

# BC Fruit Growers' Association

## Friday File

June 30, 2016



### **The Next Ag Policy Framework**

#### **Probably not called Growing Forward 3**

The provincial government's Agricultural Risk Management Advisory Committee (ARMAC) met on June 23. Tony Nijjar and Glen Lucas attended for the BCFGA. There was a general discussion of Risk Management Programs that are currently available, including AgriStability, AgriInsure (Production Insurance), AgriInvest, and AgriRecovery.

The current federal-provincial APF agreement is called Growing Forward 2. It will end March 31, 2018, so work is starting now to get a new agreement in place. ARMAC will meet to review any proposed changes to the Risk Management Programs.

In the previous program, funding was shifted from Risk Management Programs to "Strategic Investment" programs. This shift in funding was accomplished by reducing the margin coverage in AgriStability and reducing the matching funds in AgriInvest.

At this time, there are no proposals to change the balance between Risk Management Programs and Strategic Investment Programs. Various provincial governments have also signalled that they have limited or no ability to increase funding to agricultural programs, so there is an expectation of minimal change overall. However, an important indicator will be "communique" issued from the federal-provincial agriculture ministers' meeting being held July 18-20 in Calgary. Ongoing updates will be provided in this newsletter.

### **Test Orchard Lease**

#### **Information session**

A BCFGA grower meeting was held on June 20, in Cawston, with the purpose of answering any questions of growers on the lease of the Test Orchard. About 14 interested growers attended, of which 4 were not members of the BCFGA. Attending the meeting representing the BCFGA Executive was Fred Steele and Ravinder Bains. Peter Simonsen wore two hats, as he is on the BCFGA Executive and the Summerland Varieties Corporation Board.

The structure of the BCFGA and its subsidiaries was outlined. SVC currently leases the Test Orchard, as proposed and supported by growers in the 2015 Annual General Meeting of the BCFGA. It was clarified that a growing portion of the test orchard will be utilized by SVC for demonstration and testing of new varieties. It is the shrinking,

unused portion of the test orchard (not the entire orchard) that was sub-leased and around which growers requested more information.

The sub-lease was tendered to BCFGAs members, with two eligible responses received. Peter Simonsen reported that the decision on the sub-lease was difficult, but following a grading system, a decision was reached on awarding the test orchard lease. The meeting addressed all concerns raised by members regarding the Test Orchard Lease.

Also at the meeting, the grading of Replant Projects was raised as a concern. Some growers on the waiting list feel that their projects should have been graded higher. The funding, application, grading of the Tree Fruit Replant Program was reviewed.

Some growers suggested changes to the Replant Program, as follows:

- Inspect the currently planted orchards for horticultural results as part of the application process (in addition to the inspection after the replant project is completed) and include the pre-planting orchard inspection in the rating process for Replant Projects.
- Reduce the maximum size of a project to be less than the current 10 acres.
- Make projects ineligible if the grower received funding in the prior year.

The BCFGAs noted that the existing grading system is on the website and agreed to send the detail of the grading to two of the growers present who had complaints about being on the waitlist.

The meeting also added the New Variety Development Council to the agenda. The BCFGAs representatives provided some general information on the Ambrosia Levy, but noted that the NVDC is responsible for the Ambrosia levy. It was further noted that the NVDC Annual Meeting was being held in 2 days time on June 22, where ideas and concerns could be provided directly to the NVDC.

## **New Variety Development Council Election results**

### **Ambrosia Levy Leaders**

The following are members of the 2016/2017 NVDC elected June 22, in alphabetical order:

Raj Bagha	Tom Kinvig
Steve Brown	Tahir Raza
Bruce Currie	Julie Sardinha
Linda Edwards	Bob Thompson

Wilfrid Mennell is appointed as the Ambrosia Variety Owner representative. Jim Campbell is now engaged as a part-time administrator for the NVDC.

## **SAWP Workers available for Transfer**

### **Save airfare**

BCFGA is coordinating transfer workers. We have a pool of workers available August 20. Call Bunvir 250-762-5226 ext 4, if interested in having workers transferred to your farm, or if you have workers available to transfer to other farms.

## **Drought Surveillance - Update**

### **Okanagan Basin Water Board**

The Okanagan Basin Water Board is working with the Ministry of Environment to provide current, relevant information on water supply and demand. Glen Lucas attended a June 21 conference call on current water supply conditions. At risk of over-generalizing, there is low concern about drought in 2016.

The snow pack was relatively good, and though it melted 2-3 weeks earlier than normal, the personnel responsible (licensees) for reservoirs and lake levels were able to capture the maximum amount of the melt possible. Okanagan Lake, for example, is 1 centimeter below 'full pool'. Okanagan Lake inflow was 123% of normal, while the prior year was 76% of normal. Although timing of the snow melt is earlier, flows were above normal and there is "an earlier recession of the freshet".

Creek flows are very low at present, only 5-20% of normal and some are at historic lows for this time of year. Larger rivers have not declined as much, though. If any growers are licensed to take water directly from smaller tributaries, it is important to monitor these creek flows and obtain further information from the Ministry of Environment, as mid- to late-season flows on creeks are expected to be very low.

Similkameen River flows are expected to be low later in the season, and this will mainly cause issues for the Okanagan River flows below the border.

For groundwater (i.e. well water), governments have 40 'observation wells' to determine the general ground water levels. With the exception of Kelowna, ground water levels are normal or slightly below normal. Kelowna groundwater levels are at a minimum or near minimum level.

At this time, the water supply situation is considered stable. The OBWB, Ministry of Environment and water purveyors will monitor the situation closely and updates for industry will be more regularly timed than in past years. The BCFGAs will continue to monitor but plans to report further information in future newsletters *only* if the water supply situation deteriorates from the good and stable situation at present.

**Aerial Imaging to Manage Your Orchard**  
 Message from Summerland Varieties Corporation



Unmanned aerial systems - most commonly known as drones, can assist growers with optimizing management techniques by variety.


Drones can provide detailed orchard information that may assess tree health, vigour, weather damage or measure whether trees are under water stress, making it simpler to determine where to allocate resources and irrigation programs, leading to better crop uniformity.

Drones will only be used with the *full knowledge and consent* of property owners, and will fly in preprogrammed and agreed-upon flight patterns. SVC is proud to partner with Hummingbird Aerial Surveys, who are approved by Transport Canada, and the Ambrosia Council who are funding partners.

If you would like more information about this program or would like your orchard(s) to be considered for an aerial survey, please contact:

Erin Wallich  
[erin@summerlandvarieties.com](mailto:erin@summerlandvarieties.com)  
 778-516-8015

**How to contact the BCFGA Office**

<p>BCFGA Office - 250-762-5226          Toll free -1-800-619-9022</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brenda Zarr, Member Services and Replant Admin, local 1.</li> <li>• Glen Lucas, General Manager, local 2.</li> <li>• Sheila MacGregor, Accountant, local 3.</li> <li>• Bunvir Nijjer, Corporate Secretary and Seasonal Agriculture Worker Program, local 4.</li> </ul>
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**Dates and Events**- check the [BCFGA Calendar](#) on our website for more information

**Meetings**  
**Attended recently and upcoming**

July 18-20	Federal-Provincial-Territorial Agriculture Ministers meeting	Canadian Federation of Agriculture representatives
July 19	Western Liberal Caucus	Fred Steele and Glen Lucas
July 22-23	CHC Apple Working Group	Fred Steele
August 11	BCFGA Executive meeting	