

# BCFGA



# Bulletin

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**May 26, 2010**  
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## Grower Meetings

BCFGA grower meetings are being held to provide an update on BCFGAs events and to provide an opportunity for member input. The meeting will review the activities of the BCFGAs to gain public and government support to assist with past two years of poor market returns for apples. An update on AgriStability advance payments and the situation of other agriculture sectors will be provided. Also, longer-term strategy will be reviewed, with respect to market competition. Activities relating to the industry strategy will also be reviewed. An opportunity for input and discussion of BCFGAs direction will follow each agenda item.

### Agenda:

1. Update on BCFGAs public relations events and proposals to government.
2. Review of short-term financial assistance programs: AgriStability and AgriInvest.
3. Update on industry strategy: competition and the 2007 industry strategy.
4. Crop protection, Labour and Water updates.



Discussion and opportunity for member input will follow each agenda item.



### **BCFGA Meeting for North District members**

Time: 7:30 – 9:00 pm  
Date: Wednesday, June 9, 2010  
Place: Coast Capri Hotel, Kelowna



### **BCFGA Meeting for South District members**

Time: 7:30 – 9:00 pm  
Date: Thursday, June 10, 2010  
Place: Sandman Hotel, Penticton

## **Drought**

The Ministry of Environment (BCME) issued a general advisory regarding the potential for low stream flows and water-supply shortages this summer:

[www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news\\_releases\\_2009-2013/2010ENV0024-000542.htm](http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2009-2013/2010ENV0024-000542.htm).

A Drought Management Plan has been developed by the BCME, which is based on four levels of drought: currently, much of the tree fruit growing area is in level 3 drought.

The BCFGAs participate in and coordinate the Okanagan Agriculture Water Committee, with Cattle, Dairy, Grapes, and Vegetables represented as well. The committee will be meeting June 9 to discuss water issues, especially restrictive water dates and volumes for agriculture producers that have been imposed by some water supply systems.

## **Climate Change**

The BC Agriculture Council's Climate Action Initiative has gathered information and developed direction and plans for the past two years. It is expected that the program will be renewed for a further term. For all the information on the Climate Action Initiative, visit

[www.bcagclimateaction.ca/](http://www.bcagclimateaction.ca/)

## **Irrigation Scheduling Calculator**

*On line*

The Irrigation Scheduling Calculator that Andrew Petersen and Stephanie Tam have been working on the past few years is available online. The calculator will provide users with an irrigation schedule using real time climate data. It works for most irrigation systems in British Columbia. The tool is part of the commitment on "improving irrigation efficiency" under Living Water Smart – the provincial water policy developed last year. The development was funded by the National Water Supply Expansion Program in partnership with the Irrigation Industry Association of British Columbia .

You can access the calculator by clicking on the calculator tab on the website link

[www.irrigationbc.com](http://www.irrigationbc.com).

## **Changes to the Lobbyist Registration Act**

*What we do in our spare time*

The BC government has implemented significant changes to the Lobbyist Registration Act effective April 1, 2010. The changes expand the definition of lobbying, increase registration and reporting requirements, and empower the registrar to investigate non-compliance, as well as issue penalties up to \$25,000. The BCFGAs registered as a lobby organization, as the threshold for doing so (100 hours per year of all work related to lobbying, including preparation and analysis) is now draconian compared to the previous standard (5% of time in actual meetings). In addition, the new law forces association senior managers to register as in-house lobbyists, though the actual act of lobbying may be an insignificant amount of their time.

## The Farm Income Situation

### BCFGA Events

*12 cent sales make point*

The BCFGGA Executive considered, as early as October last year, the acute farm income problem for tree fruit growers. The Executive discussed the potential for gaining a direct payment to growers and for achieving other types of assistance for growers and the industry, through programs. Recalling that a downturn in prices had created a crisis in the 2004-2005 farm income for apples, it was notable that the result of the previous, intensive BCFGGA lobby effort for a direct producer payment was funding for an industry strategy and subsequently \$8 million in funding for the replant/removal program, as well as a commitment of \$1.5 million to innovation projects from BC Investment Agriculture. The Executive concluded that it was important to develop a complete lobby strategy - if direct funding or project funding needs to be achieved to assist with the acute income crisis, then building the support of the public was essential.

