

BC Fruit Growers' Association

Friday File

November 27, 2015



Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program

Mexico Program for 2016

The annual intergovernmental review meeting for the Canada-Mexico Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) was held November 24-25, 2015 in Mexico City. Changes for Mexican SAWP workers in BC include:

1. The BC SAWP minimum wage for 2016 is \$10.59 per hour.
2. Piece work can be paid, but it must be no less than \$10.59 per hour. Growers must keep a record of hours worked, and have workers initial or sign the record of hours.
3. Meals may be provided and charged at a rate of \$6.00 per day for one meal, \$9.00 per day for two meals, and \$12.00 per day for three meals, as long as the meals are prepared by a third party caterer and the meal plan is reviewed by a nutritionist. Workers may opt out of the meal plan and the employer remains obligated to provide facilities, time and equipment in order that the worker can prepare his/her own meals.
4. The worker will bring a copy of the employment agreement, signed by the worker and the government agent, to the employer. This will enable the employer to sign the copy and keep it on file.

In other Mexico SAWP news:

1. The burial/repatriation clause (rarely if ever used) in the event of a non-work-related death while in Canada will obligate the employer to any *additional* costs above the insurance. Previously, the employers obligation was not clear. Workers Compensation provides coverage for deaths that occur at work.
2. If the employer provides an advance on pay, then the proper CPP and EI must be deducted off of the salary advance. It is suggested that to ease the complexity of advances, that the employer may choose to provide a non-payroll cash advance (i.e. a loan or IOU), get a note on the amount and requirement to repay, and note be torn up when the worker repays the same cash amount.
3. Employers must provide housing at no cost to the worker until they go home. There was discussion that if the time between the end of work and the return home is excessive, that the employer would provide a meals or food for the period. BCFGAs unaware of any prolonged delays between the end of work and the return home for Mexican workers on the SAWP program.
4. The Mexican consulate gave notice that it would be reducing the services it provides in BC, based on services provided in Quebec and Ontario by producer-funded organizations FERMES and FARMS. This will probably require BC to revive the Western Agriculture Labour Initiative to help process applications, coordinate travel and track transfers, and some other activities. This will continue to be discussed by BC

Agriculture Council and the Mexican Consulate in Vancouver. BCFGGA is actively involved in the BCAC Labour Committee and will be seeking solutions to administration of the program which are cost-effective and efficient.

5. Payment of the work visa work permit by the employer may be discontinued after December 1, 2015. If discontinued, then the worker will pay the visa work permit directly to Canadian Immigration in Mexico City.

Seasonal Agricultural Worker Housing Inspectors - certified

Kieth Suftin	Kelowna (travels no charge 2 hours)	250-317-3349
Brad Pears	Kelowna	250-717-6434
Bob Hamm	Kelowna	250-470-8467
Barry Chickloski	Penticton	250-490-1118
Dwight Carroll	Kelowna	250-470-8467
Hugh Cairns	Kelowna	250-808-5777
Mike Bradshaw	Kelowna	250-870-8340

Replant Update

There are 141 applications to the 2016 Replant Program, received before the November 20 deadline.

99 applications are complete.

42 are incomplete.

All applications will receive a letter confirming the application is either complete or incomplete. If incomplete, then a deadline of 4 pm, December 4, 2015 has been established for the missing information to be provided (for applications that have everything except for soil samples, if the soil test results are not available, then a confirmation of laboratory payment is required). A letter to the 42 applicants with incomplete documents was sent November 23.

Okanagan Climate Change Workshop

Impacts of Climate Change and Adaptation for Agriculture

Participate in the discussion and help us to address these key questions:

- *How can the agricultural sector and partners in the Okanagan work together to build resilience to climate change?*
- *What are the risks, vulnerabilities and opportunities facing various production systems?*
- *What are the critical information gaps or areas where knowledge needs to be improved?*
- *How can we develop and/or fine tune adaptation tools and resources to assist producers with decisions at the farm-level?*

Workshop Dates and Locations: choose one location (lunch provided!)

Penticton Wednesday, December 2nd, 2015, 9am to 2pm


Penticton Lake Resort, 21 Lakeshore Drive West, Penticton, BC

Vernon Thursday, December 3rd, 2015

Vernon Golf & Country Club, 800 Kalamalka Lake Road, Vernon, BC

To register, contact Okanagan@BCAgClimateAction.ca or call 1-778-676-7657.

How to contact the BCFGA Office

<p>BCFGA Office </p> <p>250-762-5226 or toll free 1-800-619-9022</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brenda Zarr, Member Services and Replant Admin, local 1. • Glen Lucas, General Manager, local 2. • Sheila MacGregor, Accountant, local 3. • Bunvir Nijjer, Corporate Secretary and Seasonal Agriculture Worker Program, local 4.
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Dates and Events

Check [the calendar on our website](#) for more information

Date	Event
November 30	Tree Fruit Crop Insurance Deadline for 2016 coverage
November 30 - December 4	National Meeting - Caribbean-Canada Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (Pinder Dhaliwal attending)
December 1	Tree Fruit Production Guide - specialists review meeting
December 4	Sterile Insect Release Board - monthly meeting
December 7-9	Washington State Hort Forum, Yakima
December 10-11	Agriculture and Climate Change Adaptation, workshop in Kelowna (contact BCFGA if you are interested in attending)
December 14	next BCFGA Executive meeting
December 31, 2015	AgriStability application deadline for 2015 (with penalty)
January 12 and 14, 2016	BCFGA District Council meetings
January 29-30	BCFGA Annual Convention, Ramada Hotel, Kelowna

