



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **INNOVATIVE PROGRAM ENCOURAGES ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY ON FARMS**

The Township of Langley will spearhead the first program of its kind on B.C.'s west coast to reward farmers for maintaining eco-friendly areas on their lands. Such practices can be costly and the Ecological Services Initiative (ESI) was created to help farmers bear the cost of keeping waterways, forests, and other ecologically sensitive areas clean and healthy for current and future generations.

"Farmers provide one of the most valuable commodities – our population's food source," said Dave Melnychuk, chair of the Langley Sustainable Agriculture Foundation. "Farmers want to ensure that this resource remains sustainable, but it comes at a cost."

Langley is seen as an excellent location for a three-year Langley ESI pilot program. "Agriculture plays a huge role in the Township of Langley, and it is vital to all of us that we ensure our sustainable food production," said Mayor Jack Froese. "Our community is home to half the farms in Metro Vancouver, and we also have acres of wetlands, forests, and creeks to protect."

"Farmers take care of the land so that the land can take care of us," said Melnychuk. "Feeding people is an act of stewardship, and for farmers, being stewards is in their blood."

The LSAF is partnering with the Township of Langley and the non-profit Ecological Services Initiative to run the Langley ESI pilot project.

The ESI is a farmer-led program that supports financial incentives for agricultural producers who contribute to a healthy ecosystem. Maintaining areas to include practices such as a clean water supply, erosion control, pest management, and habitat preservation creates sustainable food production that benefits everyone.

The program also helps the Township achieve its sustainability objectives.

"The Township is committed to being environmentally, financially, and socially balanced and created a Sustainability Charter to help guide us into the future," said Froese. "The Langley ESI addresses many of the Charter's objectives, including strengthening our agricultural economy, conserving and enhancing our environment, and increasing biodiversity and natural capital."

Township of Langley Council approved \$120,000 to fund a portion of the pilot project.

“The Township’s investment will be used to leverage additional funding from sources such as the Real Estate Foundation and Environment Canada’s Habitat Stewardship Program,” said Dave Zehnder, co-ordinator of the ESI Program.

The estimated cost of the Langley ESI pilot project is approximately \$350,000. The pilot project will conclude in 2018 with recommendations for an expanded program over the long-term.

The Langley ESI is looking for at least 10 farms to volunteer to join the pilot project. Farmers will receive annual payments to participate in the program and allow access to their lands for monitoring and ecological assessments. Farmers must be located along the main stem of Bertrand Creek, downstream from 264 Street at 24 Avenue.

Contact the Langley Sustainable Agriculture Foundation at [info@langleysaf.ca](mailto:info@langleysaf.ca) before February 5, 2016 to apply.

*For more information, contact Jason Chu, Langley Township’s Manager of Long Range Planning, at [jchu@tol.ca](mailto:jchu@tol.ca) or 604.533.6127.*