The BCFGGA Executive met with the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, Hon. Steve Thomson, to formally request program and direct assistance for growers on the following occasions:

- Brief presented to provincial Minister of Agriculture on October 28, 2009.
- Hosted the federal and provincial Ministers of Agriculture at the January 2010 BCFGGA Annual Convention.
- Brief presented to provincial Minister on March 10, 2010.

Many other informal meetings with the Minister have provided the opportunity to establish the need of the industry in this time of acute income crisis.

Meetings with local Members of Parliament and Members of the Legislative Assembly have supplemented the direct approaches to the Ministers of agriculture. Executive members have met with MLA's and MP's. Thank you to the growers who accompanied Executive at these meetings, as well as the growers who took initiative to contact or meet directly with politicians.

On top of the direct approach to politicians, a public approach to the industry's crisis was considered necessary by the Executive. It was noted that the approach to win the hearts and minds of the public needed to be relevant to the way the public looks at agriculture:

- there are fewer direct connections to the farm sector by most of the population, and their main way of looking at agriculture is a source of safe and fresh produce, especially if it is locally produced.
- there is 'protest fatigue' – and potential for backlash against the protest, as noted when the recent Olympic protests failed due to their confrontational attacks on private property and interference with the public.
- the public wants to know what it can do to help: recent donations for international natural disasters shows that if the public understands the need and a mechanism is established to demonstrate support, then the public will engage in the issue.

With this background in mind, the Executive (based on a previous experience of Peter Simonsen), developed the concept of selling apples at \$0.12 per pound to demonstrate the small producer share of the retail purchase price for apples. Events have been held at farm markets, further reinforcing the 'local producer' message:

- Kelowna Farm Market (5,000 pounds of apples sold), April 3
- Abbotsford Farm Market (7,200 pounds of apples sold), April 24
- James Bay Farm Market (Victoria, 6,400 pounds of apples to be sold), May 29

The local farm market boards of directors have been very good in supporting the BCFGAs sale. All proceeds from the sales are donated to worthy causes – the Kelowna proceeds are donated to the local food banks, the Abbotsford proceeds are donated to the Children’s Hospital, and the Victoria proceeds will be donated to the BC Association of Farmers’ Markets.

Public support at the events has been overwhelming – the public understands the purpose of our being at the farm markets and they ask “what can we do to help?” A brochure was developed to let individuals at the events know how they can help (The answer, in simple terms, is ‘buy local’ and let the politicians know that farming and the ALR go together and support is needed). The media coverage of these events has also been extremely good, as they are not the typical type of protest, and the novelty aspect is important in attracting the coverage. An opinion editorial in support of the campaign was written by Peter Simonsen and has been published in the Kelowna Capital News, with reports of positive reaction to the description of the unlevel competitive playing field that BC apple producers face. Finally, we are encouraging everyone at the events to visit a facebook page, operated independently by a local Kelowna grower Nadene Casorso, as a show of support for Okanagan tree fruit growers. The website address is

[www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=325173912775&v=info](http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=325173912775&v=info)

or you can do a google search on “I support Okanagan tree fruit growers” to find the page.

*Signing up for the Facebook Page means Public Support for Industry*

#### **Ministers: ‘No Direct Payments to Growers’**

#### *Programs and Other Industry Help Possible*

On April 20, Steve Thomson, the provincial Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, was interviewed on CBC radio. He noted the ability and desire to work with the industry in overcoming the current income crisis, but announced that there would be no direct payment made to individual growers. Since that time, the BCFGAs Executive has considered what types of program options would be helpful to the industry, though there is deep concern about the negative impact of the decision not to provide direct funding. Programs discussed have included those that support the industry strategy and that follow-up on strategic studies done over the past year as part of the Orchard and Vines Transition Program. A formal response from government is expected shortly. Growers will be asked for input and direction at the June 9 and 10 BCFGAs grower meetings.

