HOBBY FARMING IN THE LOWER FRASER VALLEY

by

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ABSTRACT

Concern is growing over the use, ownership and preservation of agricultural land in Canada. The hobby farm is a distinctive type of farm land use in the rural-urban fringe of large cities. Opinion varies on the validity of hobby farming as land use and as part of the agricultural industry, yet little documentation exists on its actual form and function.

This study attempts to assess the validity of hobby farming in the Lower Fraser Valley near Vancouver, an important agricultural region in which a significant proportion of the farm units are hobby farms. It is hypothesized that the hobby farm has a characteristic form and that hobby farmers have similar motivations for choosing a rural lifestyle. They are likely to make similar choices and decisions in the purchase and management of their property. Only when these are identified can the relationships of hobby farming to commercial farming and its role within the agricultural industry be assessed.

The findings and conclusions of this study were drawn from primary data provided by interviews of eighty-two hobby farmers in the district of Surrey in the Lower Fraser Valley. They were randomly selected from property tax assessment rolls and interviewed between February and May 1982.
A variety of circumstances led to the development of hobby farming in the Valley where the small, mixed subsistence farms of the 1860s survived the expansion and commercialization of the farm industry over the next hundred years. Although the moderate climate of the Valley facilitates production, many potentially serious problems such as poor drainage necessitate a high level of capital improvements and skillful use of special techniques to make agriculture commercially viable. The recent trend to intensification and specialization along with rising costs and uncertain returns has led to the demise of poorly managed, small-sized commercial farms on land of marginal quality. The Agricultural Land Reserve system in B. C. prohibits the sale of agricultural land for any use except farming so the many small uneconomic farm units are purchased as hobby farms. Hobby farming is an appropriate form of agricultural enterprise in the Valley.

Surrey hobby farms, small in size and mixed in production, are generally well maintained, although improvements are made in an irregular fashion as time and money become available. Hobby farm land is seldom idle but produces a wide variety of goods, many alternative varieties and breeds to those of Surrey's commercial farms. Farm sales are minimal, sufficient to achieve property tax exemption and provide some funds for farm expenses. Marketing arrangements are flexible and informal.
Surrey hobby farmers are a heterogeneous group in socioeconomic terms and political orientations, although there is an occupational predominance of administrators and professionals. Most have urban backgrounds but have rejected city life and chosen hobby farming to achieve the qualities of rural lifestyle they desire—particularly the privacy of a peaceful setting where they are free to raise their children and manage their farm animals and crops without interference. Self-sufficiency is an important goal for some. Both the planning and management of the farm is undertaken with little outside help, and experimentation with products and techniques reflects the hobby orientation of the owners. The rural-urban fringe location is perceived positively and satisfaction levels are high.

Hobby farming coexists comfortably with full-time commercial farming, providing little competition in the market place yet some opportunities for wage labour and leasing arrangements. Hobby farms provide some of the unusual products and amenity services sought by urban dwellers and preserve a countryside landscape that is aesthetically pleasing. The Fraser Valley hobby farms have a valuable role to play in the use and preservation of agricultural land and the farm industry.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Concern is growing over the use, ownership and preservation of agricultural land in Canada. Attention is particularly focussed on the loss of high quality food producing land through its conversion to urban uses near large Canadian cities. Less than 13% of Canada's land is suitable for agricultural production of any type and much less is suitable for cropland. Over half of the highest quality farmland occurs within a fifty mile radius of the twenty-two largest Canadian cities. Urban expansion invariably involves conversion of this land to industrial, commercial and residential uses. Recent public awareness of the limited supply and continuing losses of good agricultural land has increasingly sharpened the perception of farmland as a valuable resource rather than a commodity. Pressures have increasingly been brought to bear on policy makers to protect and preserve the agricultural land resource from the inevitable result of open market bidding, the gradual conversion of farmland to higher and better uses in purely economic terms.

Farmland preservation measures have varied considerably provincially but include preferential taxation, land banking, and rural zoning. The most successful programs are those in place in B.C. and Quebec. The B.C. response to real and threatened losses of prime agricultural land was the landmark
land use legislation of 1973 establishing agricultural land reserves administered by a Land Commission. Areas of the province where the physical capability of the land was assessed potentially best for agriculture were designated as farm land with no further possibility of subdivision or non-agricultural development.

Despite these strict zoning controls, B.C. experienced increased conversion rates of both unimproved and improved land between 1971-76 over the 1966-71 period. Prime agricultural land totalling 9850 hectares was lost during the 1971-76 period in comparison to 6440 hectares for the previous five years.3

A recent study suggests farmland preservation measures are no more successful elsewhere in Canada. Warren and Rump document the Canadian farmland conversion process:

High conversion rates of certain categories of high capability lands continue despite efforts to discourage development on such prime lands. . . . For every increase in population of 1,000, 60 hectares of rural land were converted to urban uses during 1966-71. This rate increased to 72 hectares for the '71-'76 period, despite various policy, planning, and management measures to preserve rural land.4

Furthermore, the preservation of farmland does not ensure the preservation of agricultural production. The current use being made of farmland and the proposed future use are obviously essential factors in assessing long term food production trends. It is the actual management decisions being made by individual farm owners and their future
intentions that will ultimately determine how well and in what form farms will survive. As long as farmland is privately owned, even within the framework of strict zoning legislation, the use of Canadian farmland is no more than the sum of thousands of individual owners' decisions.

The Hobby Farm

The hobby farm is one distinctive form of agricultural land holding that has both supporters and detractors among those concerned with farmland conversion and preservation. Norman Pearson, a B.C. planning consultant, states:

Well, what is the hobby farm really? It is an extension of urban development, usually an expensive home, with a very neat tax arrangement. If he has a certain level of production on that land the owner can call it a 'farm' and avail himself of some rather attractive income tax arrangements—then cash in when the time is ripe. The acreage needed for an economic farm unit is getting larger and larger all the time, so the hobby farm only serves to destroy that possibility by chopping up the land and escalating the land values.

On the other hand, a Surrey hobby farmer says:

This area didn't look like anything until city people started to move out here and spruce up the place. Hobby farms should be encouraged with stronger tax incentives such as greater write-offs on income tax. They use up otherwise useless land and one of the real benefits of hobby farms is in the spin-off effects in payment for services to local people.

These contrasting statements reflect commonly held viewpoints among the geographers, planners and land economists who are concerned with the use of rural land. Detractors of hobby farming suggest production levels are low on hobby
units so good capability foodland is being wasted, and they blame hobby farmers for inflating land prices and outbidding commercial farmers who need land for expansion. Scattered purchases of land fragment an area into small parcels unlikely to be reassembled for commercial food production. Hobby farmers are frequently accused of using poor land management techniques that can cause deterioration in the physical quality of the land. They are sometimes described as astute opportunists who farm to take advantage of the tax breaks and tend to be more interested in harvesting investment dollars than hay.

Hobby farmers themselves and their supporters see hobby farming as a valid use of agricultural land, particularly farmland close to cities where it is most likely to be converted to other uses. They suggest it is a valuable way to preserve farmland for possible future food needs by keeping it in at least minimal levels of use and maintenance. It is a more sensible form of land holding than the actual alternative, land assemblies held in idled state by speculators awaiting optimum conditions for development. Proponents argue hobby farmers support the rural infrastructure by purchasing a variety of goods and services locally including custom farm services from commercial farmers who may need opportunities for wage labour. Hobby farmers sometimes provide land for lease to commercial farmers who are unwilling or unable to purchase land for expansion and rather than outbidding full-time farmers, are actually
satisfying their need for additional available crop or pasture land at very low capital costs. Hobby farms have also been described as aesthetically pleasing additions to the rural landscape providing variety and alternatives to a countryside needed as green space for nearby city dwellers.

The purpose of this study is to assess the validity of these various points of view about hobby farming within a particular rural-urban fringe setting, the Lower Fraser Valley near Vancouver where a significant proportion of the farm units are hobby farms. The study explores the following hypotheses. The emergence of hobby farming as a distinctive land use is a consequence of certain historical, cultural and economic circumstances peculiar to a particular region. The hobby farm takes a characteristic form with certain common qualities and functions. Hobby farmers have similar motivations for choosing this lifestyle and it is possible to distinguish certain decision making patterns. After the form, function and ownership patterns of hobby farming have been identified and described it is perhaps possible to more accurately identify the role of the hobby farm as a land use and to suggest the possible effects it may have on the agricultural industry within a specific rural community.

Canadian researchers such as McRae, Troughton, Russwurm and Bryant suggest more documentation is essential to explore the relationship between changing agricultural land use and land ownership patterns in an attempt to assess more
effectively the planning controls imposed on Canadian farmland. But it is clear from rural land use literature that hobby farming is a poorly defined and little documented enterprise despite the variety of opinions expressed about its validity as a land use. This study attempts to provide some insight into that distinctive form of agricultural land use and land tenure, the hobby farm.

The Hobby Farm in Social Science Literature

While hobby farming is a fairly recent phenomenon in Canada, related forms of land holding and lifestyle have long been a part of the rural landscape. Countryside villas with spacious gardens existed beyond the built-up area of Greater Ur and outside ancient Egyptian cities. Countryside retreats for urban dwellers have been common in Europe for centuries. Villas occupied by the privileged upper class ringed Venice and Florence in the thirteenth century and London gentlemen cherished their country estate which, in addition to its farm functions, often provided gardens and paths for strolling, spacious lawns for archery and croquet and open fields for riding and hunting. For a long time this lifestyle remained the exclusive right of the wealthy who could afford the luxury of a country retreat while retaining a city residence.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth century the countryside as a whole was being drained of population through rapid rural to urban migration associated with industrialization and urbanization. However, intense industrialization
made cities crowded, smoky and congested. Water and air pollution caused a variety of health problems so the "demand to get away from the city became more imperative and undeniable" for those who could afford it.

Along with the obvious advantages in the physical setting, countryside living also offered a social environment where one could be liberated from "the sometimes dreary conventions and compulsions of an urban society" and be free to "have life on one's own terms." This opportunity, whether real or perceived, for freedom and individualism remains an important force in the decision to move to the countryside.

Hobby farms in their present forms became increasingly prominent features of the North American rural landscape during the period of rural resettlement that gained momentum during the 1940s and 1950s. Country living became popularized as not only the wealthy but also the middle class had access to residential land outside the city limits. Increasing income and leisure time and the mobility made possible by automobile ownership led to the establishment of suburbs beyond the city centre. Punter suggests "the elite group who (had) always formed the vanguard of outward waves of migration from the city (had) eventually been joined by a sufficient number of imitators that exurban (had) become unmistakably suburban in terms of both community and landscape." The popularity of the movement threatened to end the privacy and peace those moving out of cities were
seeking. When suburbs became crowded some moved further from the city to larger rural properties beyond suburban development.

This urban to rural movement shows no signs of abating, as the *New York Times* of March 23, 1980 suggests:

Since the early 1970s census estimates have been showing a spreading out of the American population from the cities and suburbs to the countryside, a trend so widespread that authorities now view it as a major national phenomenon with broad economic, social and political implications. From 1970 to 1980 areas outside the orbit of cities showed a net gain of about 3 million people, growing more rapidly than metropolitan areas or the population as a whole, according to the latest estimates by the Bureau of the Census.

But even as the countryside becomes resettled the number of commercial farms and full-time farmers continue to decrease. By 1970 in the United States five of six members of the economically active rural population were non-farmers by occupation although many were living on a variety of small and large acreage holdings variously described as country estates, gentlemen's farms, ranchettes and hobby farms. It is clear that the new ruralites are not seeking a rural livelihood in the sense of a traditional agricultural life but rather are using the experience of living on a farm to fulfil non-economic needs. The countryside is being resettled by those who retain their urban employment but desire a rural lifestyle.

The appeal or "pull" of the countryside is deeply rooted in agrarian ideology in the United States. It is probably
best expressed in the Jeffersonian idealization of rural life as natural and good, containing the best of American culture and producing a virtuous, independent and self-sufficient population. Rohrer suggests: "Agrarianism retained its viability through nearly two centuries of history. Its generalization to nonfarm situations and its perseverance label it a hardy human artifact."

The Canadian trend to increasing numbers of hobby farms parallels the American experience but it occurs even more recently. The movement to the countryside outside large cities has been linked with the growth of a professional and managerial class with the economic means and social inclination to live in rural areas, so the recency of interest in exurban life in Canada may be attributable to the increasing size of the professional and managerial classes as well as the increasing pressures on space and more limited access to the countryside. Until a few years ago the desire for a large acreage with room for a horse, some chickens and a vegetable garden could be accommodated within the city limits. Many Canadian cities have only recently experienced rapid growth and development to higher densities. They are now perceived by some to be crowded, unhealthy and stressful environments. Perhaps, too, the fact that most Canadians are only a generation or two removed from the farm suggests nostalgia plays a role in the appeal of rural life. The escape to the city from the drudgery of farm life fifty years ago has reversed direction. Many
now wish to escape urban ills and pressures and return in a "wistful search for roots" to a life where peace, privacy and the shaping of one's immediate environment is possible.\textsuperscript{11}

There is a rather meagre amount of published research on Canadian rural resettlement but nevertheless within the literature many intriguing questions are raised on the nature and forms of rural land holding and the effects of the trend of urban to rural migration on agricultural land use.\textsuperscript{12} The initial problem is one of defining forms of rural land holding in some standard way in terms of tenure pattern, size, and function to allow for comparative studies. McRae, in a review article on rural resettlement, identifies three primary types of rural holding: permanent residences, seasonal residences and hobby farms, but suggests there is considerable confusion within geographic literature in distinguishing between hobby farms and permanent residences, hobby farms and part-time farms and hobby farms and rural estates.\textsuperscript{13} Michie, in identifying and mapping various rural land uses in the countryside of Southern Ontario avoids definitional problems and simply describes rural estates in a unique and perceptive fashion as "farms where recent expenditures are obvious (including) white paddock fences, extensive and well-clipped lawns, barns obviously not greatly used for livestock purposes, no farm equipment visible."\textsuperscript{14}

In land use literature the one definitional characteristic of hobby farming that seems widely accepted is that
this enterprise is not primarily undertaken for income generating purposes and therefore satisfactions derived from it are non-economic. Other aspects of the term are more variably interpreted including: whether or not the farm is actually used for food production or is merely capable of production; whether the farm production is marketed and at what level of sales; whether the farm units are within a specified size range; whether the owner must be resident on the property to be considered a "hobby farmer"; and whether the hobby farm owner must have urban based employment and income.

Statistics Canada differentiates hobby farmers from part-time and full-time farmers by defining them as those farmers with 150 or more days of off-farm employment annually and less than $5000 of annual farm sales. This definition is possibly somewhat simplistic but is useful because it is easily measurable. It is probably an exercise in futility to attempt to define the hobby farm whose essential qualities and distinguishing characteristics will almost certainly vary considerably regionally. Probably it is most satisfactory to simply stress the "hobby" aspect of the term—"a pursuit outside one's regular occupation that is engaged in for relaxation."15 Within these parameters specific locational and personal circumstances determine the final form and function of the hobby farm.
Locational Aspects of Hobby Farming

The literature is more successful in documenting locational aspects of hobby farming. Most Canadian hobby farms are located in the rural-urban fringes of major cities such as Toronto, Ottawa, London, Winnipeg, Calgary and Vancouver. Hobby farming shows a definite distance decay function as one moves outward from the city and research by Found in the Toronto region and Troughton in the London region suggests one is unlikely to find many hobby farms further than thirty to forty miles or an hour's commuting time from the city centre. The obvious locational relationship between cities and hobby farming may be a function of the needs or desires of owners to be near the city for employment or recreational opportunities. On the other hand, it may reflect the amount of farm land being marketed near the city where selling out is most likely to occur or the investment value of rural land near cities.

Found statistically analyzed a series of land use maps of the area surrounding Toronto to measure relationships between various land uses, distance to Toronto and physical land capability. The obvious pattern of decreasing percentages of rural estate land use with increasing distance from Toronto was distorted somewhat by the location of attractive wooded land some considerable distance from the edge of the city. The estates were clearly associated with land of poor agricultural capability but high recreational capability. Found points out, however, the measured
variable accounted for only a minor portion of the explanation of the land use pattern, suggesting a set of complicated and elusive forces determining rural estate land use.

The locational pattern of hobby farming raises some interesting questions. Do hobby farmers really have strong urban ties and therefore deliberately choose land within an easy commuting distance of the city? Which land qualities are highly desirable to hobby farmers in terms of agricultural or recreational potential? What are these other complicated and elusive forces Found refers to that determine hobby farm location?

