Name of document	Legislative context (legislation and policies)						Land use planning tools				Gov.

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Part C. Status of agricultural plans

Many local governments (municipal or regional) prepare agricultural plans. These plans can take different forms, such as an aspirational policy (that may just “sit on the shelf”) or a formally adopted by-law. For our purpose, each agricultural plan document in your areas will be categorised as (a) received by council, (b) named in a comprehensive local area plan, (c) led to revisions to a comprehensive local area plan, or (d) adopted as a by-law (e.g., sub-area land use plan, such as an Agricultural Area Plan). These distinctions among terms are explained and illustrated with examples below.

Instructions

1. Use the STATUS of AGRICULTURAL PLAN table template.
2. List only the local government agricultural plan document(s) identified in the Legislative Framework for your site. Include the date the document was completed/published.
3. Under the column headings, indicate whether the document was received, named, revised, or adopted (as per descriptions below).

Name of document	In progress	Aspirational	Enforceable		
		Received by Council	[name of comprehensive community plan]		
			Named in plan	Led to revisions of plan	Adopted as by-law (sub-area plan)

Received by council (or board) -- aspirational

The term “received” (or accepted, endorsed, etc.) is used herein to mean that the completed agricultural plan was presented to the local government and received via a formal motion. Generally, such a formal motion has no legal status and offers little assurance that the plan will be implemented or adhered to.² This level of recognition is aspirational. The following are examples of local government motions for receiving agricultural plans.

- District of North Saanich
“That the Draft Agriculture Plan dated January 2010...be received and implemented.”³
- District of Lake Country
“That Council receive the District of Lake Country Community Agriculture Plan with its policies being brought forward for consideration during deliberations on the Official Community Plan, zoning, infrastructure, budget, and committee review.”⁴

Named

To be “named” means that the agricultural plan was formally identified in the comprehensive local land use area plan (e.g., Official Community Plan). Being named lends legitimacy to the document. The meaningfulness of the naming must be interpreted in context of the statement as well as the general practices of the local government. As such, the strength of the language

² Notwithstanding this general rule, it is possible that some local governments may take action on all ‘received’ documents.

³ District of North Saanich, minutes of Board meeting, March 8, 2010.

⁴ District of Lake Country, minutes of Board meeting, April 1, 2008.

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associated with the naming of the policy document is important, as illustrated in the following examples from the City of Surrey 2009 OCP.

- Agricultural “objectives are reinforced by Surrey’s Agricultural Plan” (p. 5);
- “The City of Surrey completed an Agricultural Plan in 1999, which was adopted by Surrey Council in 1999 to address the continued and growing pressures on agricultural land, and to propose a range of measures to maintain a healthy farming economy in Surrey” (p. 91);
- Maintain Agricultural Activities: “Utilize guidelines and policies recommended in the Surrey Agricultural Plan” (p. 92).

Revised

For this assessment, the term “revised” is used when there is evidence that the agricultural elements of the site’s comprehensive land use area plan was influenced by the completed agricultural plan. It should be evident that there are significant differences between the old and new comprehensive plans that are or appear to be linked to the completed policy document (e.g., see District of Lake Country motion above).

Adopted

When an agricultural plan is adopted by a local government as a sub-area land use by-law it attains the same legal status as a comprehensive area land use plan. To be adopted the agricultural plan must provide sufficient direction to guide the comprehensive plan and include clear statements of policy. The following is an example of a motion to formally adopt an agricultural plan as a secondary plan in the District of Summerland: “Bylaw 2000-342 – Text amendment of the Official Community Plan to add the Agricultural Area Plan as a secondary plan.”⁵ Correspondingly, the formal status of land use policies requires succinct language, as illustrated in the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District where the draft Pemberton Valley Agricultural Area Plan was revised before being adopted. The Board requested that the bylaw be sent back to staff “to restructure the document so that the policy components be identified and clarified into a more succinct bylaw.” In response to the Board’s request, the Agricultural Advisory Committee revised the plan “to focus on the recommended actions, restructure the introduction section, and minimize the background information, in order to keep the plan as succinct as possible.”

⁵ District of Summerland, minutes of Board meeting, Monday, October 27, 2008.

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CONTENT ANALYSIS TEMPLATES

Legend: ✓ - Minimum level of detail included ✓✓ - Moderate level of detail provided ✓✓✓ - High level of detail provided [] - Not included

CENTENTS of DOCUMENTS

Name of document	Legislative Context	Background	Vision, Goals, Objectives	Regulations (enforceable policies, procedures)	Maps

BREADTH AND DEPTH of LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

Name of document	Legislative context (legislation and policies)						Land use planning tools				Gov.

STATUS of AGRICULTURAL PLAN

Name of document	In progress	Aspirational	Enforceable		
		Received by Council	[name of comprehensive local land use area plan]		
			Named in plan	Led to revisions of plan	Adopted as by-law (sub-area plan)