#### **BCAC Supports Call for General Direct Payment to Farmers**

At a meeting of producer representatives to the provincial business risk management advisory committee, the BCAC noted that the farm income situation as an overall average for BC producers has declined for four years, following a previous 10 year positive trend. Nationally, Agriculture and AgriFood Canada is projecting negative net farm income for the agriculture sector in 2010.

With this background, President Garnet Etsel will develop a recommendation, for consideration at BCAC and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, to seek a special federal payment to growers due to the decline in net farm incomes to an unsustainable level.

**Workplace Training for Innovation Pilot Program:** If you are contemplating training for any of your staff, you may be eligible for up to \$1,500 per worker up to a maximum of \$5,000 per business. The key aspect of the program is the employer's choice to identify and choose employee training that will assist them to:

- a. improve productivity;
- b. support the introduction of new technology, machinery/equipment or work processes;
- c. enhance international competitiveness; and/or
- d. introduce innovative training and workplace strategies to increase the long term competitiveness of the organization and its workforce.

It is expected that this training will assist in positioning the employer for economic recovery. For more information, please go to the following site: [www.aved.gov.bc.ca/workplace\\_training\\_program](http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/workplace_training_program)

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### **BCFGA Services for Seasonal Agriculture Worker Program**

For growers who demonstrate a shortage of workers (determined by a lack of response to job ads), temporary foreign workers from Mexico and the Caribbean are available. A self-help information kit is available to BCFGAs members, as well as a service (\$45 per worker) for those growers who want additional help in filling out forms and follow-up with the government agencies. Contact Elaine Miedema at 250-762-5226 extension 21 for further information.

The Mexican consulate has issued a "best practices" information brochure for those growers who already have or are preparing to host Mexican workers:  
[www.bcfga.com/files/2010 Best Practices for SAWP.pdf](http://www.bcfga.com/files/2010%20Best%20Practices%20for%20SAWP.pdf)

An alternate to the Mexican program, the Jamaican Liaison Service provides orientation and ongoing support service for both employee and employer when the worker arrives in Kelowna. Jamaican workers also speak English as a first language, making communications easier for growers. For further information, contact

Donna Adams, Deputy Chief Liaison Officer Cell (250) 869 – 6288

Email : donna.adams@jamaicanliaisonservice.com

Sasha – Ann Smith, Liaison Officer Cell (250) 869 - 5940

Email: sasha.smith@jamaicanliaisonservice.com

## **BCFGA NEW WORKER ORIENTATION WORKSHOPS 2010**

Are you interested in improving worker productivity? Lessening work-related accidents in your orchard? Having workers brought directly to you? Getting to watch how people work and then getting to choose your hires?

If so, then the BCFGa workshop is for you!

This summer, the BCFGa will continue to work in partnership with the Farm and Ranch Safety and Health Association (FARSHA), Okanagan Tree Fruit Cooperative field staff, and the job placement services at Okanagan French Employment Services (CFSEO) and WorkZone to improve worker safety and productivity in the orchard. This in turn can help improve worker-employer relationships, as the workers are educated to be respectful and work hard, and the farmer in turn gets responsible, safety conscientious employees.

Topics covered will be general orchard safety, such as proper ladder use, crop and tree damage prevention, avoiding heat stroke, as well as cherry picking and apple thinning techniques. The workshops are a couple hours long, and include a free lunch and transportation for those who attend. Afterwards, the attendees receive a wallet-sized certificate proving they took the workshop, and come out better educated and prepared to work.

Available to be given all throughout the Okanagan, in the past the BCFGa workshops have proven to be a positive experience for all parties. The workshop can also provide some on-site training for your employees while they are waiting to start.

