

BC FRUIT GROWERS'
ASSOCIATION

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BCFGA Bulletin



August-September 2011

UPDATE: Tree Fruit Working Group

The provincial Minister of Agriculture, Hon. Don McRae, has appointed stakeholders to advise on the future of the tree fruit industry, with special attention for the currently depressed apple sector.

The first phase of the Tree Fruit Working Group assessed what financial and operational performance of the industry, at different levels. Information was gathered with the assistance of the Okanagan Tree Fruit Cooperative, Cawston Cold Storage, and Fairview Orchards. A consultant was engaged, under the AgriFlex Program, to complete a study on competitiveness and benchmarking. Input from all of these sources of information led to the following conclusions:

- For varieties which are suited to the Okanagan climate, yields were comparable to Washington State. For varieties which are better suited to Washington State, BC yields were low by comparison. A strategy of 'right variety, right size, right grade' is proposed.
- Cost of production at the farm level is comparable in BC and Washington State.
- Past industry reviews and strategic plans consistently identified market responsiveness as a competitive issue. Market responsiveness includes varietal development, marketing capacity, and product quality. All 33 initiatives recommended in the 2007 Tree Fruit Industry Strategy have been, or are being implemented. The key recommendation in the 2007 Strategy was to rationalize the four packinghouse co-operatives into one co-operative. This has been done. The rationalization of the four co-operatives' physical assets is a work in progress.
- BC apple sales agencies receive prices at least comparable to their major competitors in Washington State, but that costs of packing in BC are higher, resulting in lower returns for BC producers relative to Washington State producers.
- Quality control stops at the shipping dock of the packinghouse, but there is opportunity to monitor quality at the consumer purchase point which will provide additional information for the 'value chain'.
- Compliance or regulatory costs are significant. Competitiveness issues have also been identified with respect to US government programs in the areas of labour costs, extension services, irrigation infrastructure and export market assistance.

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Membership of the Tree Fruit Working Group for phase one included Lindsay Kislock, BC Ministry of Agriculture; Jim Campbell, BC Ministry of Agriculture; Don Wescott, Okanagan Tree Fruit Co-operative; Adrian Abbott, BC Tree Fruits Ltd.; and Glen Lucas, BC Fruit Growers' Association.

Phase two of the Tree Fruit Working Group will:

- Identify the most immediate non-regulatory priorities.
- Identify actions to be taken by industry and government.

The Tree Fruit Working Group is reconfigured for phase two, and includes Fred Steele, BC Fruit Growers' Association; Amarjit Lalli, BC Fruit Growers' Association; Jim Elliott, Okanagan Tree Fruit Cooperative/BC Tree Fruits Ltd.; Steve Day, Okanagan Tree Fruit Cooperative/BC Tree Fruits Ltd.; Rick Machial, Fairview Orchards Ltd.; Grant Thomson, BC Ministry of Agriculture; and Fiona Cubitt, BC Ministry of Agriculture. Larry Pedersen, retired Deputy Minister of Agriculture, is the chair and facilitator of the group.



Members of the BCFGAs Executive will be meeting the Minister of Agriculture, the Hon. Don McRae on August 25th. Stay tuned to our next newsletter for more info on the meeting...

BCFGA Executive Meets with Chair of Family First Cabinet Committee

BCFGA representatives Sukhdev Goraya, Madeleine Van Roehoudt and Glen Lucas met with Hon. Mary McNeil on August 3 to discuss the relation of families and children to agriculture. The BCFGAs invited BC Agriculture Chair Garnet Etsell to join the meeting to present ideas on a National Food Strategy. The focus of the discussion was on the School Fruit and Vegetable Nutrition Program, institutional purchasing and support for rural farming communities and families.

Minister McNeil noted that one of the first actions under the new Premier was to restore funding to the School Fruit and Vegetable Nutrition Program, indicating the importance of children and family programs

in the current government. BCFGAs representatives felt that the meeting helped to bridge the rural-urban divide and the BCFGAs looks forward to a strong relationship with the Cabinet Committee on Family First, which Minister McNeil chairs.

Provincial Apple Promotion and Research Council

A proposal to present information, to hold meetings, and to have a vote on a provincial Apple Promotion and Marketing Council is being drafted. Once the proposed process is reviewed by the provincial government, the BCFGAs will carry through with process for growers to consider a provincial Apple Promotion and Research Council. The process is expected to start after apple harvest and culminate by the end of January, 2012.

CHC Apple Working Group Mid-Summer Meeting

BCFGA representatives Joe Sardinha and Fred Steele attended the CHC Apple Working Group meeting, held in the Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia. The group reviewed current issues including:

- Possible policy on genetically modified fruits and vegetables.
- National research project to reduce post harvest disease in storage.
- Bench marking of Canadian apple quality and service in international markets.
- Comparison of provincial cost of production models.
- Possible marketing activities for an international marketing project.

