

# BC Fruit Growers' Association

## Friday File

January 17, 2018



### Convention Portfolio

Mailed January 8

The Convention Portfolio is printed and mailed, so you should have received it in the mail. You can access the Convention Portfolio and other BCFGAs Annual Convention updates, documents and reports on [our website](#) (the other documents will be posted starting January 15).

### Apple Returns for 2017

#### Early warning

There is concern that income for 2017 apples has declined. The BCFGAs is working with packers to determine the extent of this decline and ensure that BCFGAs members are up to date on programs that can provide help.

AgriInvest is the first and fastest help available for smaller financial needs, provided that you already participate and have deposits you can access.

AgriStability is the government program that helps growers with large income declines. AgriStability provides support when “program margins” decline more than 30% from a historical “reference margin”. A margin is defined as eligible income minus eligible expenses.

Improvements have been made recently to the AgriStability Program. Agriculture Minister Lana Popham announced the 2017 BC AgriStability Enhancement program on December 19.

The 2017 BC AgriStability *Enhancement* Program:

- allows for late participation without penalty, until April 30, 2018;
- eliminates reference margin limits, thereby increasing support; and
- increases the compensation paid from 70% to 80%, when margins fall below the 30% payment threshold.

Growers will need either their final payment for 2017 apples or an advance on a pool payment to trigger an Interim (or advance) payment from AgriStability.

If you already participate in AgriStability no further actions are required by you, until you apply for an interim payment. If you did not register for 2017 coverage, you should consider doing so now.

If returns on the 2017 crop decline significantly the program could provide meaningful assistance. Information and applications are available now on the Ministry of Agriculture website.

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/programs/insurance-and-income-protection-on-programs/bc-enhanced-agristability-program>

The Ministry and BCFGAs are collaborating on developing information sessions and will work together to monitor income issues related to the 2017 apple crop.

## **Proposed Regulations re Wood Waste Storage and Composting**

### **Focus is on high risk areas, Nitrogen and Phosphate leaching into water**

The BC Ministry of Environment (BCME) recently proposed Agricultural Waste Control Regulations. Here is the link for information on Ag Waste Control Regulations:

[www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/waste-management/industrial-waste/agriculture](http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/waste-management/industrial-waste/agriculture)

What is behind this review? BCME is concerned about nitrogen from manure, compost and wood waste leaching into aquifers (underground water) and phosphorus from fertilizer that runs off into streams and lakes.

### **The regulations may affect agricultural operations in “high risk” areas, specifically how farms:**

- **store bark, sawdust or other wood byproducts on their land**
- **store compost**
- **store manure**
- **use fertilizer**

The BCFGA has not opposed the introduction of regulations in ‘high risk’ areas. High risk areas include areas where

- Rain exceeds 600 mm per year,
- Location is over a vulnerable aquifer, and
- Location is a sensitive receiving environments (i.e. water use from the aquifer is for drinking, amount of water use versus amount of flow is relatively high, and soil and geologic buffering of the aquifer - e.g. an aquifer located under a permeable layer of sand would be at high risk of leachate).

For the Okanagan-Similkameen, annual rain and snow amounts to less than 425 mm, below the “600 mm or more” threshold required to define the area as high-risk. The limited amount of rain means that there is lower risk that any leachate from manure or wood waste piles will reach aquifers. Other risk factors could come into play too, and certain areas (such as Hulcar in Armstrong) could be defined as high risk. For example, if the type of soil and other material over the aquifer is very permeable (such as gravel), then the area above the aquifer is considered high risk.

In high-risk areas, an impermeable base (concrete) will be required for the storage of manure and wood waste.

The government also intends to have set-backs from streams in certain situations for fertilizer use. The BCFGA *objected to set-backs from property boundaries as being arbitrary* but did not object to setbacks for high risk use of nutrients near streams. Additionally, for phosphate concerns, the BCFGA insisted that research-based regulations be put in place, instead of arbitrary rules for use of fertilizer that is not high risk. Most areas of the Okanagan-Similkameen-Creston appear not to be high risk if the Ministry of Environment heeds BCFGA comments on the Agricultural Waste Control Regulation proposal.

## Update on labour file

By Murray Porteous, CHC National Labour Chair

A new year is cause for reflection. As Chair of CHC's Labour Committee, I am pleased to provide an update on the file's progress over the past year, and some thoughts on what 2018 has in store for us.

