



The British Columbia Fruit Growers' Association

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August 13, 2021

The Honourable John Horgan
Premier of British Columbia
Box 9041 Station PROV GOVT
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1

Dear Premier:

The BC Fruit Growers' Association represents 320 commercial tree fruit growers in the BC Interior. The family-owned tree fruit farms in BC generate income of \$118 million per year, with a packed value of \$218 million, and \$777 million of economic activity annually, with apples accounting for about 60% of the total. Since 2016, the apple sector has declined about 15% in acreage and the cherry sector is increasing in acreage. The cherry sector is growing, but has suffered financial reverses of crop loss due to rain, winter freeze and heat over the past 3 years. We are asking for a meeting to set a direction for the future of our sector.

Is the Tree Fruit sector worth saving? In a word, yes.

The apple sector was growing until 2016.

- Ambrosia, a BC-discovered apple, is leading the way.
- A made in BC, pesticide reduction program has been in place for over 25 years. The Sterile Insect Release Program, a true IPM program, is a unique partnership with local governments.
- The BC apple sector has replaced an incredible 86.8% of our apple acreage over the past 25 years with new varieties, compared with only 44% replacement at our chief competitor Washington State - thanks to the support of the BC government for the Tree Fruit Replant Program (unfortunately now ended despite the repeated recommendation that it be renewed by the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services and despite the inclusion of Replant in the Grow BC portion of the Minister's mandate letter).

The cherry sector is a leading exporter.

- Late Season cherry varieties developed at the Summerland Research Station are planted in 80% of the new and replacement cherry acreage, worldwide.
- Through the wholly-owned BCFGAs subsidiary, Canadian growers are provided with an 8 year head-start on adopting new Summerland varieties.
- A research project to ensure the success of the new varieties invests \$3.2 million of federal funding and \$1.26 million of royalty and industry funding, mainly expended at the Summerland Research Station.

Despite these world-leading efforts and the challenges besetting agriculture, the BC tree fruit sector is in desperate need of open, honest, two-way communication with government. Industry needs collaborative action with the government in recognizing and supporting the regional economic contribution of the sector. We have noted this to your Minister of Agriculture consistently over the past 4 years, without any meaningful response, other than a government staff study that is currently underway and about which we have grave concerns.

Our industry, like other agriculture sectors, is facing the challenges of climate change and all-time record setting heat from June 28 to July 1, 2021. The tree fruit sector needs more than stabilization. The tree fruit sector needs to thrive, grow, and contribute to the BC economy in so many ways, including food security, local food processing and packing, and tourism attraction.

We request a meeting to raise issues with you about the financial challenges in our sector, the importance of food security and economic contribution, and how a future-looking collaborative approach with the Minister and Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Foods might be structured.

Our association is 132 years old, but we are future looking.

Please contact Glen Lucas, General Manager, BCFGa to arrange a meeting time and date. We sincerely appreciate your time at this critical juncture for our sector.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pinder Dhaliwal', written in a cursive style.

Pinder Dhaliwal
President

CC Lana Popham, BC Minister of Agriculture
BC Agriculture Council