

Stan Hagen, Minister of Agriculture and Lands, and Matthew Stowe, Sonora Resort, join Bill Good to discuss Eating locally produced foods in BC

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Bill Good: Matthew Stowe, executive chef at Sonora Resort. Matthew and his staff use as much B.C. product as they can. Stan Hagen brought in some world-award-winning cheeses from the Comox Valley, Comox brie and Comox camembert finishing number one and two in the world in a recent judging. Incredible story.

This is coming in from Terri on e-mail. "A number of farmers' markets on the Lower Mainland have established indoor markets throughout the winter months as residents want to access local food year-round. The Coquitlam Farmers Market is holding its next winter market this Sunday, 12 till 5 at the Port Moody Recreational Complex. For more information about the winter markets you can go to www.makebakegrow.com."

That comes from Terri Evans, chair of the Coquitlam Farmers Market. Happy to pass that on. These farmers markets are a big part of the B.C. economy now. Stan Hagen: They sure are. They generate \$118 million worth of revenue activity. So they're.... And also.... I mean, the biggest thing is you know that the food you buy there is fresh.

Good: How much are we using locally, and how much are we actually exporting and selling outside B.C.?
Hagen: Well, we can't produce enough food in B.C. to feed our own people. There's a bit of trade, certainly — export — with cattle, for instance, but with the other products, we consume pretty much all of them.

Good: How much of it is sold really locally, like in farm markets?
Hagen: That's a really good question. That's a big deal. Farmers' markets provide a real opportunity for local small farmers. You know, over 90 percent — I think over 98 percent — of farms in B.C. are family farms. They're family owned. They're not big corporations or anything. I just visited the Courtenay farmers' market a couple of weekends ago, and it's really a great experience, because there, you walk into a place. You can actually talk to the farmer who grew the food. You can buy the carrots or onions or whatever you're buying.

Good: Yeah, we have that on the Sunshine Coast too. But in a place like Vancouver, you're more likely to go to a Lonsdale Quay or a Westminster Quay or Granville Island.

Hagen: Yeah, but it still provides opportunities.