

***“Growing Together”*: Multi-Year Partnership between FARMED and Integris Credit Union focused on supporting local agriculture, food security, community sustainability and creating connections across North-Central BC**

NEWS RELEASE

North Cariboo, BC: The North Cariboo Agricultural Marketing Association (FARMED) and Integris Credit Union have entered into a 3-year partnership that, even in its budding stage benefit local farms & families, local economy, FARMED, Integris members and communities throughout the region.

“Growing Together” is an innovative local/regional partnership focused on collaboration for the greater good with an emphasis on moving FARMED’s most recent project “Opportunities 2022” forward. “Opportunities 2022” is focused on *“Connecting Producers to Consumers and Increasing Food Security across the North Cariboo”*. This project has multiple components that build on the previous works of FARMED. Included are: i) Farm Fresh Product Guide V.3 (Hard Copy & Digital); ii) Interactive Mapping Web based Tool, which includes listings of local agriculture businesses (products and services), farm stands, retail outlets supporting local products, and a listing of local agriculture / food security related non-profits), and the use of Story Maps; iii) FARMED Kiosk and Highway Billboard Update; iv) Promotional and Online Marketing: 360 Deg. Tours and Videography; v) Celebratory Event to Launch the Project; vi) Inventory of regionally based businesses and non-profits supporting the agriculture / local food production / food security sector complete with a listing, by season, of the products grown and services provided; and vii) Listing of culturally significant wild foods regionally available with their Indigenous names, uses, harvesting tips, and ecology on which they grow.

“Growing Together” will also develop community/regional connections across North Central BC in an effort to expand our collective response in advancing local food sustainability and security. This will include hosting a “Food Security Round Table” and further looking at opportunities to expand both the membership for FARMED and for Integris.

“FARMED is excited and grateful for the opportunity to work with Integris Credit Union by ***“Growing Together”***. As a regionally based organisation with an approach focused on grassroots, collaboration, and partnerships, FARMED believes the stage is set for success in terms of furthering food security initiatives, sustainability, and creating linkages both across the North Cariboo and to the north and south. Heloise Dixon-Warren, Vice Chair with FARMED and one of the founding members states “FARMED has become a leading organisation for creating opportunities that support the regional agriculture sector and thereby a greener and more sustainable community. Through *“Growing Together”* and the Opportunities 2022 Project FARMED will be able to expand and deliver on its mandates and goals. FARMED is hopeful that the Opportunities 2022 Project will bring people and organisations together with an end result of a healthier, connected, and sustainable community both economically and socially.

“As the leading financial cooperative in Northern BC, Integris Credit Union is committed to enriching the lives of all we serve through financial expertise and innovative solutions to our communities,” says Dan Wingham, Integris Manager, Partnerships. “Our partnership with FARMED encourages producers and consumers to *choose local* when the opportunity exists so that collectively, we promote local/regional business sustainability, economic development, and food security. We are thrilled to enable a project that better informs and connects consumers to local producers while addressing challenges posed by supply chain issues, affordability and the environmental issues of moving food from elsewhere to market here in North Central BC. In concert with FARMED, we are investing in the success of local farms and families as part of our focus on local & regional food networks - we believe that connected-communities result in improved economic, social, environmental and community outcomes.”

FARMED was established in 2006 and is industry-led. It was established by a group of local farmers / agri-producers who were interested in having a grass-roots organisation focused on supporting farmers / ranchers / agri-tourism operators. FARMED today is one of the driving forces in the North Cariboo for the promotion of agriculture and agriculture-related business and marketing opportunities. Membership is composed of agri-business operators (farms / ranches), individuals, and organisations which are as diverse as the geographic area they live and operate in. FARMED is project oriented and has successfully undertaken many projects including the North Cariboo Agriculture Awareness and Marketing Project, sponsoring several Ag & Hort Leap Conferences, Art on the Farm, festivals and tours, as well as supporting the establishment of the Cariboo Regional District Agriculture Development Advisory Committee (ADAC) and the Sprout Kitchen Food Hub.

INTEGRIS is a financial cooperative - a credit union - headquartered in Prince George, BC with branches in PG, Quesnel, Vanderhoof, Fort St. James, Clinton and Fraser Lake. A credit union is a financial institution that is owned by its customers - we call them members. Over 75 years, Integris has grown to more than 27,000 member-owners who empower our \$1.8 billion financial cooperative. Integris impacts local/regional economies by enriching individuals, households, businesses and communities. Integris members choose to "bank local" because they benefit from annual member dividends (shared profit), local decision-making, community investment and real relationships with savvy local bankers, insurers, financial planners and wealth managers. The more business we earn, the more profit we return ... to our members and our communities.

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