On the part of the farmer, all we need is to borrow a few ladders, some buckets, and your orchard for a couple of hours so we can do practical demonstrations of proper ladder use and picking/thinning techniques. We also encourage farmers to inform us on their specific preferences and techniques for picking and thinning, personalizing the training specific to your orchard! If you already have your workers and are still interested, we can come to you and give them the workshop. Even experienced pickers take this workshop. In the past, many farmers hired their workers on site afterwards.

Workshops are available until the end of July, though many orchardists prefer to have the workshop prior to the beginning of picking/thinning season.

*Available in French, English, and partial Spanish.*

Workshops are available immediately, and if you are interested, it is **free** for both the farmer and the workers, and can be scheduled at your convenience!

Contact Ronald Forrest or Alexa Creelman at:

[rforrest.bcfga@gmail.com](mailto:rforrest.bcfga@gmail.com) 250 859 3354

[Alexa.bcfga@gmail.com](mailto:Alexa.bcfga@gmail.com) 250 859 3358

# Registration Form

## Labour Listing on BCFGGA Website

BCFGGA members can list information on the BCFGGA website to advertise jobs for thinning, picking and sorting. The service is offered at no cost. If you are interested in this service, fill out this form and fax it to 250-861-9089 or call us at 1-800-619-9022, ext. 21.

Grower Number:	
Grower Name	
Cell Phone	
Email	
Website	
Facilities (e.g. camping, bbq, fridge, locked storage, showers and toilets, bus route)	

Commodity	Harvest Start Date day/mo	Harvest End Date day/mo	Number Required in Crew		
			Thinning	Harvest	Sorting
<i>e.g. Apples</i>	<i>01/09</i>	<i>15/10</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>0</i>

## **CFA President Moves On**

CFA President Laurent Pellerin stepped down following his appointment to Chair the Farm Products Council of Canada. The two CFA Vice-Presidents will share the responsibility for the CFA Presidency until next February's CFA Annual Convention. The Vice-Chairs are Ron Bonnet, an Ontario farmer, and Garnet Etsell, a turkey farmer from Abbotsford, BC who is also current Chair of the BC Agriculture Council. For further information: [www.cfa-fca.ca](http://www.cfa-fca.ca)

## **Investment Agriculture Foundation's AGM**

IAF held its Annual General Meeting in April, with board members selected. Tree fruit and grape representative, Don Claridge, is in the second year of his term on the BCIAF Board. For further information : [www.iafbc.ca](http://www.iafbc.ca)

## **BCAC Annual Meeting**

*Four New Board Members*

Representatives from BC Agriculture Council (BCAC) member organizations met March 17th for the Council's 2010 Annual General Meeting – Kirpal Boparai represented the BCFGa.

A number of changes to the BCAC Board of Directors were endorsed at the meeting. Ken Vandeburgt (dairy) takes over from Cornelis Hertgers; Vander Waal (nursery) replaced Sandy Mathies; Ray VanMarrewyk (greenhouse) is a new position; and Lynda Atkinson (horse) replaced Ken Huber as the horse sector representative. Huber was involved in a very serious car accident in late January, and the entire BCAC Board wished him every success in his long road to recovery.

Dennis Lapierre (community agriculture) was elected by the BCAC Board as the new Vice-Chair. Garnet Etsell was re-elected as Chair, Christine Dendy as Treasurer and Rhonda Driediger as the fourth Executive Member.

The Honourable Steve Thomson, Minister of Agriculture and Lands, addressed the delegates and committed to working with the industry to find creative solutions to the challenges facing BC agriculture, given the difficult fiscal environment currently faced by government.

Topics discussed at the meeting included:

- A new stable funding mechanism. The goal of the initiative is to provide a secure funding base that will support the wide range of activities that BCAC undertakes on behalf of farmers and ranchers from across the province.
- A review of the Agriculture Land Reserve legislation and regulations.
- The farm income crisis.

The meeting also heard an enthusiastic presentation from Chef Trevor Randle of the Maple Ridge Secondary School on the Take a Bite of BC Program – which is run by the BC Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation and has been successful in bringing fresh BC products to the teaching kitchens of 14 secondary schools in the Lower Mainland.