The occurrence of hobby farming in a particular area is likely to be a consequence of a complicated set of factors including traditional patterns of production and tenure, land values, viable marketing arrangements and land use legislation. Punter traces the history of exurban development in the area surrounding Toronto from the establishment of large country estates for the elite in the 1930s through the arrival in the early 1950s of the middle class buyers who purchased smaller properties with modest homes. By the 1960s increasing legal restrictions on lot size and escalating land prices effectively limited migration to the wealthiest once again. He explores the interrelationships of land prices, social structure and land use to document the emergence of exurban development and then suggests the impacts this development has on land holding patterns and the rural landscape. Does the B.C. pattern of rural
development mirror that of Ontario or do local circumstances differ enough to suggest different consequences? Is the trend to increased hobby farming in the Lower Fraser Valley, for example, a natural consequence of the Agricultural Land Reserve legislation and does it produce a landscape of large acreage country estates similar to those resulting from lot size zoning in Ontario?

Further interesting questions are raised concerning the motivations of hobby farmers. Why do busy, professional people wish to rise at 5 a.m. daily to care for their livestock, drive many miles to the city for a day in the office and return in the early evening to more farm chores? Who are the hobby farmers and what satisfactions do they seek and find in a rural lifestyle?

In The Nature of Demand for Exurbia Living, Carvalho attempts to document the socioeconomic characteristics of exurbanites and their reasons for moving. The study finds Winnipeg area exurbanites to be predominantly young families with higher than average education levels, occupational status and incomes. Nearly half work in downtown Winnipeg where most lived before moving to the countryside. Reasons for moving were non-economic, centering around the physical environment, namely desires for less crowded surroundings, attractive landscapes, increased areas of land, and visual privacy. Economic factors such as lower taxes and lower land prices were relatively unimportant in the decision to move to exurbia. Hardwick suggests what he terms the "rurban invasion of exurbia" in B.C. is a desire of people to
indulge themselves in the use and enjoyment of private green space while making their living in the city.²³ He pinpoints a concentration of rurbanites with this lifestyle in Langley and Surrey, communities within easy commuting range of Vancouver. Hobby farmers have also been identified by Layton as predominantly professional and white collar workers with above average education and income levels. Can the dominance of the well educated, high income earners within the hobby farm population be explained merely by the ability of this group to purchase expensive farmland near cities, or are there more subtle factors involved? In short, why do hobby farmers want to farm as a hobby?

Finally, there are interesting questions regarding the nature of agricultural production on hobby farms and the relationship between hobby farming and commercial farming. Troughton and Layton provide some insights into the interactions among full-time, part-time and hobby farmers in the rural-urban fringe of London, Ontario, in order to identify and explain the dynamics of rural transformation in that area.²⁴ They were able to identify a series of statistically significant distinguishing characteristics that categorized the three types of farming, including locational aspects such as the distribution pattern of the various types of farms, operational features such as typical improvements to properties and attitudinal aspects such as perceived advantages and disadvantages to fringe locales. The scale of production on hobby farms suggests the farming
techniques, labour and capital requirements and marketing arrangements are likely to be quite different from those of commercial farms. There may be positive or negative relationships between hobby farmers and commercial farmers who share the agricultural land in a particular area. Only when these many aspects of hobby farming are more clearly identified and explored within a particular setting can any useful judgements be made on the validity and consequences of hobby farming as a land use and a part of the agricultural industry.

THE STUDY

Aims

This study will attempt to provide insights into the nature of hobby farming as a land use by considering some of the questions raised in the previous pages, particularly the following:

1. What circumstances within the Lower Fraser Valley have led to the emergence of the hobby farm as a common and distinctive agricultural holding?

2. Who is the Surrey hobby farmer and what does he seek from his particular lifestyle? How successful is he in meeting his aims?

3. What form is the hobby farm likely to take as an agricultural enterprise in terms of production, marketing and labour and capital inputs?
4. Does hobby farming have a legitimate role to play as part of the agricultural industry and as a valid use of farmland in the rural-urban fringe of Vancouver?

Definitions

The Statistics Canada definition of hobby farming was adopted in slightly modified form for this study. The hobby farm and the hobby farmer in this study must meet the following criteria which are ascertainable and measurable:

1. The owner must be resident on the property and therefore is presumably adopting a particular lifestyle rather than merely owning a farm.

2. There must be farm production and farm sales of at least $1600 annually. It was assumed any owner with farm production would attempt sales at this minimum level in order to achieve the considerable savings possible through preferred property tax assessment as a farm unit.

3. The owner works 150 or more days in off-farm employment or is retired from previous off-farm employment.

4. The income derived from the farm sales is insignificant, contributing less than 25% to the total family income.
The Study Area

The District of Surrey, a rural-urban fringe community approximately thirty kilometres from Vancouver, was chosen as an appropriate study area. This district, like several others in the Lower Fraser Valley, is changing rapidly as increasing population pressures cause changes in land use from predominantly agricultural use to residential, commercial and industrial use. There are, however, a substantial number of farms left in the district, both commercial farms and hobby farms. The specific circumstances within Surrey facilitating hobby farming are discussed in Chapter Two.

Data Source and Sampling

The primary data used in this study were collected from 82 personal interviews of farmers in the Surrey area in the spring of 1982. The interviews were structured around a questionnaire with some open-ended and follow-up questions where they were appropriate to allow more flexibility and greater depth of information. A visual check of the sample farm properties was also made at the time of the interview and observations were recorded. The visual aspects of the farm properties and the landscape of the whole study area of rural Surrey were valuable for gaining insights into hobby farming.

The sample was randomly drawn using two sources: the 1981 property tax assessment roll for the Municipality of Surrey and the Fraser Valley Area Directory (1981). The procedure was as follows:
1. All farm assessed properties were listed from the Surrey tax assessment roll for all properties. This provided a listing of 1223 properties owned by 836 individuals or corporations. The corporate and absentee owners were eliminated from the list leaving 669 resident owners. Some 138 of these residents owned multiple parcels of land, usually contiguous properties.

2. A random sample was generated using a random numbers table. In total three draws were made yielding a total list of 256 resident owners of farm properties.

3. The Fraser Valley Area Directory was then used to eliminate from the sample those owners who listed their occupation as "farmer" on the assumption these would be commercial farmers rather than hobby farmers. As a result of this procedure 81 farm owners were eliminated from the sample.

4. The remaining 139 owners were contacted by letter and a follow-up telephone call to arrange an interview time. Eighty-two interviews were completed.

There was no way of distinguishing between part-time farmers and hobby farmers before the interviewing took place. Fourteen of those interviewed did not fall within the study definition of "hobby farmer" in that the farm sales were significant to the family income and the farm employment
was more important than off-farm employment. The data collected from these fourteen interviews were therefore not used in the subsequent collation and analysis although the information gathered from this group was useful comparatively and is noted in the study in appropriate places. (See Appendix I for more detailed sampling procedure.)

**Interviewing and Analysis**

The questionnaire (see Appendix II) covered a wide variety of topics relating to tenure; land size, quality and features; farm production and sales; labour sources; property improvements; problems and satisfactions with farming and location; attitudes, socioeconomic characteristics and background of owners; and future plans. The interview was structured around the questionnaire but many responses were followed up with more probing questions to gain insight into particular aspects of hobby farming. Responses were recorded verbatim when possible. Most interviews lasted 40 to 60 minutes. Five owners who agreed to be interviewed were not in at the appointed time and could not be reached later, but mailed back completed interviews. Their properties were checked visually and they were questioned briefly by telephone. The information from these five questionnaires was included in the primary data. The questionnaires were then collated and analyzed.
NOTES


2. Land can be put to a number of uses which can be ranked on the basis of the economic rent each can generate in a given time period. The use yielding the greatest economic rent is the highest and best use in terms of maximizing income. See: Found, W.C., A Theoretical Approach to Rural Land-Use Patterns, Arrowsmith Ltd., Bristol, 1971, p. 20. See also: Barlowe, R., Land Resource Economics, Prentice Hall, 1958.


4. Ibid., p. iv.


8. Ibid.


12. Rural resettlement in Canada is discussed by the following: Beaubien and Tabachnik, Carvalho, Gibson; Gierman, Layton, Manning, Martin, McRae, Punter, Rodd, Troughton, Warren and Rump. (See Bibliography for complete references.)


15. As defined in Merriam-Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary.

16. See particularly: Found and Michie, Carvalho, Layton, Punter, Troughton. (See Bibliography for complete references.)


18. Troughton, op. cit., p. 46.


20. The term "rural estate" is one of eight land use categories established by Michie for the mapping project. The author suggests the identification of rural estates presents serious problems including the difficulty in designating marginal properties as real farms, rural estates or idle land.


25. Statistics Canada defines hobby farmers as those farmers with 150 or more days of off-farm employment annually and less than $5000 of annual farm sales.

26. The remaining 36 owners of the original 256 were not contacted because they owned small acreages without buildings and were therefore non-residents or could not be traced because they had moved in the previous few months.
CHAPTER TWO

CIRCUMSTANCES FACILITATING HOBBY FARMING

Hundreds of hobby farms dot the rural landscape of the Lower Fraser Valley, particularly in the districts closest to Vancouver: Richmond, Delta, Surrey and Langley. Over half of all Valley farms have annual sales of less than $2500 and the number of successful commercial farms is steadily declining. On the other hand, the number of hobby farms has risen dramatically in the last few years as families move to the countryside to buy a few acres of farmland to raise their livestock and grow their crops. A variety of factors has led to an increasing interest in the rural lifestyle and a particular set of circumstances has made owning a hobby farm possible. These circumstances include a number of historical, environmental, economic and institutional factors.

Antecedents

The agricultural history of the Fraser Valley is short in comparison to most areas of Canada. B.C. was the western frontier and settlement came late. The earliest agricultural activity in the Fraser Valley occurred in 1828 on the Hudson's Bay Company farm at Fort Langley where employees produced a variety of meat, vegetables, grain and dairy products for the Fort traders and the fur brigade. The gold rush of 1858
brought a flood of miners through the Valley to the gold fields of the upper Fraser and interior points. Many recognized the promising farming possibilities in the Valley and stayed on or returned later to become the first farm settlers. At first they took up preemptions of land along the banks of the Fraser River for easy access to steamboat transport and then as the rich agricultural lowlands filled, settlers moved to the heavily wooded uplands of less fertile soils. Farms were gradually improved and expanded despite problems of lowland flooding, upland clearing, poor markets and very rudimentary transportation lines. By 1881 there was a farm population of only 1500 through the whole Valley.

Over the next few decades the Valley population grew steadily and soon a wide variety of ethnic groups, French, Chinese, Japanese, German and Dutch joined the predominantly British population in the evolving communities of the Valley: Chilliwack, Mission, Langley, Ladner, Surrey, Delta and Richmond. Improvement in transport links to New Westminster and Vancouver, particularly the building of the B.C. Electric Railway to Chilliwack in 1910, gave farmers better access to market allowing for delivery of milk and fresh produce.

These early pioneer farms, like their modern counterparts, the hobby farms, were small in size and mixed in production. Clearing the forest was slow, difficult work and it often took families two or three generations of ownership before all the trees were cut and burned and the stumps removed. Farms grew slowly, acre by acre, and seldom exceeded 80 to 100 acres. The early farms were mixed enterprises.
providing subsistence to the farm family and surpluses such as eggs, milk and vegetables to market. Although the diversity of farm production a hundred years ago reflected the optimism and inexperience of the first settlers, the small, mixed farms of the Valley survived even as a more specialized agricultural industry evolved and dominated the market. The early land holding pattern of many small sized farms has survived a hundred years of development and now provides a large supply of desirable small acreage properties suitable for the hobby farm market. And the hobby farms occupying those original farm sites are in many ways analogous to the mixed enterprise subsistence farms of earlier times.

Environmental Aspects

Physical factors have both facilitated and limited the development of agriculture in the Fraser Valley. The Valley, with its one million acres of land on its broad flood-plain and well-developed delta, is obviously an important agricultural area in a province where 90% of the land is mountainous and non-arable. In fact, the Valley farms play a key role in the provincial agricultural industry and in 1979 contributed $300 million or 55% of B.C.'s total farm receipts.

A variety of Valley soil types allows for considerable variety in products. Each type of soil has unique properties and potentialities and requires special management. The Valley soils can be generally differentiated into three
groups: upland soils, lowland soils and organic soils. The lowland soils are located between sea level and seventy feet in elevation and are alluvial in origin. Clay and silt deposits occur on the Fraser delta and in smaller pockets along the Fraser, Pitt, Nicomekl, Serpentine and Chilliwack Rivers. These soils are generally fertile and well-suited to field crops and pasture but they are very susceptible to winter flooding. Organic soils, both deep peat and muck soils, are also found in the lowland regions. The 25,000 acres of muck soils are generally fertile and are suitable for intensive truck farming. Deep peat can be useful soil for berry and vegetable production but requires very special management. It must be carefully drained so it does not dry out during summer drought periods, it requires considerable fertilization and often liming to offset acidity, and it needs deep cultivation. Upland soils, found on the low hills and ridges of the Valley ranging from 70 to 400 feet in elevation, are composed of glaciomarine materials as well as glacial till and outwash. Many of these soil types are medium textured sand and clay loams that are generally well drained although poorly drained pockets do occur. Some of the upland soils such as the extensive area of gravelly loam uplands around Mud Bay are coarsely textured, heavily leached and excessively drained. These soils do not retain their moisture and require irrigation during summer months. Upland soils tend to be thin, sometimes less than 20 inches, are frequently underlain with rock and are generally less
fertile than the lowland alluvia.

Although there is less than 1% of Class One soil in the Valley and only small amounts of Class Two soils, the soil limitations are somewhat offset by the moderate climate which is a definite asset to agriculture. The mild winters and warm summers assure a long growing season of 180 to 200 frost-free days. There is generally adequate annual precipitation although there are variations within the Valley from the drier west end to the wetter east end and with elevation. The seasonal distribution is fairly even with most rain falling in December and January and occasional summer droughts in July and August. Most crops do well in the Valley although the possibility of frost and the low summer temperatures limit the production of tomatoes, melons and some tree fruits.

The mild climate, reasonably fertile soils and gentle terrain facilitate agricultural production but the Valley is a series of micro-environments with variations that require sensitive handling and often considerable capital expenditures for improvements. Heavy winter rainfall, high water tables and poorly drained soils cause serious problems for lowland farmers for several months of the year. Their land must be dyked and underdrained, carefully fertilized and appropriately cropped to produce well. Upland areas need irrigation and constant fertilization while peat soils require very special management. Every area is suitable for some type of production but requires intensive management
by highly skilled farmers. Farms that are marginal in land quality, poorly managed or undercapitalized can no longer be commercially viable. Profitable commercial farming requires much more than good intentions. Many marginal, part-time farms have in recent years been sold to developers or hobby farmers as older farmers retire or give up farming.

Economic Factors

In recent years most Canadian farmers have experienced economic difficulties with soaring costs of inputs that have not been matched by increased product prices. Valley farmers face the same rising costs for machinery, fuel, feed, seed and fertilizer as all Canadian farmers, but it is likely rapidly increasing land costs have been the key factor in accounting for the declining number of successful commercial farms in the Fraser Valley. The Lower Fraser Valley farmland has been subjected to very serious pressures for conversion to other uses in the last few years and agricultural land losses have been high, averaging 1250 hectares annually between 1961 and 1971 and about 700 hectares a year since. These "lost" hectares are usually converted to urban uses, particularly for housing in an area very short of urban expansion land.

The city of Vancouver is a large and rapidly growing city whose expansion is seriously constrained by its physical setting. The Greater Vancouver Regional District identifies the problem:
Room to grow in this Region is severely limited. The whole Lower Fraser Valley, a narrow corridor bounded by mountain slopes, the U.S. border and the sea, contains roughly 900 square miles of which 640 are within 35 miles of the central business district (of Vancouver) . . . the physical limits to growth restrict the area in which the land market can operate and results in high speculative land prices throughout the Fraser Valley.3

The Ministry of Agriculture in B.C. identifies the high cost of farmland in the Valley as the major problem for growth in the industry. Farmland close to Vancouver averaged $12,415 per hectare in 1976, second only to land in the metropolitan area of Toronto as the highest farmland price in Canada. Both improved land and Class I and II land were worth even more. These costs suggest intensive land use is essential for commercial farming in the Valley.