The group also discussed possible value-chain meeting with wholesalers, as well as a possible direction on a national apple promotion and research levy. BCFGGA members may wish to provide feedback on these national initiatives to Joe Sardinha or Fred Steele.

Columbia River Treaty

The BCFGGA and the potato industry agencies have developed a strategy to seek government recognition of the impact of the Columbia River Treaty on the affected agriculture sectors.

A meeting with the Minister of Agriculture has been requested. An update will be provided to BCFGGA members after the meeting takes place.

Plant Protection Regulations and Exports

International rules allow importing countries to inspect the exporters production systems and assess the risk of pest/disease transmission, prior to permitting foreign products, such as BC cherries and apples, from entering. The BCFGGA is continuing to assist in the coordination of foreign inspector visits from countries such as Thailand, China and the US (California).

Youth Skills BC Workplace Pilot Program

Youth Skills BC, which is funded through the Canada-British Columbia Labour Market Agreement, offers employers a \$2000 hiring incentive (up to 3 employees at \$2000 each) to hire eligible youth between the ages of 15 and 29. There is also an additional training allowance, of up to \$1000, available should an employer wish to train their new hire through an accredited institution. To learn more about the program (available until March 2012), please visit the program website or contact Youth Skills BC by phone at 250-448-4602.

Proposed Bylaw Standard for Residential Uses in the ALR Consultation Process

The BCAC has responded to the Ministry of Agriculture's discussion paper that outlines proposals for the development of a draft Minister's bylaw standard for residential uses in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) to guide local governments. Since publicizing the discussion paper and the Ministry of Agriculture's response survey, BCAC heard from several member organizations and individual farmers and ranchers on the issue. Overall, the sentiment expressed suggested that there needs to be considerably more flexibility allowed than what was proposed in the paper. The BCAC noted that the proposals and options outlined in the discussion paper could in many instances be quite restrictive on farmers' ability to meet their family residential needs as well as their farm business needs – and could be particularly problematic as farmers increasingly look to undertaking value-added activities such as on-farm processing. Given these complexities and the wide range of views on this issue within the agriculture sector, the BCAC has requested an opportunity to review the results of the on-line survey with the Ministry of Agriculture, and to discuss potential options for solutions based on those results. It is expected this discussion will occur in late August or early September.

AgriStability – Important Upcoming Deadlines

AgriStability is a vital program for many producers across the province, but it is easy to miss important deadlines during the busy cropping and harvesting seasons.

Farmers and ranchers should be aware of the following deadlines:

- 2010 AgriStability/AgriInvest Harmonized Form **without penalty September 30, 2011**. This is the deadline to submit the 2010 AgriStability/AgriInvest Harmonized Form without penalty.
- 2010 AgriStability/AgriInvest Harmonized Form **with Penalty December 31, 2011**. This is the FINAL deadline to submit the 2010 AgriStability/AgriInvest Harmonized Form with penalty.

If you miss the September 30, 2010 deadline, you can still submit the form until December 31, 2011 but a \$500/month reduction to your payment.

For more information, please call the toll free number listed below and speak to your AgriStability representative from the Ministry of Agriculture:

Toll-free number: 1-877-343-2767
Business Risk Management Branch Website

National Food Strategy Presented at FPT Agriculture Ministers Meeting



The National Food Strategy (NFS) working document Towards a National Food Strategy: Securing the Future of Food was discussed with Canada's Agriculture Ministers on July 6th at the Canadian Federation of Agriculture-hosted roundtable meeting, held prior to the Federal/Provincial/Territorial (FPT) Agriculture Ministers' Annual Meeting in Saint Andrews, NB.

The NFS was well received by the Ministers, including Minister Ritz who flagged the NFS as a tremendous document and excellent launching pad towards a more holistic and strategic approach to food and agriculture.

"The National Food Strategy is important in bringing together the entire value chain for the benefit of all Canadians," commented Carla Ventin of Food and Consumer Products of Canada during her presentation at the meeting. Judy Shaw of Syngenta echoed this view, noting, "We see this as a strategy to continue building the business of agriculture, to create long-term value for Canada but also one that makes a significant contribution to society."

And this direction was consistent with outcome of the FPT meeting itself. The Saint Andrews Statement (SAS), endorsed by the Ministers, provides instructions to officials on the development of the next Federal/Provincial/Territorial (FPT) agricultural policy framework, Growing Forward 2. The SAS lays out the essential elements Ministers will look for in the next agricultural policy framework. It is expected that provincial and federal officials will begin negotiations and develop programming over the next year, with full implementation of GF2 expected to begin April 1, 2013.

There is, however, still ample opportunity to make input into the policy direction. Public meetings have been held across the country, including a session in Abbotsford in mid-June that was well attended by representatives of BC's diverse agriculture and food sectors.