## The HST and BC Agriculture

*The tax everyone loves to hate*

The BC Agriculture Council is in full support of eliminating the Provincial Sales Tax (PST) and replacing it and the GST with the new Harmonized Sales Tax (HST). The Council had been asking for changes to the antiquated PST for several years, and the HST system being implemented in July 2010 is fully consistent with our efforts to change the system, and is actually better than the previous options developed with government.

Effective July 1, 2010, B.C.'s PST will be eliminated and a 7% B.C. rate will be added to the 5% GST forming a combined HST of 12%. If your business is registered for GST, you are automatically registered for HST. Farm products that are currently considered zero rated for GST purposes (i.e. taxable at 0%) will continue to be zero-rated under the HST system (e.g. milk, grain, meat, poultry, produce, eggs, etc.). If GST currently applies to your farm production (e.g. non-food items sold in a farm market), HST will also apply.

With respect to farm inputs, farmers and ranchers have been paying a conservative estimate of \$15 million every year in PST on farm input purchases that could not be claimed back. The PST exempt list is very specific and does not include many big ticket items such as construction materials, vehicles and replacement parts. As new technology is developed it has been subject to PST until the equipment is added to that exemption list in some subsequent year, if ever. In addition, the aggressiveness of provincial sales tax auditors towards farm supply businesses has been affecting the willingness of some small business owners to recognize the exemption list, and was therefore forcing farmers to pay the tax even on exempt items, and then file for a rebate.

What the HST will do for British Columbia farm inputs compared to the current system:

1. Farm inputs exempt under PST and zero-rated under GST will continue to be zero-rated under the HST, and therefore purchased without paying any tax, e.g.: feed, fertilizers, seed, farm equipment and machinery, livestock purchases.
2. Farm inputs exempt from the PST but subject to GST will be subject to HST when purchased, but will be fully eligible for a refund: e.g. veterinary fees and drugs, custom feeding, machinery lease and rental, hand tools.
3. Farm inputs subject to PST will now be subject to the HST when purchased, but fully eligible for a refund, e.g.: pick-up trucks used on the farm, computers and office equipment used in the farm's business and construction material.

Producers should seek further information:

BC HST web pages: <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/gncy/hrmnztn/bc/menu-eng.html>

CRA General Business enquiries: 1 800 959-5525

The BCFGAs has included an information bulletin on HST and agriculture, written by Grant Thornton accountants, on our website: [www.bcfga.com/files/file/An HST update for BC Fruit Growers.pdf](http://www.bcfga.com/files/file/An%20HST%20update%20for%20BC%20Fruit%20Growers.pdf)

## Tree Fruit Innovation Fund Update

The Tree Fruit Innovation Fund (TFIF) provides up to \$1.5 million in funding to support the tree fruit industry's strategic plan. Funding is provided by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries via funds administrator BC Investment Agriculture Council. For further information on the strategic plan, visit our website [www.bcfga.com](http://www.bcfga.com) and select the "Tree Fruit Industry Strategy" item.

The following projects are approved for the 2010 year:

### 2010 Project Summary

Project Number	Project Title	Total Budget	BCIAF Funding	Multi-Year Project?	Strategic Goal / applicant *
1	Registering Growers for Food Safety	110,363	73,943	Y	Markets / OTFC
2	Traceability in Co-operative Packinghouses	276,313	185,130	N	Markets / OTFC
3	Pathology and Orchard Health	207,149	138,790	Y	Quality / OTFC
4	Pilot Projects for SIR Sustainability	149,265	100,008	Y	Markets / SIR
5	--				
6	New Varieties Testing and Field Practices Program	12,500	8,400	Y	New Varieties/ NVDC
7	Bin Liner Assessment - Commercial-scale Trial	30,396	20,365	Y	Quality / OTFC
8	Quality Testing Technology at Receiving Station	24,804	16,619	N	Quality / OTFC
9	--				
10	Investigation and Control of Cherry Powdery Mildew	63,364	42,454	Y	Quality/ OTFC
15	SIR Web-based GIS Pilot	30,000	20,100	Y	Markets/ SIR
17	MacIntosh Storage Quality	78,175	52,377	Y	Markets/ OTFC
<b>Total</b>		<b>982,329</b>	<b>658,186</b>		

\* OTFC = Okanagan Tree Fruit Cooperative, SIR = Sterile Insect Release Program, NVDC = New Variety Development Council.