Changes in production in the Valley between 1971 and 1976 reflect some adjustments being made to offset high land costs. The dairy industry is relying more heavily on feeding rather than grazing to save the cost of providing pasture. Silage corn production has increased 166% in the last few years and higher imports of hay are reported. Feed lots for cattle finishing are more common. Broiler production, another intensive enterprise, has increased 20% a year. Other types of intensive farming with significant increases include greenhouse production (+254%), mushroom farming, and nursery production (+436%). Each of these intensive enterprises requires considerable specialized skills of full-time operators.
Other economic problems faced by Valley farmers include high labour costs which affect the berry and vegetable industries, and competition from American vegetable imports. Vegetable producers must ensure constant levels of production at reasonable prices achievable only with the use of greenhouses which are costly energy users. Expensive diking and underdraining is necessary in many areas as well as irrigation systems. As a result of these costs, capital investment levels are high on Valley farms, averaging $16,842 per improved hectare or $189,000 per farm, of which 88% is absorbed by land and building costs and property improvements.⁴

One of the consequences of these rising costs has been a significant decline in the number of farms whose annual sales are between $5000 and $25,000 (See Table I).⁵ Farms have tended to polarize toward either the high sales of the successful commercial farms with full-time operators or the low sales of $1200 to $5000 of the hobby farms whose owners generate the family income elsewhere. Increasing specialization and sales through marketing boards requiring a certain scale of production have meant the marginal, part-time farm of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s can no longer generate reasonable profits for the owners and increasingly these farms become the hobby farms of the 1970s and 1980s.
TABLE I
PERCENTAGE OF CENSUS FARMS BY ECONOMIC CLASS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$1200-5000</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$5000-10,000</td>
<td>26,53</td>
<td>16,55</td>
<td>11,33</td>
<td>10,22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,000-25,000</td>
<td>27,39</td>
<td>39,55</td>
<td>22,33</td>
<td>12,22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over $25,000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Census Farm: $1200 + sales

Institutional Factors

Probably the most significant factor affecting the supply of hobby farm land in the last ten years has been the establishment of the agricultural land reserves in 1973. The circumstances leading to this provincial zoning legislation is discussed in detail elsewhere, but basically the legislation grew from an awareness of the serious and increasing rates of farmland conversion in a province with a very limited supply of agricultural land. As more and more farmland was "lost", particularly in the Lower Fraser Valley which provided most of the vegetable, dairy, egg and specialty production in the province, the future viability of the agricultural industry was in question. The province was reluctant to depend on imported food supplies and the industries linked to agricultural production such as food processing were endangered.
There was evidence that encroaching urban uses had a very negative effect on the farm industry in the rural-urban fringe. A Greater Vancouver Regional District report on the farm situation in Delta in 1972 states the many problems associated with changes in the agricultural environment "taken collectively, extended over a lengthy period and coupled with the impact of massive land assemblies in the area . . . have had unusually damaging effects upon the Delta farmers' outlook." The problems identified included difficulties and delays in getting produce to market because of traffic levels; the banning of farm vehicles from highways crossing the area, making equipment moves between fields impossible; the isolation of some farm units in areas predominantly industrial and residential; the migration of feed, fertilizer and equipment distributors further up the Valley; and the uncertainty of land leases. By 1973 only 47% of the farmland in the area was still owned by the operators with the rest registered to absentee landlords who were awaiting optimum times to develop the properties. The condition of the farmland registered to non-farmers was described as "deplorable" by the report, as the owners had no interest in improving the land resource and those leasing it could not justify any expenditures for fertilizers in view of the short term nature of the leases and the uncertainty of renewal. The viability of farming in Delta, as well as in other parts of the Valley, was in serious doubt by 1973.
It was evidence of farmers' defeatism in the face of uncertainty as the Delta farm study illustrated, that stimulated the provincial government to implement a freeze on farmland rezoning or development in December 1972. The Land Commission Act which followed in April, 1973, provided for the preservation of agricultural land in each of the province's twenty-eight regional districts through provincial zoning authority. The land within the reserves, designated Class I to IV by the Canada Land Inventory as land capable of agricultural production, was included regardless of its present use or tenure unless it was irreversibly developed.

The years since the Act passed have been filled with problems for the Land Commissioners, beginning in the early years with the task of adjusting the boundaries of the reserves to exclude marginal farmland originally included. They also had to deal with disgruntled owners of farmland, both farmers and non-farmers who demanded compensation for anticipated reductions in the value of their land. A change of government apparently weakened the commitment to preserving agricultural land, particularly since 1977 when the decision making powers of the Land Commission were seriously eroded by allowing appeals for exclusion of land from the reserves to be made directly to the Cabinet. This has led to increased political pressures and the subsequent removal of land under controversial circumstances. However, the current Chairman of the Land Commission, Dr. Mills Clarke,
suggests, "In spite of the controversies that have swirled around the agricultural land reserves, critics and commissioners agreed it has succeeded in saving a great deal of agricultural land that would otherwise now be subdivision."

The most important consequence of this legislation for hobby farming has been the development restrictions placed on farmland within the reserve. Farmers reaching retirement age or deciding to sell marginal properties no longer have the option of selling to speculators or buyers for residential, commercial or industrial development. The number of possible buyers has been considerably limited to those who wish to use farmland to farm. Some property is sold to neighbouring commercial farmers who wish to expand their operations, but the farm unit is not subdividable so properties with houses and farm buildings are too expensive for those farmers seeking a few additional acres of pasture or cropland. Because of high startup costs and the economic problems of the farm industry there are very few new farmers entering the industry and seeking out property, particularly properties small in size or marginal in quality. The obvious buyers then become the hobby farmers who are happy to buy a small sized property with a house, barn, outbuildings, pasture and cropland. The hobby farm buyer plays an essential role in keeping the land market of the Valley healthy, for who else is the retiring farmer likely to sell to? Those wishing to hobby farm are ensured of a steady supply of farm properties as the number of commercial farms in the Valley steadily
declines and marginal farms become less and less profitable. Hobby farming is a very natural consequence of the factors outlined above. The historic land holding pattern of many small sized farms has persisted through the hundred years of agricultural development in the Valley. The environmental circumstances allow for comparative ease of production and make possible a variety of enterprises, yet requires sensitive management skills to cope with the complexities of a particular site. There is a trend to intensification in Valley agriculture. Economic circumstances, particularly high land costs, have necessitated inputs and techniques that will ensure higher yields from every unit of land and have forced out the small, marginal commercial farms of earlier times that can no longer compete successfully in today's highly technical, rationalized agriculture. The agricultural land reserve system has limited the marketing possibilities of farmlands to purchasers willing to farm, of whom the hobby farmer is the most likely buyer. The historical, environmental, economic and institutional factors described above can be traced in the development of hobby farming in the entire Lower Fraser Valley and are clearly identifiable in the district of Surrey, the study area of this paper.

Circumstances Within the Study Area of Surrey

The district of Surrey, a region of 343 square kilometers, stretches from the American border in the south to
the Fraser River in the north and is flanked by Delta on the west and Langley on the east (see Map 1). It is situated about 25 to 30 kilometers from the Vancouver core, well within the forty to sixty minute commuting time zone frequently used to define the urban fringe of major cities. Like many urban-rural fringe communities, Surrey is undergoing rapid population growth and is experiencing serious land use conflicts. It has been described as an area exhibiting urban sprawl with all the negative connotations associated with that term: a haphazard mixture of juxtaposed, conflicting land uses such as trailer parks and dairy farms, shopping centres and blueberry fields, housing developments and broiler operations, drive-in theatres and beef feed lots. The 1982 population of 160,887 is a dramatic increase from the population of 1940, approximately 15,000 most of whom lived on farms. Today only 5500 people, 3% of the population, live on agriculturally zoned land.

The physical landscape of Surrey is comprised of the floodplains of the Serpentine and Nicomekl Rivers, the Campbell River valley in the south and an extensive upland area in the form of a series of low hills with elevations less than 120 meters (see Map 2). The best farm land is located on 4000 hectares of lowland between the Serpentine and Nicomekl Rivers although this area is susceptible to winter flooding, particularly during high tides in Boundary Bay. Fairly good soils of gravelly and sandy loam are found
on 6400 hectares of the Hazelmere Valley, drained by the Campbell River, and the Mud Bay uplands north of the Serpentine although these soils are subject to excessive leaching and drainage.

At present, approximately 9300 hectares, 31% of Surrey's area, are held in farmland, somewhat less than the 11,000 hectares of 1961. Most of the farms are located in the easterly portion of Surrey and more specifically in the southeast around the town of Cloverdale. The Municipality of Surrey uses the agricultural land reserve boundaries to define land zoned agricultural. Not all land within the boundaries is currently being farmed and many farms are located on land outside the agricultural zoning. Hobby farms particularly are likely to be on the more marginal land outside the boundaries. Only 47% of the hobby farms in the sample drawn for this study are located inside the A.L.R. boundaries and even fewer, 27%, are located on the Serpentine-Nicomekl lowlands or in the Hazelmere Valley.

Farming is a traditional land use in Surrey that began the day in 1860 when James Kennedy rowed across the Fraser River from New Westminster, cleared a trail south a mile from the river bank and began clearing bush for his farm. Although other settlers soon joined him, thirty years later there were still only a few tiny communities scattered over the district, including two still agricultural today—Hall's Prairie and Clover Valley. The opening of a farmers' market in New Westminster, the building of a bridge across
the Fraser, the construction of the B.C. Electric Railway and finally the formation of the Surrey Farmers' Co-operative Association in 1921 gradually developed the agricultural potential of the area. Like much of the rest of the Valley, the early mixed farms eventually gave way to the specialized commercial farms of today.

There are relatively few commercial farms in Surrey in comparison to other areas of the Valley such as Matsqui and Chilliwack. The 1981 property tax assessment rolls list 836 owners of farm assessed property, that is, land producing at least $1600 of farm sales annually. Of these owners, 670 are resident family owners but, based on the sample drawn for interviewing in this study, only about one-third of these are full-time commercial farmers. The commercial farms include about forty dairy farms each milking between 100 and 200 cows, four or five beef feed lots, a number of broiler and egg enterprises, about twenty nurseries, a large number of greenhouses and mushroom farms and about 1200 hectares of vegetable farms. Other products including berries, fruit, honey, and livestock such as sheep, pigs and goats are common hobby farms. The farm area centres on Cloverdale which provides a number of farm related services including feed stores, tack shops, veterinary services and, until very recently, the Surrey farmers' co-op.

The Surrey farmers face all the frustrations of rural-urban fringe farming discussed previously. Probably the
most serious farm problem in the district is the periodic flooding of the best farm land, the floodplains of the Serpentine and Nicomekl Rivers. Although most of this area has been dyked, the drainage ditches and dykes are in very deteriorated condition and constant clearing for residential development on the uplands has worsened the run-off problem. The solutions to water problems involve four levels of government, federal, provincial, regional and municipal, and the cost sharing possibilities have long been under study and debated endlessly. The municipality of Surrey is reluctant to invest in drainage improvements for areas of the district where tax collection is very low because of preferential farm taxation. Farmers interviewed in this study complained of the very low level of services they received from the municipality. There is little doubt that the administration of Surrey is growth and development oriented and sees agricultural viability as a low planning priority.

Bryant, in his analysis of the effects of urbanization on farming viability, identifies Surrey as a transition zone between what he describes as the "healthy" farm zone in the eastern end of the Valley and the deteriorated zone in the western end close to Vancouver. There is still a reasonably strong farm base in Surrey but it is definitely a farm area threatened by the continuing expansion of Greater Vancouver. There is some question as to whether Surrey farmland can survive the combination of political and development industry pressures for conversion to other uses as the
rezoning of farmland is constantly occurring in areas outside the agricultural land reserves. Surrey's hobby farms have an important role to play in preserving the farmland resource and the agricultural industry in this area a role which will become identifiable after the nature of hobby farm land use and the intentions and attitudes of hobby farm owners are discussed more fully in the chapters ahead.
NOTES

1. Compiled from 1881 Census, Occupational listings.

2. Gibbard (Early History of the Fraser Valley 1808-1885) notes this distinction was made as early as 1825 by James MacMillan of the Hudson's Bay Company. It is a useful differentiation that has since been used by others including the Regional Farmland Study (Central Fraser Valley Regional District, 1972) from which the following material was drawn.


8. The Land Commission Act of 1973 had other objectives and powers including the preservation of green belt land around urban areas and the preservation of parkland for recreation. The Act was amended in 1977 to delete the latter provisions and become solely involved with the preservation of agricultural land.


10. This and the following historical material is drawn from Treleaven, Fern, The Surrey Story, Surrey Museum and Historical Society, Cloverdale, 1978.

CHAPTER THREE

THE HOBBY FARMERS

Who are the hobby farmers and why do they choose to farm as a hobby? Are hobby farmers a distinctive and homogeneous group with similar attitudes and motivations for practising a rural lifestyle? Or are they simply a diverse and heterogeneous group of individuals who happen through various circumstances to be similarly engaged in farming?

This chapter explores the social characteristics and attitudes of the sample group of Surrey hobby farmers. An attempt is made to establish the degree of homogeneity within the group in terms of socioeconomic factors, background and origins and political orientations. The qualities of rural life that attract hobby farmers are identified as well as the goals they perceive as achievable through hobby farming.

The setting that hobby farmers choose in which to carry out their lifestyle is discussed in terms of general location in the rural-urban fringe, the proximity to Vancouver and in the immediate environment of their own property. By identifying the features that were important to hobby farmers in choosing a particular property, and the improvements they subsequently made to that property, insight is gained into the attitudes of hobby farmers toward agriculture and rural
living. It also provides evidence of the level of commitment hobby farmers are likely to make toward preserving farmland, the agricultural industry and the rural way of life. The preservation of farmland and the maintenance of family farms were central objectives of the agricultural land reserve legislation. Perhaps the hobby farmer has a special role to play in fulfilling those objectives.

WHO IS THE SURREY HOBBY FARMER?

Age and Marital Status

The hobby farm group included both single people and families and represented all age groups. Eight farms were owned by single people, two by single men in their twenties and six by elderly widows and widowers. Four elderly couples owned farms and thirty-three farms were owned by middle-aged people, many with teen-aged children living at home. The remaining twenty-three farm families consisted of younger couples with school-aged children, toddlers and babies. Every age group was represented and no age group predominated.

Occupational Status

A wide range of employment classes are represented in the occupations of Surrey hobby farmers, from unskilled labouring jobs to professional and administrative positions. However, the Surrey hobby farmers, like hobby farm groups in other studies, have a disproportionate number of their
group in managerial and professional employment. The occupations of the principal wage earner of the fifty-two Surrey farm families currently employed is shown in Table II.

TABLE II
OCCUPATION OF PRINCIPAL WAGE EARNERS OF SAMPLE HOBBY FARM GROUP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class of Employment</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managerial, Administrative</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(including company owners)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales, Clerical</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machine operators</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified (blue collar)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thirty-seven percent of the sample hobby farm operators were in administrative positions, were self-employed professionals or owned a company employing several workers. Seventeen spouses were also employed in teaching, nursing and a variety of managerial, clerical, sales and service occupations.
Hobby farm groups in Canada and the United States have consistently large proportions of managerial and professional employment. An American study surveyed 277 families who had recently moved back to the land across the United States.\(^1\) The group had much higher than average educational status with over 75% having at least one year of university education and those with professional or managerial occupations comprised 30.7% of the group. Troughton reported 43% of the London area hobby farm operators and 20% of their spouses had managerial-administrative or professional employment.\(^2\) Carvalho found the Winnipeg exurbanites were over-represented in the managerial-professional-technical group and noted the dramatic increase in the proportion of those with managerial and administrative positions in the sample from 16% of the total between 1956 and 1961 to 35% after 1971.\(^3\)

The Surrey sample group also shows a statistically significant increase in the managerial-administrative-professional group in the last decade. Only 18% of those who began hobby farming before 1973 were in this class but 45% of the post-1973 group were included in it (see Table III, page 50). Hobby farming has a wide appeal and is increasingly attracting better educated, higher income earners who can be somewhat flexible in their time and can afford both the initial high land cost and the subsequent costs of improvements, maintenance and farm operation.
TABLE III
PROPORTION OF HOBBY FARMERS IN MANAGERIAL-PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT CLASS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Managerial-Professional</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before 1973</td>
<td>7 (18%)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973 and after</td>
<td>13 (45%)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi square = 5.83 with 1 degree of freedom

Significant at .02 level

N.B. 1973 was the year the Agricultural Land Reserves were established.

This growing appeal of rural living to a wider group of people is also documented in literature assessing the broader urban to rural movements now underway. De Jong and Humphrey found metropolitan to non-metropolitan migrants were younger and of higher socioeconomic status than the total population, and noted that these characteristics became increasingly evident during the decade of the study. While Surrey hobby farmers cannot be typified as young, they certainly exemplify an increasingly high level of socioeconomic status.

