

## Sunshine Coast Farmers Institute - Request for review at upcoming CoW meeting

Dear SCRD Board of Directors,

As you are aware, as of January 2024 commercial food producing farms will be billed the standard metered commercial rate for water, and the current temporary exemption for farmers from Stage 4 water restrictions will expire at the end of 2024. This remains an unfair situation towards farmers, whose only difference in comparison to other commercial users is the fact that our water use is outdoors. We continue to bring to your attention that water restrictions based on indoor vs outdoor water use are unfair to farmers who are required to grow food outdoors. These restrictions are not in the best interest of our communities' need for food security, nor our ecosystem's long-term health. We also understand that the SCRD has a fund of approximately \$85,000 set aside for agricultural use.

As such, the SCFI respectfully makes the following requests:

1. Hire an agricultural consultant with these funds, in consultation with the SCFI for the RFP process. This consultant would be tasked to research and develop fair policies to address the need of the agricultural community on the coast.
2. Strike an Agricultural Committee within the SCRD whose main purpose would be to propose policies that support local agriculture, in line with the region's agricultural plan. This would be a balanced committee, including the paid consultant, and representation from the commercial farming community, SCRD directors, and SCRD staff.
3. Extend the current Stage 4 restriction exemptions to a 5 year period, to allow time for review of policies, implementation of water strategies, and review of the policy linking Stage 4 restrictions and the use of the siphon.
4. Hold back on charging commercial food growers commercial water rates until this committee has been struck, and policies are in place clearly identifying the process to establish who is a commercial food grower, and what the water rates should be for those contributing to the local food chain.

We trust that you will find that our requests are made in the spirit of working together to establish a strong, viable, and resilient local food system. We continue to bring to your attention that without further consideration and immediate action, our local agricultural community is, plain and simply, at risk.

On behalf of the Sunshine Coast Farmers Institute, we thank you for your time and consideration and look forward to your feedback.

Regards,

The Sunshine Coast Farmers Institute Board

Mel Sylvestre – President – Grounded Acres Organic Farm Julie Carrillo – Vice President – Heart & Sol Coastal Farm Robin Dutcher – Treasurer – Soames Hill Farm Mary Degan – Director – Elphinheart Gardens Erin Dutton – Director – Erin Dutton Design Landscaping Alisha M'Lot – Director – Harvest Heart Farm