



## The British Columbia Fruit Growers' Association

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### **BCFGA Reacts to Provincial Budget**

**Kelowna** – The BCFGa noted today that the Provincial budget tabled on February 19, 2013 presented little improvement for the tree fruit industry, with specific program increases aimed at correcting the harm done to the greenhouse and livestock sector through past regulation change.

Industry competitiveness studies and the BCFGa have concluded that the tree fruit industry needs an on-going replant program and assistance with environmental improvements on farms. “We were hoping to get a positive future direction on these programs, but the budget contained no strategic, competitive help for tree fruit growers,” said Jeet Dukhia, President of the BCFGa.

Replacing old trees and varieties with new varieties and high-density plantings will increase productivity and marketability of tree fruit, but costs growers about \$30,000 per acre. The current program contributes up to \$7,000 per acre for the renewal of orchards. “We need continuity of replant in our industry. When we plan, orchardists look forward 15 or 20 years. The disruption of not having a long-term replant program is harming our industry,” said Dukhia. The replant program is currently funded for two years, but was disrupted in 2012 as no program was offered then.

Environment programs, such as integrated pest management, deer fencing and septic systems for worker sanitary facilities have been proposed by the BCFGa. “Our program proposals are similar to, but at a much lower level of cost, than those provided in Washington State, our main competitor. We proposed the programs with the expectation that the government was interested in protecting and enhancing the environment and helping us to meet the competition. We were disappointed,” said Dukhia.

“The BC agriculture budget is the lowest in Canada, as a percentage of our agriculture output. We were looking for long-term direction from the province to get us on a level competitive playing field,” said Dukhia.

Two items in the budget corrected errors in existing programs:

1. The carbon tax on purple, or marked, fuel used on farms is eliminated, such that the fuel for tractors and farm vehicles is not put at a disadvantage when compared to imported food. “The government needed to fix this error in order to stop giving an advantage to imported produce and having the perverse effect of increasing carbon emissions due to increased transportation of fruits and vegetables,” said Dukhia.
2. Property purchase tax for farms was not charged for transfers to family members when the owner was alive. The change corrects an error that taxed the transfer of the farm property if the owner was dead. Dukhia classed the error correction as “important to get it right, but not a significant industry issue.”

“The BC Fruit Growers’ Association looks forward to working with a government that will support agriculture at a competitive level and meet the obligation to increase exports of high-quality, safe, tasty and nutritious BC tree fruit,” Dukhia concluded.

The BC Fruit Growers’ Association represents 550 family operated farms and advocates for the \$300 million in annual economic activity which the industry generates each year, and which mandate is to foster a healthy food system for the long-term prosperity of BC tree fruit growers.

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**Further information**

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