Urban Background of Hobby Farmers

Most of the hobby farm group moved from non-farm residences to their present farm properties. Forty-eight
families, 70% of the sample group, moved from homes in Vancouver or its suburbs, Burnaby, Richmond, Delta, Langley, the North Shore, or other parts of Surrey. Fourteen of the remaining twenty owners had immediate past farm addresses in the Lower Fraser Valley while six were from the Prairie provinces and European countries. Fifteen families in this farm group had lived on hobby farms previously while five had lived on commercial farms.

However, urban origin in terms of past addresses alone is somewhat misleading because only eighteen families were fully urban in that no family member had ever lived on a farm. The remainder had at least one family member, and in many cases both husband and wife, who had lived on a farm in the past, usually in childhood. For many owning a hobby farm was a return to rural life after a period of city living, sometimes an extended period of twenty or thirty years. A few of these people expressed their desire to have a farm like the one they had grown up on in Richmond, or Saskatchewan, or Italy. One French-Canadian hobby farmer who made syrup from the maple trees on his property admitted, "I'm reliving my childhood in Quebec."

This often nostalgic return to farming has interesting implications in terms of both farm management and expectations about the quality of rural life. These ideas will be discussed more fully later, but perhaps it is sufficient to say at this point that individual attitudes to farm life
could sometimes be understood in terms of pleasant childhood memories rather than more realistic appraisals of the current farming situation.

Length of Ownership

Hobby farming has been described as a recent development in rural land ownership. Layton found 53% of farm owners around London, Ontario, were hobby farmers in 1971 compared with only 18% ten years earlier and 6% twenty years before, making them a very recent group of arrivals in comparison to the full-time and part-time farm owners. The length of ownership of Surrey hobby farmers varied from less than two years to life for two owners who had inherited the family farm. The mean number of years of ownership was 12.7 with 76% of the group arriving within the last fifteen years. Those hobby farmers with previous non-farm addresses and no farm backgrounds for either husband or wife were the most recent arrivals, averaging 9.3 years of ownership. This suggests rural life is becoming more appealing and more accessible to a wider segment of the population.

Political Orientations

Although hobby farmers were not asked to specify their political affiliations, a surrogate measure was provided by responses regarding government farm policies and attitudes toward the agricultural land reserve system. Those with a conservative viewpoint and a free enterprise orientation were identified by comments that called for fewer restrictions
on farm operation, less government involvement, the removal of all subsidies and supports to farmers and the abolition of marketing boards. This conservative stance was suggested in comments such as, "I'm dead against all government help," "I don't want any help or any restrictions," "I don't believe in handouts," "government involvement increases costs to all" and "the less government the better for us all."

The members of this conservative group were also opposed to the agricultural land reserve system although only nine farmers were philosophically opposed to this type of land use legislation which they perceived as discriminatory or a restriction on personal rights and freedoms. Others felt the B.C. system was unfairly imposed or poorly administered. A few suggested there should never be government controls on land as it invariably forced up land prices and interfered with the land market.

The majority of owners favoured government control over agricultural land use and farm marketing and operation. This group supported policies which provided economic assistance to farmers in the form of lower interest rates, crop insurance programmes, farm development incentives and subsidies to cover machinery and fuel purchases. Many clearly distinguished between the needs of full-time, commercial farmers and the part-time and hobby groups which they felt did not require or deserve to receive government assistance. However, a few felt small scale farming was desirable and should be encouraged by government policies, not necessarily the same as those needed for large-scale operations.
The majority group was also strongly in favour of agricultural zoning as an appropriate mechanism to preserve agricultural land. A few called for a speculation tax on unused farmland. The most extreme expression of this stance was articulated by one owner who felt all farm land was a public good and therefore should not be privately owned. He felt farm land should be banked and leased to those willing to use and care for it on an ecologically sound basis that would ensure its preservation for future generations.

The hobby farmers sympathetic to government involvement in agricultural land use also showed strong support of the A.L.R. legislation. Twenty-seven respondents were completely in favour of agricultural zoning and typical comments included: "We need all the farmland we can get," "too much has been lost already," and "not another square inch of farmland should be lost." Other owners were generally supportive of the legislation but felt there were problems with the original boundary designations and the subsequent administration of the reserves. The most commonly identified qualifications were the limitation of using physical capability as the single measure to decide inclusion of land, and the susceptibility to political pressures for the removal of land. Some felt land that was too marginal in quality and too small in parcel size should not have been included.

The hobby farms in the sample were fairly evenly divided between locations inside and outside the A.L.R. boundaries.
Each owner was asked whether he agreed with his own designation. Fourteen owners didn't know whether their land was in the reserve or didn't correctly identify their designation. Eight of these owners incorrectly assumed the farm designation for property tax purposes meant they were agriculturally zoned. Eighteen farmers disagreed with their own designation. Eleven felt their farm should not be in the reserve because of its size or marginal quality. A rather surprising number, seven owners whose farms were not in the reserve, felt they should be included in the boundaries because they strongly favoured the inclusion of all useable farmland, including their own. By voluntarily restricting all future uses of their land, this group obviously displayed a very strong interest in agricultural land preservation.

It was hypothesized that there might be differences in attitude toward the land reserve system between those whose land was in or out of the reserve or between those who purchased their land before or after the imposition of the restrictive zoning: However, as Table IV suggests, there was no statistically significant difference between the groups for either measure. Those favouring the agricultural land zoning were as likely to be within the reserves as outside and were as likely to have purchased their land previous to imposition of the boundaries as afterwards. If the owners' responses can be trusted, this suggests personal circumstances had little bearing on orientation toward the
preservation of agricultural land. The variations in opinions simply reflected variations in philosophical and political orientations. This suggests diversity in political viewpoints and attitudes as well as in socioeconomic characteristics.

### TABLE IV

**ORIENTATION TOWARD AGRICULTURAL LAND RESERVE SYSTEM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location of Farm Unit</th>
<th>Strong Agreement</th>
<th>Qualified Agreement</th>
<th>Disagreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In reserve</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside reserve</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi square = .83 with 2 degrees of freedom
Not significant at the .05 level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time of Purchase</th>
<th>Strong Agreement</th>
<th>Qualified Agreement</th>
<th>Disagreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before A.L.R.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After A.L.R.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi square = .61 with 2 degrees of freedom
Not significant at the .05 level
WHY DO HOBBY FARMERS CHOOSE A RURAL LIFESTYLE?

Qualities of Rural Living

The Surrey hobby farmers, a fairly diverse group in terms of socioeconomic characteristics and political orientations, have all chosen to live in the countryside. What qualities of rural life entice hobby farmers to move from their urban homes to a different setting and way of life in the countryside? Can similarities be identified in lifestyle preferences and goals?

Owners were asked to identify positive qualities of their rural lifestyle in an open ended question that brought both single and multiple responses (see Table V).

The most commonly mentioned attribute was the opportunity for privacy, peace and quiet and seclusion typically expressed in comments such as "I'm away from it all" and "When I drive into my yard I'm in a different world." The second most common quality identified was the desirability of a farm setting for raising children. Usually this was expressed as the opportunity for teaching children the value of hard work through the care of animals or doing general farm chores. It also allowed children the "freedom to roam" in a safe environment where they "can't get into trouble." A satisfaction with rural life in terms of living in an uncrowded environment with "open areas" and lots of space was also expressed by many. This desire for "elbow room" is closely linked to the desire for privacy and the opportunity to live in a healthy environment. The other
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Number Mentioning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity for privacy, seclusion, peace and quiet</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good environment for raising children</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncrowded environment: space, open area, &quot;lots of room&quot;</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to grow own food, self-sufficiency</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy environment: fresh/clean air, opportunity for outdoor life</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to keep animals</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always wanted to live on a farm (or return to a farm)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good neighbours</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to city amenities but in country</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence, freedom, quality of life, &quot;mental sanity&quot;</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
frequently mentioned attribute was the ability to become self-sufficient or at least to grow as much of one's food supply as possible.

The Surrey farmers' perceptions of positive qualities of a rural lifestyle are similar to ones identified by respondents in other studies. Coffin and Lipsey found self-sufficiency in terms of ownership of land and food production was identified by almost half their respondents as the key attraction for moving back to the land. Other frequently mentioned goals were to pursue specific pastimes such as outdoor activities or a cottage industry and to achieve a more peaceful, relaxed and simple lifestyle with the possibility of freedom and independence. Troughton lists the following attributes as most important to Ontario hobby farmers: fresh air, privacy, peace and quiet, healthy environment, a good place for children and a chance to grow one's own food. This study found some significant differences in the ranking of important values among full-time, part-time and hobby farmers, particularly in the importance of a peaceful setting and an opportunity for food production for hobby farmers and the relative lack of importance hobby farmers attached to traditional rural social life, the family farm way of life and good neighbours. These were all ranked higher by full-time and part-time farmers.

Many Surrey farmers were totally absorbed in their farm development and management. Some mentioned they were involved in no "outside" activities and never took a vacation
from their farm. This total commitment at times bordered on social isolation from the larger community. Almost half the sample farm owners desired privacy and seclusion and only 10% mentioned the importance of neighbourly contacts or rural community feeling. Many had little knowledge of the activities of their neighbours and there was no suggestion of communality or the sharing of ideas or knowledge. They didn't generally seek help or advice from outside but took pride in reaching goals by self-discovery and experimentation. This do-it-yourself approach is consistent with a philosophy of self-sufficiency and seclusion.

This social isolation is noted in two other studies. Coffin and Lipsey found the back to the landers in their sample group declared an intention to maintain social contacts after they left the city but after their move, "while most did not want to be isolated, many were."8 Punter also notes the generally few social contacts within the local area of Toronto area exurbanites and suggests owners spent considerable time on their own property pursuing their own interests.9 He also notes "exurbanites are not known for their willingness to share their amenities . . . because this conflicts with their desire for peace and privacy."10

Self-imposed separation is also frequently reflected in a desire for self-sufficiency in terms of growing and raising one's own food. This seemed an important goal to some although full self-sufficiency is very difficult to achieve. An adequate annual supply of protein and dairy
products and fruit and vegetables had been achieved by three of the Surrey farm owners but most were far from realizing this goal. The desire for self-sufficiency reflects the appeal of separation or isolation as it is a deliberate attempt to remove oneself from depending on the larger society. This survivalist mentality can possibly be interpreted as a fear of the future or an insecurity associated with dependency on others.

The Setting

Surrey hobby farmers perceive themselves as truly rural. Some writers characterize hobby farmers as having strong urban ties but this was clearly not the case with Surrey farmers. The farm operators were asked to identify how frequently they travelled to Vancouver and for what purpose. From their responses it was obvious they displayed a strong anti-urban bias and perceived Vancouver as crowded, dirty, noisy and dangerous. A few suggested vandalism, theft and trespassing in rural areas was insignificant in comparison to what was likely to occur in the city. Only twelve owners worked daily in Vancouver and three of these volunteered the comment they would much prefer to remain on their farms. Three women interviewed said they liked to shop and visit friends in Vancouver and five families made occasional trips to Vancouver for hockey games and theatre. Almost half of those interviewed said they very seldom or never visited Vancouver and their comments
suggest their negativity toward the city: "We don't ever go if we can help it," "We go as little as possible," "I feel claustrophobic in the city," "We never go unless we're desperate," and "I hate the city." Most of the hobby farmers had lived for some time in the city and had chosen to leave. The "pull" of the countryside was probably matched by a variety of "push" factors from the city. Many of this group obviously felt uncomfortable in a stressful and crowded urban milieu. Some were escaping from the pressures associated with urban life and were seeking the open space and peaceful seclusion of the rural environment to achieve a more satisfying lifestyle.

WHAT SETTING DO HOBBY FARMERS CHOOSE FOR THEIR RURAL LIFESTYLE?

Location

Surrey's hobby farmers have generally positive feelings toward their rural-urban fringe environment. They perceive their setting as rural rather than suburban yet a few are very aware of the accessibility of this location to shopping centres and freeways. Thirteen owners identified the location of their property as its most valuable feature. The owners were asked to identify specific positive qualities of their area. Thirty-two mentioned privacy, seclusion and peace and quiet as the most desirable characteristic. Almost one third of the group mentioned space and open area
and a further sixteen commented on the fresh air and clean, healthy surroundings.

The contentment hobby farmers feel toward their environment suggests they are not particularly disturbed by the rapid changes and land use conflicts of an urban fringe setting. Unlike commercial farmers who are frustrated by the changing nature of their area, hobby farmers have chosen to live in this setting. As a group they have come more recently when the freeways, shopping malls and subdivisions were in place nearby and are less affected by the restrictions that an increasingly urban setting imposes on agriculture such as limitations on noise levels and spraying restrictions, problems of moving farm equipment on busy roads and vandalism reported by the Delta farmers referred to previously. Over one third of those interviewed could not identify a single problem associated with hobby farming in the rural-urban fringe.

However, not all were content. Thirty-five farmers identified problems that were locational in nature rather than agricultural. The complaints could all be considered incompatibilities with nearby land uses and were fairly evenly divided between negative effects from commercial farms and problems associated with neighbouring urban uses. The close proximity of commercial farms brought complaints of odours, dust and noise associated specifically with feedlots, mushroom farms and poultry farms. Leaching and run-off from next door farms were mentioned by three owners and
two complained of cattle wandering into their fields from nearby dairy farms.

Those rural residents identified by hobby farmers as "city people" living in subdivisions or on one-acre holdings were accused of stealing, vandalism and trespassing. Six farmers said dogs belonging to "city people" were allowed to run loose harassing livestock and killing chickens. Other "urban" problems included spraying complaints, the spread of weeds from non-farm properties and speeding and increased traffic levels on rural roads because of recreational land uses such as the golf course at Hazelmere and the race track.

Although almost all hobby farmers were enjoying their community at present, many expressed uncertainty about the future of rural Surrey and were pessimistic about overcoming anticipated conflicts. There seemed to be little confidence present agricultural zoning would be in place much longer. Owners were aware of the rapidly changing nature of areas outside the Agricultural Land Reserves and rumours of impending changes were apparent everywhere in the district. Almost everyone interviewed had heard about something going on "just down the road," a piggery, an oil depot, a shopping centre, a golf course extension, or a condominium development. Many assumed the area would inevitably become urbanized and they would be forced to move. Some no doubt were anticipating the rising property values that would inevitably accompany land use change.
Features Important in Choice of Property

In order to assess the agricultural orientations of the hobby farm group it was necessary to establish what particular features had attracted them to choose a specific property and what improvements they had subsequently made to their farm. It was assumed that owners committed to farming would choose property with desirable farm features as well as amenity features and would invest in making whatever improvements were necessary to make the farm a smoothly functioning and viable production unit. The owners were asked to identify the feature or features of the property that were important to them in the decision to purchase (see Table VI, page 66).

The findings are rather interesting because all owners were seeking a farm, rather than just a rural home, and yet very few mentioned any farm features as important in their choice. Only 16 of 95 responses were features of a farm nature such as good soil, good drainage or a good barn. The location and price of the property and a whole range of amenity features such as a pretty setting, view, stream on the property, type of house were all mentioned more frequently than any farm feature. In view of the fact that owners intended to farm when they bought the property, this suggests they felt the physical quality of the land was consistent throughout the district and was therefore not an important variable, or they felt as long as they had a piece
### TABLE VI
FEATURES IDENTIFIED AS IMPORTANT IN THE CHOICE OF A PROPERTY
(Arranged in order of frequency mentioned)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Location (close to Vancouver, near freeway, near workplace, close to relatives)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Attractive physical setting (pretty area, lots of trees, pleasant looking)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Size, type of quality of house</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Affordable price</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Privacy (quiet area, secluded)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. View</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Water features on property (pond, stream)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Good drainage (high land, dry land)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. &quot;Quality of land&quot;</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Appropriate zoning for intended use</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Good soil</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Good investment</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Others (mentioned once each) good barn, sunny property, good barn, good farm layout, right size, park across street, good for horses, had artesian well, history of the area intriguing, reminded of former farm, farm improvement possibilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Don't know, not sure, chance, inheritance</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of farmland they could choose to develop it as they wished. Both of these perceptions are inaccurate and reflect a certain naivete on the part of the buyer.

