

Honorable Rick Thorpe and Esteemed Panel Members:

Farm Assessment Review Panel Presentation:

LUSH Valley is a grassroots, non-profit, volunteer-run organization focusing on food security both at the kitchen-table level and within the community as a whole.

Launched in 1999, LUSH Valley is dedicated to developing, implementing and maintaining programs that promote adequate and nutritious foods, education, and food skills for the entire community. We have over 100 volunteers and 3 staff.

Taxing and assessing what a farm is and what it is not is a complex issue: there is no one-size to fit all circumstances, so close-to-fair will have to suffice. The key is that the rules must be transparent, consistent and, above all, targeted at encouraging and supporting innovative ways of producing more food and producing more value added foods closer to home.

1. There needs to be an ecological balance where it is recognized that farms include watershed and wet lands [lagooning], and natural vegetative growth close to streams and ocean shorelines. These non-farm acres are a necessity for healthy marine and water-born protein foods such as fish and shell fish. This land should not be taxed more than the productive farm land; just the opposite - they should be taxed less or not be taxed at all if they are set aside and protected to ensure ecological health and conservation.

2. Wood lots and forest buffer areas are a necessity and should be taxed the same and included in the farm assessment on those farms who meet the farming income minimum. For special circumstances like a Gary Oak grove this land should be recognized as parkland as it is impossible to farm it due to government regulations.

3. There should be a two-tier system to recognize:
 - A - The beginning farmer : 3-7 years depending on the produce/ crop, until it is reasonable to expect full usage of all available acres minus wet lands and woodlots, and the capacity to meet the income minimum target.

 - B - The established farmer: who already is and continues to meet all the above requirements.

4. So what should the definition of farming be - if you cannot eat it, drink it, feed the animals that we eat, use it as raw materials to wear it, or use it to medicate - then is

it farming? We suggest that production outside of these simple parameters isn't farming but a business located in a farming district and should not be farm exempt.

5. That the minimum farm income be set at 50% of the farmer's family's total income or \$10,000 gross income, whichever is the greater.
6. Retiring farmers should be encouraged to keep the land's tax exemption by leasing unused farmland to other farmers or cooperatives willing to farm the unused acres.
7. And; a retiring farmer willing to sell his land retains his farm tax status during the year in which the sale of the land occurs.
8. Land that is used for farming but which is not in the ALR should be allowed or encouraged to opt into the ALR to take advantage of the farm land exemptions.
9. The yearly application to be recognized as a farmer be replaced by a single application and the ongoing adherence to regulations should be enough to recognize an individual as a farmer.

A tax credit of no less than \$3,000.00 / year be allotted:

A - To each farmer who has to maintain a separate bathroom and office for the farm inspector to use on his/her visits to the farm. *-ie for meat processing facilities*

B - And, to each farmer willing to take on an apprentice farmer.

C - To each farmer who replaces his fossil fueled operation with alternatives until the project is paid for. These investments should be free of PST and GST.

And finally:

10. The ALR be requested to allow two permanent homes on each farm, as long as the second home is occupied by an individual working full-time on the farm and the owner farmer is meeting all the farm regulations.

Thank you for allowing us to present today.