## **BCFGA Golden Jubilee Bursary**

April 12, 2010

My name is Scott Nicolson and I was one of the recipients of your Golden Jubilee Bursary. Having just completed my Masters program I have just returned home to find your letter, so I would like to apologize for not getting back to you sooner. I would like to sincerely thank you and the BCFGAs for awarding me as one of the successful applicants for the bursary. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,  
Scott Nicolson



## **Winner of Door Prize at Annual Convention**

The winner of the lawnmower, provided by Farmco Equipment Sales, was BCFGAs member Jasbir Kullar of Kelowna.

## **Laurel Packinghouse – Renovation**

The historic Laurel Packinghouse in Kelowna, which housed the Orchard Museum, is being renovated to deal with structural problems of an earlier renovation. The funding required to complete the renovation is provided by the federal, provincial and Kelowna municipal governments. The redevelopment of displays and the finishing of the interior are, however, not part of the government funding and the Kelowna Museums Society is conducting a fundraising program to support the renewal of the Orchard Industry Museum. Enclosed in this newsletter, for Kelowna area BCFGAs members, is a donation information package.

The BCFGAs has agreed to approve a Tree Fruit Industry Development Project of up to \$7,500 to match grower donations.

## **Canadian Federation of Agriculture 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

*Contest!*

CFA's Photo Contest and Best Producer Awards were launched at the AGM. Visit the 75th anniversary page to learn more about our contests and download the application forms. Deadline for contest submission is September 10, 2010. The awards will be presented at a special Awards Banquet on October 20, 2010.

**BCFGA Kelowna Office**  
**Telephone: in Kelowna, call 250-762-5226**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Telephone (Extension)</b>
<b>Glen Lucas</b>	General Manager	1-800-619-9022 (23)
<b>Elaine Miedema</b>	Member Services Coordinator	1-800-619-9022 (21)
<b>Sheila MacGregor</b>	Accountant	1-800-619-9022 (22)
<b>Deb Gibbard</b>	Finance and Administration Officer	1-800-665-5254 (Summerland)

**Josèe Larocque**

*back in 6 months*

You may have noticed the BCFGAs newsletter has reverted to an earlier format. This is due to the maternity leave of our staff member who took over the preparation of the newsletter several editions ago.

Our BCFGAs public relations and events coordinator, Josèe Larocque, who started work last year, had a happy, healthy baby girl Lea, born on March 29, 2010. Josèe plans to be on maternity leave for about 6 months.

### **New scholarship available for agriculture studies**

Canada's Outstanding Young Farmers Program has introduced the OYF Memorial Scholarship, to be awarded annually to an individual pursuing post secondary education in agriculture.

**Award:**

One \$1000 scholarship awarded annually

**Eligibility:**

Open to any individual in Canada pursuing post secondary education leading to a diploma or degree in agriculture.

**How to Apply:**

Each applicant will be required to fill out this application form and forward it by *June 30th*. Visit the following website for further information: [www.oyfcanada.com/scholarship.aspx](http://www.oyfcanada.com/scholarship.aspx)

## Replant and Removal Funds - update

The Replant program, with \$3 million in funding provided by the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, is now fully allocated with a waiting list in place. In previous years, the replant program has been able to fund the wait list with funds released from approved projects that did not go ahead or were scaled back.