An ongoing trend we have seen throughout the year is that producers and government continue to suffer from extreme public and activist pressure against Canada's international farm worker programs. Every packing and processing operation that employs these workers is vulnerable to losing access to labour due to inconsistent interpretation and application of rules, and a lack of understanding of agriculture. We also saw the extreme stress caused by the bureaucratic application of these rules for Labour Market Impact Assessments (LMIAs) and Integrity Audits.

To help address these issues, we have partnered with the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC), who are experts at generating the solid independent data that we need to support our lobbying, and whom we have also used as a valuable resource for strategizing our approach to government. As a result, we now have a far better understanding of the forces at play. We are tackling these issues, as appropriate, at every level within the appropriate ministries, from the person screening LMIAs, right up to the Minister's office. Throughout this process, we have established good working relationships with the senior staff responsible for policy decisions on employment, agriculture and immigration.

In 2017, we got senior officials from the relevant departments to come out and see the farms, packing and processing facilities where international farm workers are actually employed. As a result of this initiative and others, we have raised awareness of why we need access to foreign workers, what the workers mean to the economy, and how they are treated. For the first time, we have been able to back up this insight with solid analytical data, thanks in part to the initiative taken by Ontario's Foreign Agricultural Resource Management Service (FARMS) to generate research through CAHRC.

We know how bad things are and what it is like to deal with the uncertainty of extended LMIA processing and Integrity Audits. The administrators of labour organizations—FARMS, FERME (Quebec) and WALI (BC)—are doing all they can to help the government move through the processing backlog of LMIAs. CHC is working with senior officials to help set policy direction to improve how applications are handled. We know this is as bad as it gets and we will see significant improvements in the coming year. In the meantime, we continue to pressure government to deal with the backlog of applications for international farm workers and tell them how severe the delays in worker arrivals impact our farms. AAFC Minister Lawrence MacAulay is personally engaged on our behalf to help correct the problems we are experiencing.

I know people across Canada are worried about the issues that have been identified so far, but I am excited about the opportunity to make positive changes in 2018. For the first time, we have access to—and the attention of—senior officials who can make decisions necessary to our cause. And for the first time, we are getting recognition from politicians that we have problems that need fixing. Most importantly, we have obtained a commitment from government that it will help to resolve the situation. All political parties are actively engaged in finding solutions, and CHC has been asked to provide recommendations on how to proceed.

Policy changes in the federal government are slow to materialize, but we now have the best shot in years to affect real change, thanks to the relationships we have developed with the right people—people who are willing to listen and have the authority to make good policy decisions.

Priorities for the Labour Committee in 2018 include:

- encouraging ESDC to change the way it does business in order for it to become more efficient, fairer and accountable;
- participating in the re-definition of "primary agriculture" with the goal to close the gap between the government's perception of our businesses and reality;
- pressing the government to make the availability of reliable labour a top priority; and
- encouraging the government to start treating agricultural employers with the respect that the country's most important employer group deserves.

I look forward to providing a more complete update on the labour file at the CHC AGM in March. Until then, I wish you a happy and productive start to 2018.

Respectfully,



Murray Porteous  
Labour Committee Chair

### **SAWP VISA delays**

#### **A translation - "do not panic, yet"**

Mi Tierra travel agency sent out a note to inform growers of a delay in issuing work permits (visas) for Mexican workers. The delay is caused by changes in the way work permits are released from the Canadian Embassy in Mexico City to the Mexican Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (STPS by its name in Spanish). In past, this process has been very efficient and because it worked so well, growers were probably unaware of how work permits are issued. Now it is being noticed, due to the changes causing a delay until everyone gets used to the new processes.

STPS and Mi Tierra have been working hard to adapt to the new process. Mi Tierra notes "Please bear in mind that these changes imply a learning curve that we are facing together and we are committed to continue working on it so that we will soon have a much more competent and agile process". In other words, things should return to normal now, but the situation is being monitored.

### **Mexico SAWP Health Insurance**

#### **Rate Change - downwards**

Mexico SAWP employers may be aware that the daily deduction for Cowan Insurance has changed from 94 cents per day to 90 cents per day.