Previous Status of Property

Hobby farmers have sometimes been accused of outbidding farmers for viable farm units and then allowing valuable farmland to be wasted through underutilization. The owners were questioned about the status of their property at the time of purchase to compare types and levels of usage before and after purchase. While some of the responses were vague and probably inaccurate the findings are suggestive. Only twelve of the sixty-eight properties were commercial farms operated on a full-time basis by the previous owner and three of these had been subdivided just prior to purchase. One 32 acre hobby farm had been part of a 104 acre unit and two five acre holdings were both subdivisions of 20 acre farms (see Table 7, page 68).

Twenty-two properties were not farmed by the previous owner. Eleven of these were residences only although at least two and probably more had been farmed at some earlier time. These previously residential properties were relatively recent purchases and had been owned an average of 7.7 years. The other eleven farms were undeveloped land when purchased and were subsequently improved by clearing and filling. Only four of these were recent purchases, the newest being a 1977 purchase of boggy, bush covered lowland that has required considerable work on the part of the owner.
TABLE VII
PREVIOUS STATUS OF HOBBY FARM PROPERTY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hobby farms purchased before December 1972</th>
<th>Hobby farms purchased after December 1972</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time: 10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobby farm: 10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-farm,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential: 3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Farm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undeveloped: 7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Status undetermined 6)

The remaining farms were previously farmed on a part-time or hobby basis. These too tended to be fairly recent purchases with 18 of the 28 bought within the last ten years. It was impossible to determine how intensively these farms were used as the responses were vague and uncertain such as, "He kept a few cattle like I do" or "I think the last owner sold his hay." It is very likely that some of these were commercial part-time farms, more intensively farmed and more productive than now. Some owners described their land as "neglected" or "run down" at time of purchase. It seems reasonable to speculate that many of these farms were
economically marginal enterprises which became non-competitive to the point of sale. A few had been bought from retirees.

Since the imposition of the land freeze in December 1972, there have been twelve new farms developed and only two farms, previously full-time operations, put to less intensive use. This is a rather interesting finding because if it can be generalized it suggests a trend to increasing numbers of producing farms in this area. The number of Surrey farms reported in the 1976 Census was 516, twelve fewer than the 528 of the 1971 Census, but the 1981 property tax assessment roll lists over 800 farms. Confirmation of an increase of this magnitude must await the results of the most recent census but this increase almost certainly reflects the growing number of hobby farms within Surrey. It does not, however, suggest either an increase in the number of commercial farms or an increase in agricultural production within the district as many hobby farms are operating at minimum levels of production to achieve farm status for taxation purposes. It simply means a greater number of properties are being used as farms and more people are involved in farming.

**Hobby Farm Size and Land Quality**

The small size of many hobby farms limits the possibility of their becoming viable commercial units. Seventy-six percent of those in the sample were ten acres or less.
TABLE VIII
HOBBY FARM SIZE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 acres or less</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10 acres</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 20 acres</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 to 51 acres</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clearly a viable farm size is linked to the type of production being attempted. Most commercial farms with fruit, vegetables, dairying or livestock need considerably more than ten acres to achieve reasonable financial returns. Small acreages are sufficient for intensive enterprises such as mushroom farms, feed lots and poultry operations but these require capitalization, specialized equipment and technical skills beyond the means of hobby farmers.

Hobby farmers understood the size limitations of their farms. When asked to speculate on possible purchasers for their farm only five of the sixty-eight felt their units were large enough to be commercially farmed and three of these owners had relatively large properties. Many of those questioned commented their property was "too small for anything but hobby farming."
When the small size of hobby farm properties is considered in conjunction with the quality of land the problem of economic viability as commercial units becomes more obvious. Owners were asked to rate their soil quality and condition with particular reference to drainage. Only ten farmers rated both the soil quality and drainage and "good", "very good" or "excellent". Almost half the group rated their soil quality as "fair" or "poor" mentioning problems of rocky or gravelly composition. Fifty-four percent rated their drainage as "fair" or "poor" mentioning low, swampy areas, rock or clay layers under thin topsoil and summer drought on slopes. Those with upland farms often had good drainage but infertile, stony soil while owners of rich peat and loam bottom land on the flood plain had frequent winter flooding and poor drainage for several months of the year. Only nine farms had underdraining, an effective but expensive solution to drainage problems. The usual hobby farm response to drainage problems was to widen, deepen and clean out existing ditches, an inexpensive but far from satisfactory long term solution.

The actual land capability of Surrey's farmland confirms the hobby farmers' assessment of their land. There is no Class I land and only very small parcels of Class II and Class III land, mostly located between the Nicomekl and Serpentine Rivers. Most Surrey farmland is Class IV and Class V, described as land with soil and climate limitations
demanding special management and seriously restricting the range of crops, possibly limiting the land to forage crop usage. Manning and Eddy found 93.6% of their farm sample, randomly drawn from within the Surrey A.L.R. boundaries, had predominant agricultural capability ratings of Class IV or Class V.

The physical quality of the land resource was not an important factor in the choice of a particular farm property for most owners interviewed. Only eleven hobby farmers mentioned soil quality, adequate drainage or quality of the land as a feature attracting them when they were seeking a property to purchase (see Table VI, page 66). It is likely many owners neglected to make an adequate assessment of the land quality before purchase. Some farmers expressed frustration in dealing with the limitations of the land and were disappointed with crop yields. Some undoubtedly had unrealistic expectations.

Improvements Made to Properties

The improvements hobby farmers made to their properties varied considerably in types and in investment levels of money, time, and energy. Farm improvements such as clearing, ditching and barn construction were fairly well balanced with amenity improvements such as landscaping and home renovation (see Table IX, page 73). All farms had been improved to some extent since purchase although eight had only minimal changes. Eleven farms were developed from raw land so were
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESIDENCE AND AMENITY IMPROVEMENTS</th>
<th>FARM IMPROVEMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constructed new house</td>
<td>Constructed new barn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renovated house</td>
<td>Renovated barn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(addition of rooms, updating)</td>
<td>(re-roofed, increased or decreased size, cement floor added)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscaping</td>
<td>Constructed new outbuildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(extensive - 7)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paved driveway added</td>
<td>(storage sheds, chicken house, stable, greenhouse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pool added</td>
<td>Renovated/removed outbuildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis court added</td>
<td>Drainage - improvements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous ornamental additions (entrance archway, fountain)</td>
<td>ditching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>undertiling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearing - original</td>
<td>Clearing - subsequent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasture fertilization</td>
<td>Pasture reseeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- regular</td>
<td>- regular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- occasional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orchard planted</td>
<td>Orchard planted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blueberry acreage</td>
<td>Blueberry acreage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infilling, levelling</td>
<td>Infilling, levelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(well, root cellar)</td>
<td>(well, root cellar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
totally "improved" while ten others, purchased more recently, had been extensively changed and improved. Three properties were in fairly deteriorated condition with poor quality houses, untidy grounds and disintegrating outbuildings. The remaining 36 properties had moderate improvements made by the present owners.

Many owners had replaced older style frame cottages and farmhouses with modern homes or had extensively renovated and updated the existing home. The inside renovations were sometimes surprising in relation to the rustic farmhouse exterior. Almost all homes had the conveniences of suburban homes such as modern kitchens with dishwashers and microwave ovens, bedrooms with en suite bathrooms and wall to wall carpeting. Eight of the homes were of superior quality, very large, modern and well-furnished with sun rooms, games rooms, extensive lawns and gardens, patios and swimming pools. The other homes were more modest and had more practical improvements such as the addition of a bedroom or family room. Most were neatly landscaped with garden borders and ornamental shrubs. Some farms had matching paint colour and decorative trim on house, barn, stable, outbuildings and sometimes fences, unifying the property into a cohesive unit visually. The commercial farms in the area rarely reflect this, choosing instead to separate the home from the farm buildings. Perhaps this can be regarded as visual evidence of the contrasting viewpoint of two distinctive groups of landowners, the hobbyist who views
the farm as a lifestyle and the commercial farmer who sees the farm as a livelihood.

Four of five property owners had added fencing to their property. Most chose board or rail fencing, always painted, usually white. Wire fencing is cheaper to install and maintain and is more practical for farm purposes but doesn't have the aesthetic appeal of board fencing, so was seldom used at least around the visible parts of the property. People with horses used electric fencing inside the white rail paddock fencing.

The improvements of a farm nature included barn and outbuilding construction and renovation, fence building, drainage installation, brush clearing, orchard planting and pasture maintenance. Almost half the hobby farmers had built new barns and fifteen others had renovated barns. In many cases this was a replacement process with large, older, deteriorating barns being replaced with smaller, better constructed barns more appropriate to present needs. Some owners had added cement floors and re-roofed their barns but in other cases the objective seemed to be to tidy up and beautify rather than to make them more functional. Very few of the barns and outbuildings were metal sheathed in contrast to most commercial farm buildings, perhaps a hint that appearance was at least as important as practicality.
Drainage and pasture improvements were carried out extensively but perhaps in a less regular fashion than on commercial farms. Many hobby farms cleaned out ditches "when they need it" but only nine had attempted to deal with drainage problems by undertiling their fields. Many knew tiling would improve their land quality but simply dismissed it as being too expensive or costing more than it was worth. Almost all had fertilized their pastures, many on an annual basis but ten reported it "was not worth doing it." Only a few had any idea of the nutritional value of their hay crop. Three farmers reseeded a section of their land each year on a rotation basis and eight had reseeded once or more. Some said they planned to do it "when it needs it."

A rather surprising amount of tree clearing had been done. The eleven farms developed from raw land had all been cleared extensively and fifteen others had done some clearing, often the removal of scrub trees such as vine maples and alders to increase pasture size. A few had cleared several acres with contracted bulldozing for stump and rock removal and levelling. Only eight owners had planted an acre or more of trees although most had added a few fruit trees, berry bushes, ornamental evergreens and garden shrubs. It is perhaps interesting that many commented on the beautiful setting of their farms and six specifically mentioned choosing their property because there were lots of trees, and yet tree cutting was a common practice. Again
the clearing seemed to reflect a compromise between the aesthetic and the practical. One farmer mentioned his cattle needed access to four acres of woods for summer shade, so he had selectively cleared so it would "look like Stanley Park".

Perhaps the hobby farm group could be characterized as being good caretakers of agricultural land in that they maintained their land to at least a minimum level. None of the properties was totally neglected or overgrown with weeds. Many of the properties were very well cared for in aesthetic terms, painted and decorated, neatly landscaped and appealing to the eye. The cropland and pasture land was cared for on a somewhat "hit and miss" basis as need demanded and time, money and interest allowed. This casual approach to farm land care is in keeping with the hobby orientation of the owners. The farm was not needed for income purposes so the improvements were made on the basis of choice rather than economic need, and practicality and functionality were options.

The relative unimportance the Surrey owners placed on farm features in their choice of a property and the type of improvements they made are typical of hobby farmers in other parts of Canada. Found and Morley report the most commonly sought after property characteristics by exurbanites in the Toronto region were rolling or hilly terrain, winter ploughed roads, access to Toronto and streams and wood
lots on the property. Punter surveyed 500 advertisements for exurban properties from the *Toronto Daily Star* and found the most often mentioned features, and therefore presumably the most appealing to customers, were water features, wooded areas on the property, high rolling topography, scenic or picturesque setting, views and accessibility. Farm features, other than stables and barns, were tenth on the list.

Troughton found statistically significant differences among full-time, part-time and hobby farmers in the London area in both their choice of property features and in recent improvements they had made. Full-time farmers sought land that was Class One arable with tile drainage installed while hobby farmers sought property on rolling land with a stream, lake, pond, wood lot and orchard. The improvements made by full-time farmers were building silos, installing tile drainage and fencing land; part-time farmers put in fencing and renovated their homes; hobby farmers built or renovated homes, landscaped and planted trees. Clearly hobby farmers everywhere are choosing property and making improvements that hold the promise of a comfortable lifestyle in amenable surroundings. They are not simply choosing a functional setting where production possibilities are optimum and economic returns most achievable.
Summary

The hobby farmers are a fairly heterogeneous group in terms of social characteristics although a disproportionate number are employed in professional and managerial capacities. Most moved recently to their present properties from non-farm settings in urban or suburban locations but many had lived on a farm in their childhood. They showed no common political orientations although most of them favoured, at least philosophically, the provincial zoning legislation to preserve agricultural land.

The opportunity to live in a quiet, safe, uncrowded area seemed the most important quality of rural living to the hobby farmers. In this relaxed setting they felt they could be somewhat independent of others by growing their own food, caring for their animals and raising their children with the values they espoused. For some, creating and managing the farm became totally absorbing, and this, along with a desire for privacy and independence, tended to isolate them from the community.

Surrey hobby farmers are generally satisfied with their rural-urban fringe location although some complained of nuisance factors associated with neighbouring land uses such as feed lots. The sample group considered themselves to be a rural population and displayed a somewhat surprising degree of anti-urbanism. The urban ties, so commonly mentioned in other studies, had been severed with the move to
the country by most of the Surrey sample group. They apparently had tried and rejected city life as stressful and unpleasant.

Particular properties were usually chosen on the basis of their amenity features such as a view, an attractive or secluded setting or a particular house style rather than farm features such as good soil or adequate drainage. Most of the properties were small and many were of marginal quality. Almost all of the properties had been improved since purchase with a combination of farm and amenity improvements. A great deal of construction and renovation had been completed as well as considerable "tidying up" of many properties. Farm improvements such as fencing and clearing tended to be done on a casual basis reflecting the hobby orientation of the owners.

Despite the diversity of the group some common threads can be identified in the social characteristics, attitudes, goals and choices of hobby farmers. The satisfaction with the hobby farm setting and the level of improvements to properties suggest most of the hobby farm group is firmly committed to an agricultural lifestyle.
NOTES


7. Troughton, op. cit., p. 121.


10. Ibid., p. 333.


CHAPTER FOUR

THE HOBBY FARM

Hobby farmers clearly consider themselves farmers and not merely owners of rural properties. A few even identified themselves occupationally as "farmer" despite full-time off-farm employment, low farm returns and small scale production. Retired people particularly were likely to call themselves farmers although none had farmed full-time previously. Other people, usually the young and the most recent arrivals, called themselves farm people in terms of residence but not occupation. They were most likely to immediately classify themselves as hobby farmers and either stated or implied their needs and expectations were quite different from those of commercial farmers. Are hobby farmers justified in calling themselves farmers? Does hobby farming have a legitimate role to play in the agricultural industry? Or, are hobby farms merely playgrounds for those who want to have fun playing farm?

This chapter attempts to document the agricultural aspects of hobby farming by assessing the current situation on Surrey hobby farms with respect to land use, production, marketing, labour inputs and information gathering. The "fit" of hobby farming within the agricultural industry can then be better understood. Does the actual farm situation provide the satisfactions hobby farmers said they were
seeking and does it fulfil their goals and expectations? What do the future intentions of hobby farmers reveal about their commitment to hobby farming? Some owners may be content to continue their farming in its present form while others plan to expand their holding, change their production, make further improvements or sell their properties. In short, we attempt to identify the present nature of the Surrey hobby farm and assess its stability as a continuing form of agricultural enterprise.

THE PRESENT SITUATION

Land Use

What use are hobby farmers making of their farmland that has previously been identified as small in size and often marginal in quality? Land on each holding in the sample group was classified as cropland, pasture or unused land, excluding the area used for buildings, driveways, lawns and the family vegetable plot. Most farms used 80% or more of their acreage for income generating purposes.

The most common land use was pasture, with sixty of the sixty-eight hobby farms having at least some pasture. In most cases this pasture was improved fairly regularly with fertilizing, manuring and occasional reseeding. It was usually used for grazing beef cattle, although some was used for dairy cattle, horses, sheep or goats. Twenty-two farms had both pasture and cropland: twelve had pasture and hayland, nine had pasture and acreage in vegetables or
fruit, and one had pasture, hayland and vegetable acreage. Only six farms were all cropland: two in hay, two in hay and vegetables, one in Christmas trees and one in nursery stock. The remaining farm had only rabbit hutches.

The amount of unused or idle farmland on hobby farms was surprisingly small. Thirty-nine of the farms had no unused land of any type including wooded areas. Ten farms had unused land, but in five cases this was unusable because it was swamp, ravineland or creekbed. The other five farms had idle land totalling 13 acres, the only really "wasted" land in the sample of properties, and six of these acres were being cleared at the time of the interviewing.

Nineteen farms had wooded areas ranging in size from a half acre to eight acres, averaging two and a half acres. In no case did the wooded area exceed 17% of the farm area and at least half of these areas had been cleared of scrub and underbrush. Eighteen of the nineteen farms with wooded areas had browsing cattle and some owners commented on the value of wooded areas as summer shelter for their cattle. Two mentioned the aesthetic value of wooded areas.