### Replant, as of May 12, 2010

		clients
Total Funds	3,000,000	
Admin costs	300,000	
2008	692,724	115
2009	827,787	122
2010	<u>926,592</u>	109
	252,897	
Grafting		
2008	36,734	11
2009	74,553	14
2010	<u>81,195</u>	17
	60,415	
2009 O/S	52,300	
2008O/S	<u>4,175</u>	1
	3,940	
2008 O/S G/B	-	
2009O/S G/B	<u>1,407</u>	
balance	<u>2,533</u>	

Removal Program as of May 12, 2010				
			acres	clients
total available net of admin.	\$ 3,600,000			
Paid 2008	746,330		461	132
Paid 2009	781,591		483	184
Applied 2010	1,282,554		792	204
Applied 2011	252,472		156	32
			1,892	552
	537,054			
	o/s 2009	35,450		
	o/s 2008	<u>7,819</u>		
<b>Remaining funds</b>	<b>493,785</b>			
	\$		acres	clients
	<b>Paid 2010</b>	714,158	441	132
	o/s 2010	568,395		

The Removal program uptake in the past year has accelerated, mainly due to removals of winter-damaged vines (any crop insurance are deducted from the removal payment). It is anticipated that the program, with about \$4.2 million in funds provided by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, may run out of funds and growers are encouraged to file applications as soon as possible.

## Power Rates for Irrigation

The BCFGGA joined a ratepayers group to object to proposed electricity rates for irrigation pumps proposed by FortisBC. The BC Utilities Commission held a hearing and the group made presentations explaining why the rates should not increase. The Commission will make a decision in a few weeks.

## Integrated Tree Fruit Production Guide

The 2010 production guide was published in March. If you do not have your edition of the guide, you may obtain it by:

- Contacting your Okanagan Tree Fruit field service representative, or
- At Growers' Supply and South Valley Sales, or
- By contacting Elaine Miedema at the BCFGGA office (1-800-619-9022, extension 21).

## Trade and Market Development

The Trade and Market Development Program is part of the new Growing Forward that aims to help farmers and exporters sell more products to more international customers. The program will replace Canadian Agriculture and Food International (CAFI) Program. The objective of the Trade and Market Development program is to provide exporters with information and support enabling them to sell more products in more markets. The program includes five initiatives: Canada Brand, AgriMarketing Program, Value Chain Roundtables (VCRTs), Market Information and Export Capacity Building, and Enabling Research for Competitive Agriculture. A key part of the program will be the AgriMarketing component, which aims to help exporters by ensuring the Canada Brand maple leaf is on promotional materials and raising the profile of Canadian goods.

*The BCFGA is working with the Canadian Horticultural Council to explore the AgriMarketing program, to assist the industry in attending trade shows, developing marketing materials, and meeting with buyers in other countries. An emphasis is being placed on New Varieties in this national apple marketing project.*

## House of Commons Agriculture Committee

April 24, 2010, Kelowna

The House of Commons Agriculture Committee met in Kelowna on April 24, 2010. The topic of discussion was Young Farmers and the Future of Farming. Young tree fruit growers in attendance included: David Machial, Nick Kiran, Madeleine van Roechoudt, and David Dobernigg. The challenges facing the young growers were discussed. The Western Producer newspaper made note of the high quality of the discussions when meetings are held outside of Ottawa, where things often devolve into partisanship.

Following the session with young farmers, farm organizations were invited to make presentations. Here is the summary of the BCFGA president Joe Sardinha's presentation:

The BCFGA recommends:

- Encouraging Young Farmers and new entrants by making the industry competitive.
- Investing in industry through programs such as AgriFlex.
- Providing national funding for school fruit and vegetable nutrition programs, as an important part of health budget.
- Continuing to support the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program.
- Develop and implement a national plant health strategy.
- Implementing true harmonization in pesticide registration with the US.
- Consider expanding the list of sensitive products and allow broader access to orderly marketing powers.

We appreciate the effort and the attention of the committee in its work to improve Canadian Agriculture and to encourage new entrants to the industry.

