

BC Fruit Growers' Association

Friday File



April 20, 2020

Federal and Provincial Governments Announce COVID-19 Assistance

Governments help with costs and risks

On Monday April 13 the federal government announced funding for employers of SAWP and TFW-Ag Stream workers. The funding is \$1,500 per worker, which will assist with the payment of wages during the workers quarantine period (about \$900) and the extra costs of transportation this year (probably about \$600). There are obviously many other impacts on farms this year as a result of COVID-19, including the late arrival of workers, possibly fewer workers available due to health protocols on housing and COVID-19 physical distancing requirements, availability of transportation from the foreign country (e.g. the Guatemala international airport is closed), and extra costs related to cleaning, PPE, and modification of work practices.

Also on Monday April 13, the provincial government announced that the two week quarantine would take place in Vancouver hotels, with the province paying the cost of hotel and food.

Both announcements will help growers to focus on planning for the rest of the season.

COVID-19 Health Protocol Checklist

Known unknowns

An 'easy to use' checklist for on-farm COVID-19 best practices and protocols is being developed by the province but is not available yet. The checklist is expected to be finalized in the next week to 10 days and will be circulated by WALI and BCFGGA when available.

In the meantime, here are the [provincial](#) and [federal](#) protocols. In particular, a [COVID-19 Risk Assessment](#) and a [COVID-19 Exposure Control Plan](#) must be made specific to your farm - these documents will be required before SAWP workers arrive.

AgSafeBC

Information source on COVID-19

AgSafeBC has compiled information on [COVID-19 Protocols and Procedures, Best Practices, and Signage](#) (in multiple languages).

Workers Available

Labour Orientation and Safety Service is operational

For non-SAWP workforce, BCFGGA is undertaking extra measures to encourage capable local workers to work on farms.

Ron Forrest is the BCFGGA coordinator for backpacker and local labour. Ron currently has workers available for BCFGGA members. To contact **Ron**, call **778-363-3620**.

Stronger Together

CFA presses for Emergency Fund

The Canadian Federation of Agriculture held a [virtual press conference](#) yesterday to ask that agriculture and food security be considered a first priority, after the medical/healthcare needs associated with COVID-19. The ongoing labour shortage and labour unpredictability is one issue impacting growers, as well as the unexpected and increasing costs for farmers due to COVID-19. The CFA asked the government to establish an Emergency Fund to help farmers overcome these mounting costs.

The BCFGA [President Pinder Dhaliwal was interviewed](#) April 15 about the uncertain farm situation by Gloria Macarenko of CBC “On the Coast”. There have been a number of other media stories in the past week quoting various BCFGA members as well as GM Glen Lucas. Most media stories have highlighted the significant issues faced by our members and the need to continued support from all levels of government.

You can support BCFGA and industry positions by contacting your MP, MLA and Ministers. We have developed the following resources to help you:

Here is the [contact list for all MLAs](#) (provincial representatives) in BC. You can search by your community for your MLA and find all of their contact information.

Here is a [contact list for all MPs](#) (federal representatives) in BC. You can search by postal code for your MP.

When you send your letter, please ensure you also send the letter to the provincial and federal ministers of agriculture:

[Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau](#), Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

[Hon. Lana Popham](#), BC Minister of Agriculture

It is important that the message be unique to you and be written from your perspective, but [here is a letter template](#) that you can use as a starting point to customize from.

AgriStability enrollment deadline extended to July 3 2020

Press release: April 17, 2020 – Ottawa, Ontario – Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

The AgriStability enrollment deadline for the 2020 program year has been extended without penalty, from April 30th to July 3, 2020. This extension will allow farmers more time to sign up and benefit from the program.

This exceptional step, agreed to by federal, provincial, and territorial governments, will enable the program to help more farmers manage the impact of current market disruptions, increased expenses, and production challenges facing many farm operations. Farmers experiencing losses are encouraged to apply for interim payments under AgriStability for more rapid support.

Labour - domestic

Early arrival?

Quebecois workers have been arriving early in the South Okanagan. Municipalities have expressed concern about the spread of COVID-19 from the workers to local populations. The BCFGA has communicated with the Mayors and is offering assistance in managing the situation.

Reminder - COVID-19 Province-Wide Burning Ban

For smoke sensitive areas (areas with moderate to high residential density)

COVID-19 impacts lung health, so the province has instituted a province-wide ban on open burning, effective last Thursday. Growers have been in contact with the BCTFC field service and the BCFGA regarding a reversal of this ban for orchards. Reversing the just-announced ban is highly unlikely at this time of heightened focus on health care and COVID-19.

[Here is information on chipping programs and private contractors](#), compiled by Christina Forbes, Regional Agrologist at the BC Ministry of Agriculture - thanks Christina.

Reminder - Apple Clearwing Moth Survey

Keeping research moving

The Summerland Research & Development Centre (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada) needs your help in filling out a survey on apple decline symptoms in the Okanagan, Similkameen, and Creston Valley orchards. The results of the survey will help to better understand the extent of the issue in our apple growing regions so that we can direct the research in the Apple Decline Project to better help our apple growers. It will take about 5 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Your participation in this survey is on a voluntary and anonymous basis, and [the survey can be found here](#).

Details: AAFC Human Research Ethics Committee Approval # 2019-F-002 MacDonald; for more information, contact Jesse MacDonald at jesse.macdonald@canada.ca

COVID-19 Information

Of many sources, here are some basic, relevant sites and webpages

[HealthLinkBC](#)- Information available in [English](#), [Spanish](#) and [Punjabi](#)
[Public Health Canada - COVID-19](#)
[Ag SafeBC Covid-19 Best Practices Advice](#)
[AgSafeBC Covid-19 documents, signs, and procedures](#))
[WorksafeBC](#)

These websites provide information on how to monitor, what actions to take if detected, and getting an action plan in place in advance of a COVID-19 infection.

HubConnect

A Labour App for you, your family and your workers

WALI has developed the HubConnect app for growers, their families and workers - the app includes links to COVID-19 information, as well as other useful information.

Download for [Apple](#) or [Android](#).

- Regional specific resources
- Available in English and Spanish*
- Downloadable information
- Able to be used offline

TIP: Be sure to select the appropriate region. This can be changed in settings.

**Dependent on your phone language selection. By default all the information that is not available in Spanish will be in English and vice-versa.*

BCFGA Office

Covid-19 restrictions

We are temporarily closing access to the BCFGGA office during the Covid-19 emergency. Most of our staff are working from home. Please call (250-762-5226, or toll-free 1-800-619-9022) or [email](#) us if you need to communicate with us. We encourage members to contact BCFGGA staff and directors by telephone or email.

BCFGA 2020 Board of Directors

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