

**BC Fruit Growers' Association
Friday File**

July 31, 2015



Water

Hot weather is returning. Water supplies will be under stress - more so next year if water supplies are not fully recharged over the winter. The BCFGA is pleased that it is able to promote our industry and its growers who use water responsibly. By demonstrating that growers and the industry continue to seek efficient water use, the supply of water for orchard use will be more secure.

The Okanagan Basin Water Board provided an on-line update on water supply and climate July 27, 2015. Denise McDonald, BCFGA Executive member responsible for water and environment, and Glen Lucas, BCFGA General Manager, joined in the 'webinar'. Points that we noted from the webinar:

- In the Okanagan, more winter precipitation fell as rain and the melt of snow occurred earlier in the season, so water flowed into streams earlier in the season than normal.
- Okanagan Reservoirs are currently at 60-100% of full capacity.
- Based on the water consumption curve we are currently about 50% of the way through the season.
- Aquifers, as monitored by readings from wells appear to be at normal volumes for this time of year, with the exception of the Rutland municipal water wells, which are experiencing a long-term decline.
- Natural creek flows (where reservoirs are not in place) are at 20-50% of normal, and in some places even lower. In these 'unreservoired' creeks, flows are at mid- to late-September flows.
- There was no assessment of how likely reservoirs will be filled over the coming winter.
- El Nino will continue into 2016, so there will be warmer temperatures over the winter (less stored as upland snow and earlier melt in Spring).
- El Nino is not a strong driver of summer weather.

Currently the SW coast is at stage 4 drought while the Okanagan is at stage 3 drought. If there is not significant rain, then the expected hot-dry weather will expand the Stage 4 drought conditions East towards the Okanagan. Although the presentation did not make a projection, it

appears to BCFGAs representatives that Okanagan reservoir storage and well water sources should be sufficient for the season and a stage 4 drought rating should not be needed in the Okanagan. However, conservation efforts should be encouraged as reservoirs may not be fully replenished next Spring.

You can access some great irrigation management information and tools at Farm West, www.farmwest.com. Find out about irrigation needs and irrigation efficiency. Growers should stay within allocation so there is room to irrigate trees in Fall for winter protection.

During the hot weather, many growers use overhead cooling. For overhead cooling, make sure to monitor weather and only use when needed.

Biosecurity

CONSULTATION: CFIA National Voluntary Fruit and Tree Nut Biosecurity Standard

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) under agreement with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) and in partnership with the Canadian Horticultural Council (CHC) is collaborating with stakeholders on the development of a [voluntary biosecurity standard](#) that will help protect Canada's fruit and tree nut industry from plant pests. This voluntary standard provides the framework for a nationally consistent approach to controlling plant pests in the fruit and tree nut industry.

The standard for the fruit and tree nut industry will:

- provide guidelines for biosecurity, including prevention and integrated pest management;
- promote a nationally consistent approach to mitigating pest risks with clear guidelines for effective biosecurity;
- enhance industry's knowledge of the risks associated with pests; and
- help identify potential gaps in current biosecurity measures.

A producer guide will accompany the standard and provide additional information on approaches that can be used to achieve the biosecurity goals identified in the standard. Development of the producer guide will begin following the completion of the standard and it is anticipated that it will be available to stakeholders by the end of the 2016 calendar year

The Fruit and Tree Nut Biosecurity Advisory Committee that was established by the CFIA, AAFC and industry partners has developed a [draft of the farm-level biosecurity standard](#).

BCFGA members are invited to provide input into this initial draft of the standard to ensure it reflects the needs of the fruit producers. Forward your comments to the BCFGAs: info@bcfga.com

The due date for this consultation is September 30, 2015. Input submitted by this date will be gathered and provided to the CFIA and Canadian Horticultural Council by the BCFGAs.

Your input into *The National Voluntary Farm-Level Biosecurity Standard for the Fruit and Tree Nut Industries* is greatly appreciated.

Labour

Several articles in the news have appeared on the disappearance of four farm workers from a Vernon area farm. Normally, this would not be news, but in this case the workers are here from Mexico on the Seasonal Agriculture Worker Program (SAWP). It is very rare for SAWP workers to disappear. Many SAWP workers and employers can and do request transfers from one farm to another, but for workers to disappear is almost unknown.

There is speculation that the workers are trying to enter the US illegally at the US-Canadian border, as the workers took their identification but left other items on the farm. The workers also did not inform the employer of any intention to leave the farm, and are considered AWOL (Away WithOut Leave). As a result, the employment contract is considered broken, and the farmer is under no obligation to take the workers back if they return. Since the location of the ex-workers are unknown, there is a concern that they are vulnerable and their safety could be compromised.

SAWP workers are allowed to stay in Canada for a period of time (stated on their Visa), and also allowed to work on a specific farm (or farms, if proper transfers are approved). It is not illegal for the worker to leave the farm and stay in Canada for the duration of their approved stay in Canada - though they could not legally work in Canada and very likely would not be invited back next season under the SAWP program.

Please refer press inquiries to the BCFGA - 250-762-5226.



The flyer features a Facebook logo with the text 'bc.cherries' on the left. On the right is the BCFGA logo, which includes a basket of fruit and the text 'BC FRUIT GROWERS ASSOCIATION', '125 YEARS', and 'est. 1889'. The central text reads 'BCFGA BC LABOUR PROJECT', 'Ron Forrest, Facilitator', '(250) 859-7503', and 'rforrest.bcfga@gmail.com'. At the bottom, it says 'WORKSHOPS!' and 'EMPLOYMENT!'.

Summerland Varieties Corporation and the BCFGA Research and Development Orchard Ltd. provide funding for the BCFGA Labour Project - thank you to these BCFGA subsidiaries for supporting growers.