## Mexico SAWP 2018 Form Available

### Do not use the 2017 Form

Growers who apply for workers from Mexico or the Caribbean must first show that local workers are not available. How do you do that? By filling out and completing the activities related to the Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) form.

Included in the requirements in the LMIA include advertising, and requirements must be followed exactly or the application will be rejected. The Service Canada website has information on the process.

Housing inspections are also required. Some of the requirements for housing inspections have changed, so keeping up-to-date will help growers succeed in getting an application approved. Since the government review of housing applications is more stringent, we highly recommend that any deficiencies (e.g. new batteries in smoke detector, additional fire extinguisher, or completed renovation) be addressed completely. In other words, make sure the housing inspection has no 'outstanding items to be completed', or risk having the application sent back as incomplete.

Finally, the SAWP Agreement must be attached to LMIA, for the program you are applying to - there is a Caribbean SAWP and a Mexico SAWP. The Mexico SAWP Agreement is now available for 2018. We have posted the 2018 SAWP Application Form on our website, but at time of writing it is not yet on the government website. Start using the new form immediately, or risk having the application sent back to start over again with the 2018 form.

The Western Labour Market Initiative (WALI) is working to make these requirements less rigid, but this will take time and perseverance..

## SAWP Housing Inspectors

Inspector	Location	Phone		Inspector	Location	Phone
Hugh Cairns	Kelowna	250-808-5777		Keith Suftin	Kelowna	250-317-3349
Mike Bradshaw	Kelowna	250-870-8340		Brad Pears	Kelowna	250-717-6434
George Giannotti	Summerland	250-809-6804		Bob Hamm	Kelowna	250-470-8467
Craig Hostland	Kelowna	250-862-6400		Barry Chickloski	Penticton	250-490-1118

For more information on the SAWP program, check out [Labour on the BCFGA website](#), and [Labour on the BCAC website](#).

## Membership Renewal

### Reminder for growers who do not ship to BC Tree Fruits Cooperative

If sent by mail, annual membership dues must be received in the office by February 13, to allow time for staff to organize and prepare for the Annual Convention on February 15-16. Fees are budgeted at \$230 base fee and \$19.90/acre for any acreage over 5 acres that is planted to tree fruits.

All BC Tree Fruits Cooperative growers are members of the BCFGA, and membership is automatically renewed.

**Meetings and Events** - check the [BCFGA Calendar](#) on our website for more information

Date	Meeting	Attending for the BCFGAs
January 17	South District Council Annual Meeting, 1:30 - 3:00 pm, Best Western, Osoyoos	South Delegates and Alternates
January 18	North District Council Annual Meeting. 1:30 - 3:00 pm, Ramada, Kelowna	North Delegates and Alternates
January 23	BCFGA Board meeting	
January 24	BCAC Agriculture Gala	Fred Steele, Sukhdev Goraya, and Glen Lucas
January 30-31	FIRB Hearing: BCFGAs intervenor	Glen Lucas
February 8	BC Tree Fruit Horticultural Symposium	
February 9	Sterile Insect Release Board	Glen Lucas
February 9	CHC Labour Committee conf. call	Pinder Dhaliwal, Glen Lucas
February 15-16	BCFGAs Annual Convention, Kelowna	BCFGAs members

BCFGAs Office 250-762-5226 Toll free -1-800-619-9022 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brenda Jorde, Member Services and BC Tree Fruit Replant Program, local 1.</li> <li>• Glen Lucas, General Manager, local 2.</li> <li>• Bunvir Nijjer, Corporate Secretary and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program, local 4.</li> </ul>
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#### BCFGAs Board of Directors

Name		Telephone
<b>Fred Steele - President</b>	Kelowna	Cell/text: 250-801-1968
<b>Bhupinder (Pinder) Dhaliwal - VP</b>	Oliver	Cell/text 250-490-7198
<b>Ravinder Bains</b>	Keremeos	Cell 250-499-0512
<b>Sukhdeep (Deep) Brar</b>	Summerland	Cell/text 250-462-5687
<b>Surjit Nagra</b>	Kelowna	Cell 250-863-6801
<b>Sukhdev Goraya</b>	Kelowna	Cell 250. 859.1229
<b>Peter Simonsen</b>	Naramata	Cell 250. 488--.0363
<b>Harnek (Tony) Nijjar</b>	Vernon	Cell 250-938-1820