It was clear hobby farmers were making some use of almost all their land but an interesting contrast was the amount of useable but idle land held on five of the twelve commercial farms whose owners were also interviewed. The mink farm had two unused acres of a five acre holding while the two broiler operations, both on ten acre holdings had seven and eight and a half acres of idle land. The nursery
owner had almost half of his nine acres uncleared although he considered it future expansion land. One of the two dairy farms in the sample had 25 acres of idle land on an 80 acre farm. The land on four of these five farms was "excess" in that the holding size was inappropriate to the intensive nature of the enterprise and yet the land could not be subdivided and sold because it was held within the agricultural land reserve. These full-time farmers did not have the time or money resources to make use of land that was surplus to their commercial enterprise. In the case of the dairy farm the 25 acres was not improved and used because he had a marginal operation and could not afford the increased cost of additional shares of dairy quota to make use of his idle land to increase the size of his dairy herd. His land too was in the reserve and was not subdividable.

While five full-time farms cannot be considered a legitimate sample, there is a hint in these findings of an interesting circumstance in Surrey. The hobby farmer, with the freedom to choose an appropriate sized holding, is able to make very rational use of his land. The commercial farmer who buys an existing unit with the needed facilities and correct zoning may well have land excess to his intended purposes that he cannot sell. Perhaps it is idle land "locked" in inappropriately sized commercial holdings that is really the "wasted" farmland.
Farm Production

Hobby farms produce a great variety of products but an important distinction must be made between production for income-generating purposes and production for family use. Most of the agricultural production of hobby farms is used by the farm owners, distributed to family and friends, or occasionally exchanged for other farm products. The majority of hobby farms produce only one item in marketable quantities so while 82% of hobby farms have three or more types of products, an equal proportion sell only one or two products.

TABLE X

NUMBER OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF PRODUCTION PER FARM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of product types</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of farms</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of farms</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NUMBER OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF PRODUCTION FOR INCOME PURPOSES PER FARM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of types of products sold</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of farms</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of farms</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hobby farms are clearly mixed enterprises. Only five of the 68 in the sample were producing a single product type and the group as a whole were involved in most types of agricultural enterprise possible within the climatic limitations of Surrey, as Table XI suggests.

The most common livestock found on hobby farms are beef cattle, kept on fifty of the sample farms. This is an obvious choice for hobby farmers because of the low level of care necessary and the relative ease of marketing. Beef is a popular product for family use and is readily sold privately or at the local auction. Most hobby farmers winter over their animals, although a few buy calves in the spring and sell or slaughter them in the fall to save winter feed costs. Other livestock kept included dairy cattle, pigs and sheep and goats, usually kept on marginal grazeland.

Hobby farmers are popularly identified as the horse owners of the Fraser Valley but the Surrey farms had surprisingly few. Seven farmers bred horses, four of them specializing in race horses. Only three other families kept horses as pets, a single horse or ponies for their children. The low level of horse ownership can probably be explained by a number of factors, particularly the small size of the farms and the lack of trails and open areas suitable for riding in Surrey. Some farmers dismissed horse ownership as being too expensive and others claimed
### TABLE XI
TYPES OF PRODUCTION ON SAMPLE FARMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Production Type</th>
<th>Number of Farms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beef cattle</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy cattle</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goats</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigs</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horses (breeding)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chickens (eggs)</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ducks</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geese</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabbits (for meat)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit, berries</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hay (cutting)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honey bees</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursery stock</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nut trees</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas trees</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maple syrup</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trout</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show birds (turkeys, peacocks,</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>canaries)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
horses ruined pasture for any other use and said they preferred to keep their limited supply of grazeland for cattle, sheep or goats. A few even said they were too busy farming to spend a lot of time caring for a horse, clearly relegating horse ownership to the category of a frivolous pursuit.

Chickens were a popular choice of hobby farmers as a source of both eggs and meat. Ducks and geese were kept on a dozen farms and rabbits, raised for meat, were kept on five others. All of these are ideally suited to hobby farming needing low levels of care and very little space. Eggs are easily marketed.

Almost all farms had vegetable gardens often as large as an acre in size. The vegetable plot was usually carefully planned to provide both variety and sufficient yield to be frozen, preserved or stored for winter use. Some people grew enough vegetables to sell surpluses. More than half the farms had some fruit trees and berry bushes, particularly apples and blueberries. Fourteen farms had sufficient hay acreage to supply their own winter livestock feed and six sold hay surpluses.

There was a variety of specialty items, some more exotic than others, produced on hobby farms. The mundane included nuts, honey, nursery stock and Christmas trees; the exotics were canaries, peacocks, show turkeys and maple syrup. One farm generated income from sales of trout raised in large ponds to finance the owner's first choice of enterprise, breeding race horses.
The variety of produce from a single small farm was often quite surprising and certainly indicative of the hobby aspects of this kind of farming. Many owners were experimenting with different types of production and particular breeds of livestock for a variety of reasons which will be discussed more fully later. The variety also reflected an attempt by some owners to be self-sufficient in terms of food production, a goal a few had almost reached.

Perhaps a description of the production of two of the sample farms will exemplify this variety. The first farm is a well managed five acre holding owned by a young family with goals of a family-focussed lifestyle and self-sufficiency in food production. The family raises and breeds Highland cattle, keeping six head on their three acres of pasture. Two are slaughtered annually, one for their own use and one for sale. The son is responsible for the care of eight to ten pigs which are kept penned and fed partially on garden and house scraps. These are sold as they reach optimum size. The daughter feeds the three dozen chickens whose eggs are used by the family and sold to several regular customers. The farm has an acre of orchard with several kinds of fruit trees, grape vines used for juice and wine making, three kinds of berry bushes and a large vegetable garden. Produce is stored in two freezers and a recently constructed root cellar for winter use. Every February,
weather permitting, the family taps the large maple tree in their front yard and makes syrup to give to their "city friends".

Another five acre hobby farm in the same neighbourhood keeps two milk cows, several goats, chickens, geese, ducks and honey bees. The family is vegetarian and makes cheese and yogurt from both cow's milk and goat's milk. Their diet is supplemented by their own vegetables and fruit, and they sell milk, kids, and honey to provide enough income to maintain and improve their farm.

Farm Sales and Marketing Arrangements

Over half the hobby farms in the sample group sell only one product, usually beef, and only twelve farms sell three or more products. The range of products sold is listed in Table XII.

Beef cattle are easily sold, although often at less than satisfactory prices. Many hobby farmers have a few head of their cattle slaughtered and butchered locally each year and then sell sides or quarters of beef to friends or regular customers. There is apparently no shortage of buyers for what is perceived as healthy, grass-fed beef "without all those hormones injected in them", as one farmer explained. Other farmers sell their animals live at the Surrey auction which was criticized by a few owners as paying much lower prices to hobby farmers than to commercial farmers. Some said they were forced to accept whatever price was offered,
TABLE XII
MARKETED HOBBY FARM PRODUCTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Number of Farms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beef</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk: cow</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goat</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broiler chickens</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep: meat</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wool</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigs</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabbits</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ducks</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geese</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foals</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hay</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blueberries</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honey</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other sources of farm income:
- Canaries
- Horse boarding
- Dog kennel
- Nursery stock
- Christmas trees
- Trout
even when they knew it was too low, or they would have to pay the return trucking costs for their animals. The reason for the low price might well be the potentially poorer quality of hobby farm beef because a few owners didn't seem to have a good understanding of nutritional needs for their livestock. Others sold at an inappropriate time when prices were low or before their cattle were optimum weight. Usually this was necessary in order to generate the income necessary to claim a farm property tax exemption.

Almost all other products are sold directly to consumers through private contacts, roadside stands or by means of farm gate advertising. All the eggs, fruit and vegetables produced were sold this way with the exception of one farmer who sold pickling cucumbers to the Surrey vegetable co-op on a contract basis. Lambs, rabbits and trout were sold privately to restaurants in Vancouver. Three or four owners of goats and sheep sold lambs and kids to Greek and Italian ethnic organizations for festival days. One hobby farmer sold ducks to neighbouring Chinese vegetable growers who appreciate his "organically" raised products.

The marketing situation is very informal but seems to be reasonably satisfactory. Almost all who sold privately said they had no problem finding customers for their produce. Many commented that city people liked to drive out to the countryside on the weekend to buy fresh organically grown vegetables, brown eggs from chickens that are allowed to roam freely, blueberries that have not been sprayed with
chemicals, black sheep wool for weaving and goat's milk fresh from the source. The elimination of middle marketing levels often means lower prices to buyers and higher returns to hobby farmers. However, the real attraction for the customer is probably the alternative source of supply to the supermarket. Despite lack of quality control and regulation, the customers' perception seems to be that they are receiving fresher, healthier food from direct farm sales. Perhaps they like the idea of small scale production and enjoy the friendly face-to-face contact with the producer.

By definition the hobby farm sample was limited to farms with low value sales with little importance attached to farm income. The farm income tended to vary considerably year by year and many farmers said it was sometimes a struggle to meet the $1600 sales requirement for preferred property taxation. One of the frustrations of the exemption criteria was the necessity of having sales of at least $1600 every year by a specified date, sometimes forcing farmers to sell calves before optimum marketing weights or other livestock that could be used to build up a flock or herd to more viable levels. A rainy season with poor blueberry crops was causing concern for three farmers who depended on blueberry sales. Because marketing is informal economic returns are highly variable.

There are two main reasons for hobby farmers to sell their farm produce. Many save considerable amounts of property tax by attaining farm classification for assessment
purposes, as indicated. Others attempt to sell enough to fund improvements and pay annual maintenance costs on their farm. Few make any sizeable profit and some claim losses each year. It is possible to claim up to a $5000 farm income loss each year against personal income for federal tax purposes. Four farm owners who were interviewed were high income earners with their own business and all routinely claimed the full farm loss. This is a controversial deduction which Punter calls a "legal form of tax evasion." However, as he goes on to suggest, "it has led to the maintenance of productive land in good agricultural condition and has led to increased maintenance of the landscape for the visual enjoyment of all who use the rural landscape in Ontario." The same is undoubtedly true for the Fraser Valley. Property and income tax savings are necessary incentives, at least for some of the hobby farmers, to make very good use of their farmland.

Like commercial farmers, hobby farmers are feeling the effects of the cost-price squeeze. They are experiencing rapidly escalating input costs, particularly high interest rates on mortgages and loans and soaring costs for fuel, feed, seed and fertilizer while farm returns remain low. Unlike commercial farmers, hobby farmers do not depend on their farm income so can postpone purchases, decrease production levels or change types of production. They usually have low investments in specialized equipment and can therefore be more flexible in their adjustments and approach.
The attitude toward farm income is possibly the most clearly distinguishing feature of hobby farmers. They do not depend on farm income for their livelihood and therefore they are not as frustrating when sales are poor and expenses are high. One farmer suggested, "Hobbies are always expensive." The expectation was that sales would cover costs of production and possibly provide funds for further improvements. But if sales did not reach anticipated levels, only minor adjustments in expectations were necessary.

Only sixteen hobby farmers identified any farm production or marketing problems. Low prices, particularly of beef cattle sold at the auction, high costs of inputs and the lack of farm labourers were the three problems most frequently identified. Lack of facilities for slaughtering sheep and processing rabbits were mentioned. In general, those interviewed were far more concerned about the nuisance factors in their area, as discussed previously, than any actual farming problems. Most were reasonably content with their own farm situation.

**Farm Labour Requirements and Sources**

Almost all hobby farm labour is done by hobby farmers themselves without hired help. Five women and fourteen men run their farms alone. Almost half the farms were run by husband and wife and sometimes children were also involved with animal care. There was sometimes a structure to the chores with each member of the family responsible for some aspect of the farm management. Some children received
the profits from the sales of their own animals and participated in 4H activities. Farmers received occasional help from other relatives, notably grandchildren, nephews and sons-in-law and some depended on friends to help at busy times such as haying or blueberry picking. A few hobby farmers mentioned their city friends liked to come out and help on the farm once or twice a year and one held an annual "harvest" party which was a social occasion as well as a work day on the farm for his friends.

Only five farmers had regular hired help, all part-time. These farm helpers were involved in planting and weeding, cattle care, and horse training and exercising. Three farmers hired students for full-time work each summer. Three other owners complained that they wanted regular help but were unable to find trained, reliable farm labourers in Surrey.

Many of the farmers used occasional custom services. Although twenty-five had never received any assistance, the remaining forty-three mentioned a variety of services they used from time to time, particularly hay cutting and baling (see Table XIII). These services usually require specialized equipment which is too expensive for hobby farmers to purchase. Custom work is almost always done by commercial farmers in the area and provides a source of cash income for them. One commercial farmer who was interviewed owns a modern baler which keeps himself, his wife and two teenaged sons busy all summer cutting hay on neighbouring farms in the Hazelmere
### TABLE XIII
CUSTOM FARM SERVICES USED BY HOBBY FARMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Number of farms using service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hay cutting and baling</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulldozing, ploughing, tototilling</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land clearing, tree or stump removal</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drainage improvements, under-tiling, ditching (backhoe)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digging of fence post holes</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Custom butchering (on farm)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manure spreading</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berry picking</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle hauling</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liming of fields</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General repairs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farrier services</td>
<td>1</td>
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Valley of Surrey. He operates on a non-cash basis, as many others do, taking a share of the crop as payment. He keeps his own sizeable herd of cattle in winter feed without using his own pasture for hay and sells several hundred bales each year. Another commercial farmer interviewed does cattle hauling for cash income and a third operated a backhoe service.
The hiring of custom farm services is a great help to commercial farmers, and sometimes their sons, who can better rationalize the purchase of expensive equipment for their own farm if they know they can use it to generate cash income when time permits. The use of custom services was sometimes less than optimal for hobby farmers. They had no option but to wait until the service could be provided and this sometimes meant waiting past the best time for ploughing or hay cutting. Some farm operators complained they had difficulty hiring anyone to do small jobs such as cutting three acres of hay, digging a short length of ditch or roto-tilling a vegetable plot.

Most hobby farmers chose to do as much of their farm work as possible partly for financial reasons and partly to avoid the frustrations of trying to hire someone to get a job done when it was required. However, there was also considerable self-satisfaction with handling their own needs and getting the job done themselves. Some expressed pride in their accomplishments and felt self-sufficiency in labour terms was a worthy goal to strive for. A few hobby farmers either owned, or were planning to purchase equipment that didn't seem justifiable in rational economic terms for use on a five acre farm. Some hobby farms had quite a bit of equipment and the ownership of a small tractor was common. One hobby farmer, a retired executive, drove his tractor across his expansive, well-trimmed lawn to the front door of his home for the interview. Apparently owning a tractor is an important part of at least the image of farming.
Information Flow

It was hypothesized that hobby farmers, many with no farm background and most with no recent farm experience, would need considerable technical advice in establishing and operating their farm enterprise. The hobby farmers in the sample were asked to identify their information sources, particularly in terms of formal farming courses and help from the district agricultural office. The data suggest the lack of economic success and the variety of production problems encountered by hobby farmers can be partially accounted for by their informal approach to gathering information.

None of the hobby farmers had taken any kind of agricultural training except for Surrey or Langley School Board night school courses, although the son of one owner was currently enrolled in the Faculty of Agriculture at the University of British Columbia. Thirteen hobby farmers had taken a variety of night school courses including poultry raising, organic farming, pig farming, horse training, veterinary care, bee keeping, small farm management and, the most popular choice, beef cattle raising. These courses were short-term and introductory in nature, but were described as useful by most of the thirteen.

Fewer than half of the hobby farmers had ever sought help or advice from the Ministry of Agriculture office in Cloverdale despite the fact the office is well-staffed, highly visible and a maximum twenty minute drive from all
the sample farms. Some hobby farmers had read the pamphlets issued through the office and some had attended field days, an on-site informational meeting on some aspect of a specific type of farm enterprise. A few farmers had sought individual advice, most often on treatment of stock or poultry, or control of insect infestations on crops. Reaction to the advice varied. Some found it useful while others said the help came too late or was not of practical value. It seems likely in some cases the expectations for help were too high so could not be satisfied and in other cases the advice was rejected by the farmer who was reluctant to invest the money needed for changes or to make changes that were philosophically unacceptable such as chemical spraying.

A few people found sources of help in neighbouring commercial farmers. Three young families, including a family moving toward full-time farming, had established a good relationship with an older, experienced farmer and depended on his advice for decision making. Others sought advice from friends and family, the Surrey co-op, the stock sellers and the seed suppliers.