## Self-elevating Orchard Work Platforms

*Hurry up and slow down*

While pointing out that ladders are inherently more risky than orchard work platforms and that the accident rate for work platforms is very low, the WorksafeBC view is that it must regulate Girettes and similar machines as that is its mandate.

Bruce Johnson, General Manager of the Farm and Ranch Safety and Health Association (FARSHA) and Glen Lucas, BCFGA General Manager, had a second meeting with WorksafeBC representatives to work on a practical solution to the regulatory issues.

The practical concerns are that the machines will tip if used on land that is too steep. Also, there are some minor issues with the safety of the basket that holds the worker (e.g. the gate should not open outward, as an operator leaning against an improperly closed gate could fall). It was agreed that a “standard acceptable to the board” which reflects a practical approach that is equivalent to the regulation could be workable.

The Prairie Agriculture Machinery Institute, located in Saskatchewan, were identified as qualified engineers and a practical approach.

FARSHA is currently putting together a funding proposal involving FARSHA, WorksafeBC and BCFGA/TFIDF funding to complete the work proposed by PAMI. Work may be completed by August and new requirements, based on PAMI’s report, put in place for January 1, 2011.

The BCFGA will be following up with a survey of growers on the use of the elevated work platforms.

### BCFGA Executive 2010

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## BCFGA Water Policy – position statement on the Modernization of the Water Act

- The BC Water Act is our first and legal water management document that the industry has acknowledged and has depended on over the last 100 years. The industry recognizes the historical significance of First in Time First in Right (FITFIR) in providing water security to the agricultural industry.
- To address issues surrounding and consider changes to FITFIR, it is important to engage all stakeholders in an education process that helps license holders understand how it will play out in a drought situation.
- The BCFGAs supports the concept of an agriculture water reserve goes beyond what the current act allows. The reserve would be a pool, where water conserved by agriculture can be held for future allocation. The reserve would protect agriculture from the claw back of unused allocations. To address periods of drought, there would need to be links between the agriculture water reserve and the drought management plan.
- The BCFGAs position on ranking of the respective purposes for which water is used is, from highest rank to lowest rank: domestic waterworks and fire suppression, irrigation for agriculture, conservation, industrial, and landscape and outdoor recreation irrigation.
- While conservation licenses are not used widely by the Ministry of Environment, the BCFGAs recognizes the importance of ensuring the health of the ecosystems and the natural elements. The industry will strive to work with conservation efforts while there is a collective stewardship responsibility across all ministries and the First Nations.
- Department of Fisheries and Oceans needs to be incorporated into the BC Water Act in a clear and transparent form so all stakeholders know at what level the DFO will engage in a stressed watershed.
- Agriculture water licenses attached to land should not be used in a way that will eventually lead to water being traded causing the commoditization of water. An assured, adequate, and affordable water supply to support the Agriculture Land Reserve policy.
- Groundwater legislation is recommended in priority areas. Further studies need to be done in order to draft science based regulations and best management practices for the watershed that aim to ensure sustainable withdrawal and recharge of the aquifer.
- Drought Management Plans and Water Use Plans need to be developed on a watershed basis, involving all water users, and funded by the province. In high water stressed areas, there should be agreement prior to extreme drought conditions that all license holders will share in reducing water use. Individual water purveyors would be subject to the regional water use plan and Agriculture Water Reserve.
- The BCFGAs recommends that the province create a Ministry of Water that brings all ministries together on water issues. The Ministry of Water could manage the provinces water resources in a sustainable manner to meet the broad range of competing demands and values. Success of the Ministry of Water will require comprehensive water data collection and analysis, efficient water license management and education of all stakeholders. Adequate funding to this ministry is as fundamental to the wellbeing of our society and environment as it is to agriculture, health, and education.
- The Act should enable the creation of a provincial fund to provide the water purveyors with monies to compensate those farms that suffer losses because of efforts in adaptation and mitigation forced by drought conditions.
- Finally, the BCFGAs would like to be involved through BCAC on future consultation and final agreements needed on the Modernization of the Water Act when draft legislation is created.