



BC Fruit Growers' Association ***Friday File, December 11, 2015***

Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program ***Caribbean Program for 2016 - clarification***

The Canada-Caribbean Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) intergovernmental review meeting was held December 1-4, 2015. BCFGAs Vice-President Pinder Dhaliwal represented the BC Agriculture Council at the meeting.

Changes are similar to the Mexico SAWP for 2016:

1. The BC SAWP minimum wage for 2016 is \$10.59 per hour.
2. Piece work can be paid, but it must be no less than \$10.59 per hour. Growers must keep a record of hours worked, and have workers initial or sign the record of hours.
3. Meals may be provided and charged at a rate of \$6.00 per day for one meal, \$9.00 per day for two meals, and \$12.00 per day for three meals, as long as the meals are prepared by a third party (e.g. contracted) caterer and the meal plan is reviewed by a nutritionist. Workers may opt out of the meal plan and the employer remains obligated to provide facilities, time and equipment in order that the worker can prepare his/her own meals.
4. The worker will bring a copy of the employment agreement, signed by the worker and the government agent, to the employer. This will enable the employer to sign the copy and keep it on file.

In other Mexico SAWP news:

1. If the employer provides an advance on pay, then the proper CPP and EI must be deducted off of the salary advance. It is suggested that to ease the complexity of advances, that the employer may choose to provide a non-payroll cash advance (i.e. a loan or IOU), get a note on the amount and requirement to repay, and note be torn up when the worker repays the same cash amount.
2. The allowable housing deduction remains the same at \$6.20 per day worked, but the maximum increases to from \$682 per worker to \$826 per worker for the season. After the maximum is reached or after employment ends, employers must provide housing at no cost to the worker until they go home.
3. The Jamaican Liaison Service, with an office in Kelowna, will continue to provide support for the program. (Mexico gave notice that it would be reducing the services it provides in BC, by moving to a BC producer-funded organization such as FERMES and FARMS in

Quebec and Ontario. The change in Mexico's support and how BC will adjust is a current topic of discussion at BC Agriculture Council).

4. Payment of the work visa work permit by the employer may be discontinued after December 1, 2015. If discontinued, then the worker will pay the visa work permit directly to Canadian Immigration in their home country.



Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program Mexican Program for 2016 - clarification

This is a clarification on the update in the last newsletter, regarding the annual intergovernmental review meeting for the Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) held November 24-25, 2015.

The previous update on allowable housing deduction did not adequately clarify that growers that the SAWP contract requires growers to provide housing for workers and that a housing fee may only be deducted from the workers' pay on the days worked. The allowable housing deduction from pay is set out in the employment agreement.

For days not worked and for the period of time after work ends, employers must provide housing at no cost to the worker until they go home (e.g. housing deduction cannot be made for days the employee is not working).

Seasonal Agricultural Worker Housing Inspectors - certified

Keith Suftin	Kelowna (travels no charge 2 hours)	250-317-3349
Brad Pears	Kelowna	250-717-6434
Barry Chickloski	Penticton	250-490-1118
Dwight Carroll	Kelowna	250-470-8467
Hugh Cairns	Kelowna	250-808-5777
Mike Bradshaw	Kelowna	250-870-8340

Agritourism proposals raise concern Agriculture Land Commission

The province issued a ['white paper' to initiate discussion on the regulation of agritourism operations located in the ALR](#). The white paper proposes a Minister's bylaw standard. Examples regulated activities are farm markets located on the farm property (at least 50% of the product must be from the grower's own farm), overnight accommodation (maximum 10 units, used seasonally). Other regulated activities considered in the agritourism white paper are events, such as weddings. The white paper proposes that events require permits, and in some instances a business plan. Cities and regional districts may regulate using bylaws, imposing tighter restrictions than the Minister's bylaw standard.

The Ministry of Agriculture released the white paper on October 8 and originally set a deadline of November 30 for comment. Ministry staff has consulted with municipalities for input prior to the deadline, but did not approach the BC Agriculture Council, stating the BCAC had its input when Bill 20 to amend the Agriculture Land Commission Act was discussed (recall that BCAC was consulted only after agriculture associations complained). The BCAC does not agree that it has been consulted on the items in the white paper. The deadline for comment on the white paper has now been extended to January 15, 2016. At this time, the government staff are stating that input will be received from agritourism organizations. The BCFGa and BCAC intend to directly address issues with the Minister of Agriculture and MLAs before the January 15 deadline.

The BCAC board discussed the white paper on December 8. Concerns being discussed include:

- the bureaucratic red tape and delay involved in getting permits or permission.
- the confusion and lack of competitiveness when different municipalities impose different bylaw regulations for agritourism (e.g. the current situation for overnight accommodation, where different municipalities have different numbers of overnight rooms permitted).
- lack of consultation.

BCAC will be seeking input from member associations. If you have any comments, please forward them to the BCFGa General Manager or President (glucas@bcfga.com or fsteele@bcfga.com)

Apple Maggot Update

An update from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency is attached. No further Apple Maggots have been detected. CFIA will continue its trapping program and increase the number of traps in the neighbourhood of the single detection.

Provincial Agriculture and Seafood Plan Province wants growth

Provincial Agriculture Minister Norm Letnick announced the B.C. Agrifood and Seafood Strategic Growth Plan on December 2. The plan will seek to increase agrifood sales from \$12.3 billion in 2014 to \$15 billion in 2020, an increase of 22%, or roughly 3.1% annually, compounded.

The plan has a focus on

- Achieving economic growth;
- Adapting to climate change; and,
- Maintaining food supply security.

Twenty actions are set out in the plan, with the most relevant to the tree fruit sector:

How to contact the BCFGA Office

<p>BCFGA Office <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>250-762-5226 or toll free 1-800-619-9022</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brenda Zarr, Member Services and Replant Admin, local 1. • Glen Lucas, General Manager, local 2. • Sheila MacGregor, Accountant, local 3. • Bunvir Nijjer, Corporate Secretary and Seasonal Agriculture Worker Program, local 4.
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This newsletter prepared by Glen Lucas - contact me with any errors or omissions at glucas@bcfga.com

Dates and Events

Check [the calendar on our website](#) for more information



Date	Event
December 8	BCAC Board meeting - Fred Steele (Vice-Chair of BCAC) and Glen Lucas attending.
December 10	BCAC Labour Committee - Pinder Dhaliwal (Co-Chair of the committee) and Glen Lucas attending.
December 10-11	Agriculture and Climate Change Adaptation, workshop in Kelowna (contact BCFGA if you are interested in attending)
December 14	next BCFGA Executive meeting
December 16	CHC Labour Committee conference call - Glen Lucas attending
December 16	Fruit and Tree Nut Biosecurity Advisory Committee conference call - Glen Lucas attending
December 16	Okanagan SAWP Housing Inspectors workshop - organized by BCFGA to discuss inspection process, with the purpose bringing consistency to housing inspections. Pinder Dhaliwal, Glen Lucas and Bunvir Nijjer attending.
December 31, 2015	AgriStability application deadline for 2015 (with penalty)
January 12 and 14, 2016	BCFGA District Council meetings
January 27	BCAC Agriculture Gala: for tickets www.bcac.bc.ca - this event usually sells out, so register early.
January 29-30	BCFGA Annual Convention, Ramada Hotel, Kelowna