There was obviously a serious shortage of time to take courses or seek information in any structured way. Many families had both adults working full time and farm chores took up virtually all free time. However, there also seemed to be a curious reluctance to seek advice. Many suggested, with a certain amount of pride, they had learned on their own from books or experience. Some farmers were clearly
reluctant to formalize their information gathering and saw "hit and miss" experimentation as part of the learning experience. The independent, do-it-yourself attitude was quite apparent although some would have undoubtedly benefitted from some kind of outside help. Others simply said they "knew how to farm" because they were raised on a farm, suggesting current farm practices were apparently of little concern. There was almost a deliberate attempt to distance themselves from the type of knowledge that might demand more rational, rather than whimsical, decision making. These people were choosing farming as a hobby and were disassociating themselves from the type of farming one would practice for a livelihood. In deliberately refusing to formalize, they were ensuring farming would be "fun".

LEVELS OF SATISFACTION

Surrey hobby farmers are strongly committed to a rural lifestyle and, in general, are satisfied and content with farm life. They expressed pleasure in their accomplishments and regarded operational problems and production failures as part of the learning process. Considerable time, energy and money was invested in farms with low economic but high psychic returns.

The expressions of pleasure and contentment with hobby farm life suggests these farmers made a wise choice in moving to the country. The dissatisfactions expressed were minor in nature and complaints tended to be focussed on changes in
the community which were perceived as threatening, particularly the influx of urbanites to one acre properties and therefore the potential replication of an urban milieu that had been rejected. Negative features of commercial agriculture were usually nuisance factors associated with large-scale or intensive farming that restricted potential peace and quiet. In general, the problems associated with hobby farming in the rural-urban fringe were merely irritating annoyances and the satisfaction levels were high.

Coffin and Lipsey comment:

Considering the rigors of rural life (particularly when self-sufficiency is a goal) the financial loss that accompanied the move for most of the sample, and the discrepancy between lifestyle desired and that actually attained, it is pertinent to ask whether anyone was happy with the outcome. On balance the answer was a resounding 'yes'.

Eighty-eight percent of their respondents said rural life was "satisfying" or "very satisfying" and only 7% were "somewhat discouraged". Surrey hobby farmers too are a satisfied and contented group of rural landowners and, in general, are far less frustrated by the economic problems and rural-urban fringe environment than the few commercial farmers who were interviewed. Hobby farmers cheerfully accept temporary set-backs, enjoy their setting, and few have intentions to sell, move or make major changes in either their farm management or rural lifestyle. For many their chosen hobby has become an engrossing, challenging and satisfying way of life.
THE FUTURE

The hobby farmers in the sample were asked about their future intentions in terms of ownership, changes in levels and types of production and intended improvements. Despite further probing after the initial response, almost half the group stated their farm was "finished" and they had no plans beyond maintaining their present property and lifestyle. Some had put considerable time and effort into developing their farms and perhaps would agree with one owner who stated quite emphatically, "Enough changes have been made— it's resting time!"

Only twenty-three farmers planned further improvements to their properties. Ten had plans to build a new house or renovate their existing one, or add a barn or outbuildings. Other planned improvements included additional fencing, improved drainage systems, reseeding of pastures and further clearing and infilling of swampy areas. Most owners were quite vague about the scheduling of these intended improvements. However, in view of the amount of effort which had already been expended on most of the farms in the sample it seemed likely these changes would also be carried out as time and money permitted. Some depended on produce sales to finance changes to their farms and recent low prices, particularly for beef, had discouraged them.

Twenty-two farmers had plans to increase their production levels or change their type of production and three had
bought additional land in the last year. Layton found 26.7% of London area hobby farmers were anticipating a move to full-time farming and a further 9.9% were moving toward part-time farming. One might assume some owners in Surrey would also use hobby farming as a stepping stone toward a part-time or full-time enterprise as capital, expertise and circumstances permitted. However, surprisingly few hobby farmers had any plans to farm on a commercial basis in the foreseeable future. Only one Surrey hobby farmer was planning to farm full-time and four others were hoping to achieve production increases which would allow them to farm part-time while supplementing their income with some off-farm work.

The family with full-time intentions was a young couple with small children. Both husband and wife worked full-time to build up capital to purchase a larger property for full-time cattle breeding. They were seeking a property outside Surrey because they couldn't afford the high land costs of the Fraser Valley. Both husband and wife had urban backgrounds and were hobby farming in order to build up the expertise necessary to move successfully into commercial farming.

The four who were moving toward part-time enterprises were planning to breed horses, raise pigs and increase the size of their cattle herds to more viable levels. Three of these had bought additional adjoining land to allow for expansion. All were hoping to cut back on their off-farm employment as the income from the farm increased.
Three other families were increasing production but saw no likelihood of ending their full-time off-farm employment. The farm of one of these families was run by the woman who seemed quite serious in her intention to build her sheep flock to commercially viable levels although her husband would continue to run his construction company. Their farm was large and had recently been improved with undertiling and the construction of a new barn. She had sought advice from other sheep breeders and the district agriculturalist to ensure her expansion plans were feasible. A rabbit producer hoped to solve processing problems so he could fill his newly constructed rabbit shed to its full capacity of 400 rabbits. He kept fewer than 100 rabbits at the time of the interview but had developed his own market among restaurants in Vancouver and planned to use his farm to generate considerably more income in the future. The third family was developing a small specialized nursery business which they hoped would fund the educations of their three teenagers.

The small number of Surrey hobby farmers planning a move into commercial farming probably reflects an awareness of the very large step now required to move from a hobby farming situation to anything commercially viable. The specialized nature of modern agribusiness requires high levels of capital investment, technical knowledge and astute management skills. Most hobby farmers don't have the desire to farm full-time and, if they do, they don't have the resources to make this major move.
The six part-time commercial farmers with small-scale production who were interviewed were all struggling to survive economically. Although by definition they were generating about half their total income from their farms their sales were still very low. One of these farmers was a cucumber grower who had been in business for five years and anticipated it would be several more years before she made a clear profit. Although she had a modern, well-equipped greenhouse, worked long hours and sold through the marketing board, she was still putting all her profits back into loan repayments. It is no longer easy to move into commercial farming and the gaps between the stepping stones seem to be widening.

Fourteen hobby farmers, 20% of the sample, were planning to make changes in their type of production in the near future. Experimentation was apparent as some farmers changed from raising sheep to keeping pigs; others sold their goats and bought calves; some ploughed over their vegetable plot and planted nursery stock. At least some of the experimentation was attributable to lack of success, usually because of unforeseen problems. The expectations were not always realistic and problems were not always anticipated. Some hobby farmers expressed surprise at the cost of feeding their cattle, the expense of veterinary care or the difficulty of dealing with insect pests on their fruit trees. On one farm the death of a valuable brood mare stimulated a change to holstein heifer raising. On another the level
of care needed for livestock became tiresome so the pasture was converted to Christmas tree production. When marketing problems were encountered it was sometimes easier to switch production type than wait out low prices and temporary setbacks. Low beef prices at the time of interviewing caused some to contemplate changing enterprise. While commercial farmers were tied to uneconomical enterprises and were bitter about low farm returns, hobby farmers had low investments and flexibility allowing them the freedom to change.

Much of the experimentation was by choice and very much in keeping with the hobby orientation of the farm owners. Some admitted they became bored with one kind of enterprise so decided to try something new. Others wanted to have a little of everything, either to achieve their goal of self-sufficiency or to recreate the mixed farm of their past experience. Some of the improvements and renovations undertaken were tied to changes in enterprise as mink sheds became chicken houses and horse stables became sheep barns. Two or three owners admitted their future plans would be whatever took their fancy. One hoped to raise horses "someday" while another had plans for constructing a hydroponic greenhouse with a circulation system tied to an adjoining aquaculture pond. The sample farmers were committed to farming as a hobby and a lifestyle, but generally exhibited little commitment to any particular type of enterprise. While economic returns were of little importance, the personal fulfillment of doing something interesting and challenging was of prime concern.
The exceptions were those few farmers interviewed who were attempting to develop a high quality breed of livestock for show or breeding purposes. Several farmers proudly displayed their championship ribbons and cups for their Black Angus cattle, purebred shorthorns, Suffolk sheep and Welsh ponies. Two families that bred race horses were successfully producing occasional winners which brought them great satisfaction and considerable monetary returns, as breeders receive a proportion of all future winnings for that particular horse. One family had financed the expansion of their farm and the construction of their new barn from the constant returns from a consistent winner. These farmers too were not so much interested in economic returns as personal fulfillment but they were very involved in one particular enterprise and had considerable expertise in their field.

Thirteen landowners had definite plans to sell in the near future. Seven of these were elderly retired people, including four widows who could no longer cope with farming. At least two of the remaining six were financially unable to maintain their property. While four of the thirteen considered themselves to be "pushed" from their land by encroaching subdivisions with attendant nuisance factors, at least four others were selling to profit from zoning changes. One farmer owned a 46 acre property on Cloverdale's city limits which was recently downgraded to quarter acre zoning. His farm was subdividable into 120 lots worth two million dollars, a strong incentive to stop farming. Three
owners planned to subdivide their properties, sell one part and retain the rest.

Eighty percent of the hobby farm owners were optimistic about the land market in Surrey. Thirty-six owners said they would have no problem at all selling their property if they wished to or were forced to. Nineteen others felt high interest rates at the time of interviewing might limit buyers but their perceptions were still positive toward the land market. Many of those interviewed mentioned the frequent visits from real estate salesmen hoping to list the property for sale and the apparent ease with which other sales were made in their neighbourhood. Some mentioned the size or quality of their homes or amenity features such as a nice view as good selling points. Only one owner mentioned a farm quality, "cleared and fenced land" as a positive attribute although some said land, and particularly farmland, was the "best investment possible."

Only four owners felt selling their present property would be difficult. The owner of a 37 acre property said the large size of his farm made it too expensive for a hobby farm purchase but the land was too marginal to attract any other farm buyers. Another owner suspected, quite correctly no doubt, that his very expensive and very unusual home, a replica of a sixteenth century Spanish farmhouse complete with windmill, would have a somewhat limited appeal.
Owners were asked to speculate on possible buyers for their farms. Almost 70% suggested hobby farmers would be the most likely buyers and only five owners saw a possibility of selling to a full-time farmer. Three of these owners had large properties of 20, 30 and 36 acres.

The hobby farm units are for the most part not large enough for viable farm operations unless they are used very intensively. The market is limited for these because of zoning restrictions and high start up costs including the purchase of market quotas. Neighbouring commercial farmers who may be searching for additional pasture or cropland cannot afford to buy land with an expensive home on it and inclusion in the land reserve makes home lot subdivision impossible. Land on hobby farms is basically unavailable to full-time farmers except as leaseland.

Fourteen owners saw the likelihood of their farm being put to industrial or residential use in the future. Although most did not want to lose their agricultural land the inevitability of this happening was often implicit in the responses. Eleven of these fourteen properties, totalling 137 acres, have been rezoned and can now be subdivided and put to other uses. Most have been changed to one acre residential use but two farms have recently received industrial zoning. The remaining three farms are presently agriculturally zoned but they border areas recently downzoned.
Summary

Surrey hobby farms are generally mixed enterprises producing several types of products for family use but probably marketing only one or two. Farm sales are minimal, often at a level designed to achieve tax relief and meet maintenance costs. Most marketing arrangements are private and informal but satisfactory to the owners. Hobby farmers use the custom services of commercial farmers in the district when necessary but generally prefer to remain independent of outside help and advice.

Most hobby farmers are content with their present situation. They are aware of the investment value of their farm and the healthy land market but feel no pressure to sell at present. They are generally content to keep their farms small-scale and very few are willing or able to make the move into part-time or full-time commercial production which increasingly needs considerable financial resources and expertise and a total time and energy commitment. Hobby farmers experiment with types and levels of production through a desire to successfully meet a variety of challenges. A growing number of nuisance factors and uncertainty about the future uses of the area may push some into leaving farming eventually but at present most have no plans to sell and are finding their present lifestyle interesting, challenging and fulfilling.
NOTES


CHAPTER FIVE

IMPACT, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This final chapter considers the impact and some of the implications of hobby farming and particularly attempts to specify the role of hobby farming as an integral part of the agricultural system and as preserver of rural landscape. Having previously identified the form the hobby farm is likely to take, we now consider its function—especially noting the positive relationships between hobby farming and commercial farming. The amenity function of hobby farms is also significant. City dwellers need a spacious green zone beyond the suburban limits, a rich and varied countryside with a diversity of farm types and activities.

THE ROLE OF HOBBY FARMING IN THE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY

As a farm enterprise, the hobby farm is typically quite different in scale and form from the commercial farm. It has been described in this study as small in size, mixed in production and likely to have a low level of sales achieved through informal marketing arrangements. Total hobby farm production is fairly insignificant in economic terms as both the volume of production and the value of sales are low. Hobby farms are not competing with commercial farms for markets and are likely to be totally removed from
the sophisticated system of marketing in which modern agribusiness is involved.

However, hobby farm production does play an important role in furnishing a wide variety of products, alternatives for the consumer to the usual commercial possibilities. Full-time farmers have no option but to produce the most highly valued and easily marketed types and breeds of animals and plants. They must use whatever modern agricultural technology offers to produce the highest yields and best quality to gain the highest prices. Experimentation is risky when contracts must be met, quotas must be filled and mortgage and loan payments made.

The hobby farmers, less constrained by the need to generate income, can exercise more choice and take more risk in providing the unusual for a select group of buyers. Hobby farmers can choose to keep their blueberries unsprayed and their fields free of chemical fertilizers. With a large urban market nearby, they know they can sell small amounts of unpasteurized honey, rabbits, goat's milk and duck eggs to those few who seek that particular product. Hobby farms add to the richness and diversity of Valley agriculture by providing the alternatives. Hobby farmers may also be offering amenity specialties, defined as recreational, diversionary or aesthetic services for enhancing the quality of life.\textsuperscript{1} Amenity agriculture, which is well suited to the urban fringe hobby farm with its proximity to customers in the city, is often an appropriate enterprise for the hobby
farmer with limited resources of time, labour and capital. The Surrey hobby farms that provide Christmas trees, paddocks and stables for boarding horses and dog kennels may be considered examples of amenity agricultural enterprises. Throughout the Valley there are also "pick-your-own" berry and vegetable farms, trout farms with well-stocked ponds and a pheasant shooting preserve all of which provide enriching experiences for an urban population increasingly mobile and in search of new diversions.

Hobby farms, although small in size and scale of production have at least the potential of being very efficient in terms of labour and capital inputs. A recent U.S. Department of Agriculture study revealed the greatest production value per acre on American farms was generated on the farms owned and operated by a farm family with no hired help. Another study suggested there were no economies of scale achieved by increasing size beyond the one or two operator farm. Surrey hobby farms are certainly not all operating at optimum efficiency, but some rather small parcels of poor quality farmland are producing quite a surprising range and volume of products.

Very little land is left unused on the Surrey hobby farms and land is undoubtedly being farmed that would not be viable cropland for a commercial enterprise. Since economic gain is not the prime objective for hobby farmers, low yields from marginal land may be acceptable returns. Poor quality land is kept in low levels of production which
is more efficient in agricultural terms than abandonment or conversion.

There are outspoken critics of modern agribusiness who see the specialization and large-scale technological approach to farming in very negative terms. Ecological damage resulting from the effects of continuous cash cropping, soil compaction by heavy equipment, the waste products from feed lots and other intensive enterprises and the high level of chemical pesticides in run-off have all been identified as major ecological concerns. Berry identifies economies of scale, which he interprets as the dispossession of thousands of farm families and the rise of an agribusiness elite, and specialization, "the abandonment of the ancient, proven principle of agricultural stability through diversity," as the "most degenerative, dangerous, costly and socially disruptive achievements of American agriculture." The mixed production, family run hobby farm may be growing in popularity as it symbolizes an alternative, small-scale production which can be efficient and ecologically sound. Hobby farming is not competing with commercial agriculture in volume or sales but it has its own special role to play in adding diversity to an agricultural industry that is increasingly becoming rationalized and specialized.

Agricultural land held in hobby farms may be a transitional land use between a former commercial agricultural use and a future urban use. On the other hand, it may be considered a permanent form of land use in an area which
supports the philosophy of preserving a green zone of farm-
land around a major city and where there is a desire and
commitment on the part of many owners to have this kind of
lifestyle. Hobby farming would seem to be an ideal land
use in a rural-urban district with reserves of agricultural
land more extensive in size than can be realistically
justified in present economic terms. If we are preserving
farmland as possible future foodland, is it not better to
preserve it as hobby farm land in production than to leave
it idle which is the only other alternative use for agricul-
tural reserve land?

RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMMERCIAL FARMING

On this basis of the findings of this study, the rela-
tionship between hobby farming and commercial farming must
be considered more positive than negative. Hobby farmers
are not competing with commercial farmers for markets, they
may be providing cash income for the commercial farmer
offering custom farm services, and they are more likely to
be outbidding each other rather than commercial farmers for
land. Many commercial farms in the Valley are intensive in
nature and require capital inputs rather than land, and in
fact they may have land in their holding in excess of their
needs. The Valley agriculture that does require large
acreages to be viable includes dairying and vegetable and
berry production. Most berry farms are located in an upland
area of well-drained gravelly soils near Abbotsford, at a
distance somewhat beyond the commuting zone where the demand for hobby farm land is high. Dairy and vegetable farmers, those most likely to need land for expansion, are often limited by their marketing board quotas to certain production levels. In any case, at a time when many farmers are caught in a cost-price squeeze, the major investment of a land purchase might well be postponed, especially if lease land is available as an alternative.

Hobby farmers play a positive role in the land market by purchasing farmland within the agricultural land reserves which has not survived the transition into rationalized agriculture on the basis of its size or quality. One real estate agent in the Valley who deals exclusively in farm properties said there had been almost no demand for commercial farm properties for five years as marketing board quotas were no longer readily available and successful commercial farms were usually passed along to family members. In his experience marginal enterprises and small holdings were almost always bought as hobby farms. Hobby farmers are the obvious buyers for these properties and the demand for them is high so prices are also high. Earlier fears of falling land values within the land reserves have not been realized because of this continuing high demand.

Another positive relationship between commercial and hobby farming is the possibility of hobby farmers leasing land to commercial farmers. Thirty-eight of the properties in the sample group were too small to have any extra land
but the remaining owners were questioned about leasing arrangements and possibilities. Seven of this group of thirty were currently leasing out up to 80% of their land for pasture and crops of hay, corn and potatoes. Another seven farmers would consider leasing out part of their land if they cut back on their own production and they could find careful tenants with good conditions of lease. Eleven owners would not consider leasing because they anticipated problems such as over-use and constant fencing repairs or simply because "the rent is never commensurate with the land value or problems." Four hobby farmers also lease in land from other hobby farmers: five acres for horse pasture, six acres for sheep pasture, ten acres for hay and a variable amount of summer pasture for a dozen head of beef cattle.

Because of the small size and intensive use of most hobby farmland leasing is not a viable option. However, almost half those with larger sized holdings are at least interested in the possibility if they are not actually leasing at present. There is also some land in Surrey leased out by absentee owners. This land is obviously valuable to commercial farmers who wish to expand their enterprise but cannot afford the very high prices of farm-land. One problem is matching the limited supply of leasable land to the limited demand, but the most serious drawback to leasing arrangements is the reluctance of some owners to sign long term leases because of the uncertainty of future development possibilities for the land. This is particularly
true of properties owned by non-residents. One commercial farmer interviewed attempted to lease in 100 acres of pasture each year but claimed he could seldom get more than a one year lease so there was no incentive for him to improve the pasture he rented. Having to search out leasable land each year is time consuming and makes long term planning very difficult. However, with farmland priced at $10,000 an acre many farmers have little choice but to lease in needed land. The lease payment can be used by hobby farmers as income for farm property tax exemptions so this can be a fairly satisfactory mutual arrangement. It would be a much improved situation if there were more certainty that agricultural zoning was permanent and rezoning was not a future possibility despite pressures from developers on the Surrey municipal politicians, the Land Commissioners and the provincial cabinet. Long term leases could then be arranged and a higher level of care could be expected from those leasing in land. There is at least a good potential for beneficial leasing arrangements between commercial farmers and hobby farmers.

In general, hobby farming seems to have an important role to play as part of the agricultural system. It fits quite comfortably in the rural-urban fringe setting and the relationships between commercial farming and hobby farming are generally positive. Jake Brown, the Dean of Agriculture at the University of Saskatchewan, suggests the trend to rural resettlement by hobby farmers "may be part of the
solution to rural depopulation, back-to-the-landers have a tremendous impact on the rural economy. They have time for animals . . . they make good use of the land and some are excellent farmers." And not only do they play an important role in preserving agriculture, but they also preserve a rural way of life.

**THE ROLE OF HOBBY FARMING IN PRESERVING THE COUNTRYSIDE**

Hobby farms have a role to play in preserving a heritage and providing a rich countryside landscape for urban dwellers who seek and need open green space. A recent report to the Greater Vancouver Regional District suggests the existence of the agricultural lands in proximity to urban areas in B.C. has enhanced the lives even of those urban residents who choose to remain in the city. The amenity role of green countryside is well expressed by Higbee in writing about the highly urbanized region of northeastern United States: "To most people in Megalopolis, the country is not just farmland. It is open space where a man can stretch and feel free. The more urban congestion increases, the greater becomes the urge in some people to get away to the country . . . ."

The role of hobby farming in providing a rich and varied rural landscape is clear. Jackson suggests the engineered environment of agribusiness has "coarseness of detail; the lack of men, of animals, of small woodlots, of isolated barns and sheds" . . . [a] factory in the field" has little
to offer the city dweller. The small mixed farm, on the other hand, has variety and colour. On hobby farms animals wander freely rather than being hidden from view in metal sheds and vegetable gardens, duck ponds, fruit trees, ponies and chickens are all visible in a single farmyard. The sights, sounds and smells of farmscape are there for passers-by to experience. Hobby farms add a finer texture to the countryside landscape; they offer the alternative, the small-scale, the unusual, the diversity. They enhance the image of rural countryside.

Vidich and Bensman typify farmers as either rational or traditional. The rational are those who have adopted and developed the scientific, technological and commercial aspects of farming while the traditional farmer, clinging to older ways, tends to resist change and refuses to adopt innovations. They suggest hobby farmers fit well within the traditional group, refusing to tie into the outside economic forces that would force them to increase their scale of production, specialize and become more efficient. Yet they "glory in all the ceremonial and ritual complexity of farming" and are "in a peculiar sense, the custodians of historic agrarianism." They espouse the Jeffersonian ideals of freedom and independence and the natural virtues associated with an agricultural way of life.

Surrey hobby farmers reflect this tradition on their farms as they replicate the small mixed farm of an earlier time when the farm family owned a cow or two and some
chickens, grew a few vegetables and shared in the work and rewards of the farm.\textsuperscript{13} Who is more likely today than the hobby farmers to have a red wooden barn surrounded by flowers and topped with a rooster wind vane? Who but the hobby farmer has the names of his seven goats painted above their individual stalls? Who but the hobby farmer spends hours carving designs in the oak beam above the door to his newly constructed root cellar? Hobby farming can be seen as nostalgic, old-fashioned and even irrational, but it also represents a traditional way of life that is probably worthy of preservation. Michie suggests, "Among the public there is a new perception of a unique historic countryside which is to be valued and preserved."\textsuperscript{14} At a time when we value our past and search for our roots, when we visit farm museums to see threshers and take our children to "petting farms" so they can touch a goat or a pig, the hobby farm is a living and functioning historical cultural form. It is a human scale landscape, rich in imagery, with definite amenity value to an urban population. "Farmlands should form an integral part of the environment of urban man, because they are islands of tranquillity that allow the urban dweller to be connected to two worlds: the bustling world of concrete and plastic, and the tranquil and green world of farming."\textsuperscript{15} Who better preserves the tranquil and green world of farming than the hobby farmer?
NOTES


6. Konrad Loehndorf, Block Brothers Realty, personal interview.


13. However, the replication is one of form only. The pioneer family depended on their farm for their food supply and surpluses were marketed to buy basic necessities. The hobby farmer is not relying on his farm for his economic well-being.


CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY

Hobby farming is a curious mix of the rural and the urban. Most Surrey hobby farmers spent a considerable portion of their lives in an urban setting before moving to the countryside and some still have urban-based employment. Although they now consider themselves rural and express a strong dislike of the city, their properties are located within a short drive of a major city. They have not fled the city for the northern frontier or the wilderness but have chosen a countryside setting that provides most urban amenities including business services, recreational facilities and shopping centres. And, unlike many commercial farmers, they perceive the rural-urban fringe as a satisfactory and comfortable living environment.

Hobby farmers choose the most traditional rural lifestyle and pastime—farming, yet few have economic goals and the deliberately choose to remain outside the commercial agriculture network. They seek instead to create their own private, peaceful retreats where they can raise their crops and animals without outside help or interference. They market at levels required to meet property tax exemptions and to provide funds for maintenance and improvements on their farm and prefer to market informally to friends and customers who drive by their farm gate.
The selection of a particular property again reflects an urban orientation as it is most commonly made on the basis of a particular house style, a view, a wooded area or a creek, rather than for desirable farm features such as good soil or drainage. Hobby farmers are, however, good stewards of their land and are serious in their intentions to keep their land in production. They do not waste land by leaving it idle and are likely to make good use of all their land, even the most marginal sections. Farm improvements are done on a casual basis as time and interest dictate, so progress is slow, but most see the development of their property as a gradual and ongoing project.

Hobby farmers exhibit a strong commitment toward the preservation of farmland and the agricultural industry. The majority are sympathetic toward the problems of the commercial farmers and support policies such as crop insurance and low interest farm loans designed to keep commercial farms viable. Most also favour the continuation of the agricultural land reserve system. Hobby farms co-exist comfortably with commercial agriculture and may well create opportunities for wage labour and beneficial leasing arrangements for full-time farmers.

Hobby farmers show high levels of contentment with the rural lifestyle. They enjoy the opportunities for experimentation and self-fulfillment that living on a hobby farm provides. Hobby farming holds a powerful appeal to many who perceive this way of life as satisfying, nurturing, peaceful and secure.
Hobby farming is undoubtedly a valid land use and a valuable part of the agricultural system. Hobby farms often supply the alternative and unusual products and provide the amenity services that are most desired by urban dwellers. At a time when commercial agriculture is becoming less attractive aesthetically, hobby farms add a finer visual texture to the rural landscape, retaining a form of agriculture that has existed in the Valley for a hundred years but is no longer economically viable. Only the hobby farmers with his other sources of income can afford to preserve the small-scale, mixed farm so common in the past. Punter suggests "the landscape is a living record of what exurbanites desire most from living in the countryside . . . and not only does it provide insights into their lifestyle but into their aspirations and motivations as well . . . the landscape is the legacy which is passed to to the next generation."\(^1\) The hobby farmer provides us with a much needed backward glimpse at a time when we tend only to look ahead.

Hobby farming plays a valuable role in preserving farm-land that may be needed for future food production and in preserving the rural infrastructure of farm goods and services--the feed stores and tack shops, the machinery and equipment suppliers, the veterinary clinics. The popularity of hobby farming ensures a healthy land market in an area with strict agricultural zoning yet pockets of land that must be considered unproductive in purely economic terms.
Hobby farming may be a permanent form of agricultural activity and lifestyle in the rural-urban fringe. It may be a transitional land use in an area that is gradually urbanizing or it may be a temporary use of land that will be more intensively farmed for future food needs. However, it is currently a valid and valuable activity that holds a strong appeal to many who will no doubt fight to ensure its survival in a countryside they perceive as an essential, nurturing environment in a world that is rapidly changing.
NOTES

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APPENDIX I

SAMPLING PROCEDURE

1. The 1981 Property Tax Assessment Roll for Surrey was used to list all properties that had received a farm tax exemption in 1981. This exemption is allowable in B.C. for properties of 4 or more hectares with an annual farm income of at least $1600 on the first four hectares and an amount equal to 5% of the actual value of the land for farm purposes that exceeds four hectares.

2. The resulting list of 1223 properties was alphabetized by owner to identify multiple parcel ownership. There were 836 owners.

3. Seventy corporate owners of 147 properties were removed from the list. These included both farm corporations such as Mud Bay Nurseries and Vanson Poultry Ltd. and development and holding companies such as Pan American Holdings Ltd. and Gill Developments. Ninety-seven non-resident owners of 130 properties were also removed from the list. Most of this land was being leased out.

4. The final list from which the sample was drawn included 669 owners of 957 properties. Multiple parcels were owned by 138 owners and the remaining 531 owners held a single property.

5. The sample was drawn using a random numbers table from Arkin and Colton, Tables for Statisticians. A total of 256 names were drawn in three draws.

6. The Fraser Valley Area Directory was then used to eliminate those in the 256 who listed their occupation as farmer on the assumption these owners would be full-time farmers and therefore would not fit into the study definition of hobby farmer.

7. As a result of this procedure, 81 owners, 32% of the sample, were removed. A further 36 owners could not be traced because they had sold their property within the previous year. This yielded a final sample of 139 resident owners.

8. The 139 owners were contacted by letter to describe the nature of the research and to request an interview. Each owner then received a follow-up phone call to arrange a specific interview time.
9. Ninety-one owners agreed to be interviewed. Twelve owners refused, nine had moved and the remainder were not interviewed for a variety of reasons including language problems with non-English speaking owners and the unsuitability of several owners who were no longer farming but were leasing out all their land.

10. Eighty-two owners were interviewed. The remaining nine were not in at the pre-arranged times and were reluctant to make other arrangements although five later filled in and mailed back questionnaires left in their mailboxes.

In general this sampling procedure was reasonably satisfactory. The initial listing of all farm properties from the tax roll was a tedious procedure but resulted in a complete population from which to draw the sample. The time lapse of several months between the compilation of the tax roll and the final interview time resulted in numerous moves and changes which were frustrating but inevitable. The choice of random sampling was highly satisfactory because it resulted in a much more unbiased and representative cross-section than any other type of sampling would have provided.
APPENDIX II

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How large is your farm property? __________
2. How long have you owned it? __________
3. Who owned it before you? (full-time farmer, part-time / hobby farmer, non-farmer, don't know) __________
4. Is any of your land leased out? For what purpose?
5. Where did you live before coming to this property?
6. Do you have a farm background? ___ Does your spouse? ___
7. About what amount or percentage of your property is used for: house and farm buildings? ____ crops? ____ pasture? ____ Woodland? ____ Vacant or unused land? __________
8. Is your unused land suitable for use or is it swampy, etc.?
9. Which of the following features do you have on your property? good quality soil ____ good drainage ____ good pasture ____ wooded area ____ stream, pond ____ a pleasant view ____ irrigation system ____
10. What particular features attracted you to purchase this property?
11. What is produced on your property? (types and amounts) crops (including vegetable garden) __________________________ livestock __________________________
12. Which of these are marketed and which are for your own use?
13. Are the total annual sales from your farm: under $2500? ____ $2500-$5000 ____ $5000-$10,000 ____ over $10,000 ____
14. What changes have you made to your property since purchasing it? (new buildings, renovations, landscaping, fencing, drainage, etc.)
15. What changes do you plan to make to the property in the future?
16. Within the next five years do you plan to:
   increase the size of your holding?
   move into farming full-time?
   sell your property?
   change or increase your production?

17. Who works on your farm property?
   self ___ spouse ___ other family members ___ (hours
   per week) hired labour regular? seasonal? occasional?

18. Are you employed off the farm? ___ Retired? ___
    Full-time? ___ Part-time? ___

19. Is your spouse employed off the farm? ___

20. What type of employment do you and your spouse have?
    professional ___ managerial ___ sales ___ clerical ___
    service ___ transport ___ processing/machine operator ___
    other ___

21. How important are your farm sales in relation to your
    total family income:
    provides less than 25% ___ provides between 25 and 50% ___
    provides more than 50% ___

22. What do you like about living on a farm property in
    this area?

23. Are there any problems with having a farm in this area?

24. Is your land in the Agricultural Land Reserve?

25. Do you feel it should be? Why or why not?

26. Do you feel agricultural land should be preserved as
    it is in B.C.? Why or why not?

27. Do you feel you would have a problem selling your
    property if you wished to or were forced to? Why?

28. Who would likely buy your property? (full-time farmer,
    part-time farmer, hobby farmer, non-farmer)

29. Would you agree to lease part of all of your land if
    requested? Why or why not?
30. Do you make use (or have you made use) of the following custom farm services:
   - clearing, plowing, harvesting
   - veterinary services
   - governmental agricultural services

31. Have you taken courses related to farming at local schools or colleges? If not, where/how were farm techniques learned?

32. How many times a month do you travel to Vancouver? For what purpose? (business, visiting, shopping, pleasure)

33. Are there any government policies that you would like to see changed or put in place to help commercial farmers or part-time/hobby farmers?