

Re: Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries' Efforts to Stabilize BC's Tree Fruit Industry

As you may have heard, the BC Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries is leading an effort to help stabilize B.C.'s tree fruit industry. These efforts are in response to the challenging circumstances growers, particularly apple growers, are experiencing.

The Ministry's plan is comprehensive with highly aggressive timelines. To be a successful, robust industry participation will be necessary to help inform a plan of action. They are looking to engage a variety of industry participants, including associations and organizations, growers, packers, and certain representative groups, such as young growers, horticulturists, etc. Their project will analyze the current circumstances and opportunities to develop a plan for the future of the sector. The project will also include the consideration of a variety of factors, such as labour, innovation, extension and access to new varieties.

We all know this sector has been studied and reviewed extensively over the past decade, with many recommendations coming from the studies. Despite significant investment by government and continual industry efforts to put the industry on a progressive path, we are not seeing positive outcomes. This time, the Ministry has initiated a whole Ministry approach, with staff from every program or department involved. The Ministry has committed to create a stabilization plan for the sector and will participate in and support implementation of the plan to ensure every effort is made to give the tree fruit sector the best chance for success. To guide this work, there is also an Advisory Group in place, which includes representation of key industry organizations such as:

- BC Fruit Growers Association
- BC Cherry Association
- New Tree Fruit Varieties Development Council
- Sterile Insect Release Program
- BC Wine Grape Council / BC Grape Growers Association
- Agriculture and Agrifood Canada

We know there is no great time of year for growers to be away from their farms or their businesses. However, this project is about the future viability of B.C.'s tree fruit sector and improving the livelihood of growers. To support involvement, the Ministry is being as flexible as possible to accommodate growers' schedules by having engagement sessions at convenient times, and by also facilitating sessions in both English and Punjabi to ensure all who want to share their views are given the opportunity to do so.

The Executive of the NTFVDC strongly encourages you to participate in a roundtable, if you receive an invitation.

If you have any questions about the project or would like to be involved, please contact Lindsay Hainstock, Industry Advisor Lindsay.Hainstock@gov.bc.ca, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries

Thank you,
on behalf of the BCMA&F

Bruce Currie
Chairman NTFVDC