The BCFGA is encouraging individuals and organizations to provide their input, by following the links below:

1. Discussion Document: Charting the Way Forward to 2020
http://www4.agr.gc.ca/resources/prod/doc/doc/pdf/gf2_disc_paper_en.pdf
2. On-Line Feedback Form, which will be available until September 30th 2011
<http://www4.agr.gc.ca/AAFC-AAC/display->

CANADIAN WESTERN AGRIBITION: Here We Come Again!

From November 21st to 26th, the BCFGGA will be returning to the Canadian Western Agribition in Regina, Saskatchewan to promote our beautiful and delicious apples to consumers visiting the fair. We are planning an apple tasting activity and also the sale of apples by the box and 5lbs bags. We will be featuring Spartan and Ambrosia varieties. If you are interested in volunteering for this event, please contact Josée the BCFGGA office at 250-762-5226 ext 24. *(Participating growers will receive a per diem, accommodation and meal allowance, as well as travel cost.)*



BC Farm Writers' Association Tour

In cooperation with the International Federation of Agriculture Journalist Congress taking place in Ontario (September 12-17), the BC Farm Writers' Association is hosting a pre-congress tour of southern BC from Friday September 9th to Sunday September 11th 2011.

The tour will include international delegates from Europe, New Zealand, and the United States, and the BCFWA is inviting anyone from the agriculture and food industry to participate. The 3-day bus tour will travel through the Fraser Valley, the Similkameen and Okanagan Valleys, the Nicola Valley and Pemberton-Whistler. Sponsorship was provided by IAF, BC Cattlemen's Association and the Ministry of Agriculture, and further details can be found at the BCFWA website.

The BCFGGA is coordinating the "Okanagan" part of the tour, featuring a visit at the Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre in Summerland to meet with leaders in breeding apple, cherry and other fruit varieties, as well as a visit to BCFGGA President Joe Sardinha's orchard and BBQ.

The British Columbia Farm Writers' Association (BCFWA) serves the common interests of agricultural journalists - reporters, editors and broadcasters, as well as those in business, government and academia - whose primary responsibility is agricultural communications.

ROYAL AGRICULTURAL WINTER FAIR National Apple Competition

Don't forget to save your best apples for the Royal Apple Competition! Once again the competition will be held at The Royal Agricultural Winter Fair November 4-13th, 2011. The BCFGGA is proud to be a co-sponsor of this event along with the Ontario Apple Growers, Apple Marketers' Association of Ontario, and the Quebec Federation of Apple Growers. The categories include Commercial, Heritage and New Varieties as well as Best Collection of 5 of any 5 different varieties and Heaviest Apple. Prizes will be awarded and apples will be judged based on overall appearance, trueness to variety characteristics, with each apple in the class being close to identical as possible. **If you are interested in making an entry this year, please contact us at 1-800-618-8022**

BCFGGA Expresses Sincere Condolences to Claridge Family and Friends

Allan Claridge, a longtime Oyama orchardist, died Wednesday at age 87. Claridge was a member of the BCFGGA Executive from 1957 to 1964, served as the Association's President from 1966 to 1972 and was President of the Canadian Horticultural Council in 1970. He was named agriculturist of the year by the B.C. Agrologists Institute in 1971 and served with the Agricultural Land Commission. Working with him in the orchard were his wife Elsie, who died in 2010, son Don and daughter Alana. Daughter Candice lives in Kamloops.

Upcoming Meetings and Events

August 31st-Sept 4th, 2011	Interior Provincial Exhibition, Armstrong
September 9-11th, 2011	BC Farm Writer's Tour, Southern BC
September 22nd, 2011	Kelowna Museums 75th Anniversary Event, Kelowna
October 2nd, 2011	Uptown Rutland Scarecrow Festival, Kelowna
October 22nd, 2011	Orchard Industry Museum 23rd Annual Apple Fair, Kelowna
November 4-13th, 2011	RAWF & National Apple Competition, Toronto
November 21-26th, 2011	Canadian Western Agribition, Regina

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The BC Fruit Growers' Association represents the 758 commercial orchards in BC, with a mandate "to foster a business environment for the long-term prosperity of BC tree fruit growers". The BC tree fruit industry generates over \$130 million in fresh fruit sales annually at the wholesale level, with a further \$120 million in sales from Sun-Rype, the main processor of fruit in the Okanagan

BCFGA Executive

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Joe Sardinha (President)	494-9983	Summerland
Fred Steele (Vice-President)	861-6641	Kelowna
Madeleine Van Roehoudt	864-9147	Lake Country
Amarjit Lalli	869-6122	Kelowna
Sukhdev Goraya	491-2229	Kelowna
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Peter Simonsen	496-5156	Naramata
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