



The British Columbia Fruit Growers' Association

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BC Food Security Task Force

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Objectives of the Task Force

The Task Force has a mandate to:

- apply agri-technologies (“agritech”) to enhance sector productivity, economic competitiveness and sustainability, reduce waste and tailor productivity to market demands;
- grow the emerging agritech sector in B.C. as a standalone economic sector that can produce technologies that will be in demand globally; and
- support the objectives of CleanBC, both through the adoption of technologies and practices that will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase access to fresh, healthy food and stimulate local economic activity.

Current Technology Strengths of the BC Tree Fruit Sector

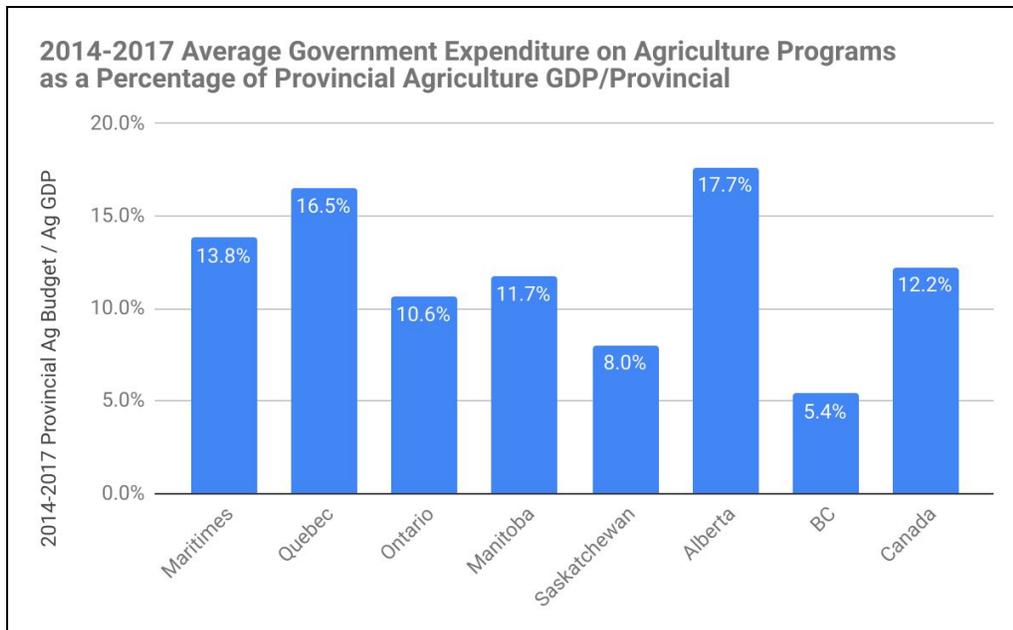
1. AAFC Summerland Research Centre
 - world-leading horticultural research
 - Apple and Cherry breeding program
2. High adoption rate, relative to competitive apple and cherry growing areas, of high-density and new varieties
3. Leadership in Plant Breeder Rights - BCFGAs subsidiary Summerland Varieties Corporation
4. Relatively high education level of growers
5. Rapid adoption of automated grading/sorting equipment
6. Replacement of aging infrastructure with new technology storage.
7. A truly area-wide IPM program - the Sterile Insect Release Program
8. Database Production Guide - linked to Decision Aid System (3 year pilot). Also linked to Crop Tracker - data automation, recording sprays with notifications, mapping.

Technology Opportunities

1. Greater uptake of digital technology at the field level
2. Greater use of pest modeling
3. Development of new biocontrols
4. Automated harvesting - can we leverage other sectors (e.g. forestry) automation?
5. Hybrid tractors
6. Adoption of advanced ‘variable rate’ Controlled Atmosphere systems

Hurdles

1. Lack of extension training/proof-of-value to adopt systems at the grower level
2. Need for basic business / technology extension and grower training
3. Capital investment requirements
4. Lack of equitable provincial funding



Source: Farm income, financial conditions and government assistance. Data book
<http://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.505960/publication.html>

Recommendations

5. Increase provincial funding to national average levels, to fund in equal parts:
 - a. Agriculture Risk Management Programs (e.g. AgriStability 85%) and adequate Environmental Farm Plan, including training in best management practices
 - b. Investment Fund: no interest capital loans for innovative technology for a 10 year period. Seek to relocate leading ag tech firms with financing and network support
 - c. Research and commercialization funding: Reduced pesticide projects: biocontrols, innovative solutions for invasive pests, and 10 year establishment funding for areawide control programs. Leverage the federal \$80 million investment in plant virus centre in Saanich by seeking to support commercialization and new genomics innovation enterprises
6. Possible ag tech research priorities:
 - a. establishing a network and initiative to develop, or to obtain and improve automated harvesting technology, hybrid or electric farm vehicles (ATV first objective), leverage forest sawmill control technology
 - b. Research to prove “dynamic CA’ value
 - c. Weather monitoring network that provides open-data and has maintenance funding
 - d. Develop a multi-disciplinary “Lab” to develop innovative solutions to pests (e.g. bedbug solution by SFU).
 - e. Enhance cherry grading to remove Western Cherry Fruit Fly and Spotted Wing Drosophila infested fruit - promote adoption of organic cherry practices through horticultural extension.