

BC FRUIT GROWERS'  
ASSOCIATION

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# BCFGA Bulletin



November 2010

## BC Apple Growers Get National Recognition

Again this year, BC apples were showcased and competed at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair (RAWF) in Toronto, Ontario. On the first day of the RAWF, awards in the Royal National Apple Competition were announced, and BC growers proudly took home several awards including Jim Campbell from Osoyoos who won the *CHC Trophy* as the winner of the New Varieties Section. Other winners include:

### Commercial Varieties

*Gala* 1<sup>st</sup> Karmjit & Balvir Gill  
3<sup>rd</sup> Enio Leardo

*Golden Delicious* 3<sup>rd</sup> Enio Leardo

*Spartan* 1<sup>st</sup> Enio Leardo  
2<sup>nd</sup> Harjinder Brar

### New Varieties

*Ambrosia* 1<sup>st</sup> Devin Jell, Gartrell Heritage Farms  
2<sup>nd</sup> Jim Campbell  
3<sup>rd</sup> Joe Sardinha, Sardinha Orchards

*Aurora Golden Gala* 1<sup>st</sup> Jim Campbell  
2<sup>nd</sup> Fred & Phyllis Nelson, Nelsons Fruit Work  
3<sup>rd</sup> Devin Jell, Gartrell Heritage Farms

*Other* 1<sup>st</sup> Enio Leardo (Nicola)  
2<sup>nd</sup> Jamie Kidston (Nicola)  
3<sup>rd</sup> Germaine Hogue, Roseridge Orchards (Pink Lady)

*Champion & Reserve* 1<sup>st</sup> Devin Jell, Gartrell heritage Farms  
2<sup>nd</sup> Jim Campbell

### Best Collection of 5 Varieties

1<sup>st</sup> Tarsem Dhoot  
3<sup>rd</sup> Joe Sardinha, Sardinha Orchards

### Heaviest Apple

3<sup>rd</sup> Tristan Mennell, Mennell Brothers Organics

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## New Cabinet Roles for Okanagan MLAs

The Honourable Ben Stewart was appointed the new Agriculture Minister in the latest BC Cabinet shuffle on October 25<sup>th</sup>. The Minister moved from Community and Rural Development; his past portfolios included the Ministry of Citizens' Services and Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism and the Public Affairs Bureau. He was elected MLA for Westside-Kelowna in 2009. Minister Stewart comes to the agriculture portfolio with a strong business and agricultural background.

While Minister Stewart takes on the agriculture portfolio, the crown land administration functions have been moved from the former Agriculture and Lands Ministry to Forests, Mines and Lands and the new Natural Resource Operations Ministry. With the new Agriculture Ministry now much smaller, the structural change should benefit the agriculture sector as the focus of the new Minister should be solely on agriculture issues.

The BCFGGA looks forward to working with Minister Stewart and will be contacting his office to schedule a meeting to discuss issues such as the recaptured input tax credit (HST).

The BC Agriculture Council will also work on setting up a round table with the new Minister and BCAC member associations. BCAC organized round tables with previous Ministers shortly after their appointment – and these sessions provided an excellent opportunity for members to present their key issues and challenges and the new Ministers found the sessions to provide an effective briefing on BC agriculture.

The change in the Agriculture portfolio was part of a much larger government restructuring that saw the separation of policy functions from operational, regulatory and permitting functions of the various natural resource portfolios. Agriculture's previous Minister, Steve Thomson has become the Minister of the newly created and very large Natural Resource Operations Ministry, which has responsibilities in many areas important to BC agriculture including water use planning, watershed restoration, fish, wildlife and habitat management, drought management, dam and dyke safety and regulation, forests and range authorizations and independent power production.

A complete list of the announced changes can be found in the attachments of the government news release: [http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news\\_releases\\_2009-2013/2010PREM0191-001330.pdf](http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2009-2013/2010PREM0191-001330.pdf).

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## 2011 BCFGGA Annual Meeting

The BCFGGA 122nd Annual General Meeting will be held at the Penticton Lakeside Resort Convention Centre and Casino, January 27-28, 2011.

The December/January newsletter will provide you with further information on the event.

Also note that we are planning to have the same format as prior years - two "half-day" sessions.

## **BC Apple Growers Get National Recognition**

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Growers entered their apples to the competition by submitting them in five distinct categories: heritage, new and commercial varieties, as well as best collection of any five varieties, and heaviest apple. Apples were nicely displayed for the competition where they were judged according to several criterias.

“Over the last three years, the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair has proved to be a great venue in showcasing Canadian apples and the amazing work Canadian growers do”, stated Joe Sardinha, President of the BC Fruit Growers’ Association. “As President of the BC Fruit Growers’ Association, I am also extremely proud of how successful BC growers were in capturing many categories in the Royal National Apple Competition again this year, proving that BC apples are second to none.”

The BCFGGA encourages all BC growers to participate in the competition.

For growers interested in participating next year, stay tuned for more information in our Fall 2011 Bulletin.

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## **Innovation Survey for the Horticultural Sector**

A survey is being conducted by the Horticulture Value Chain Round Table, one of several federally-sponsored industry roundtables. It is composed of growers, retailers, associations, and other representatives along with government policy staff.

Labour innovation is one of the areas identified by the roundtable as critical to the competitiveness of the horticulture sector and a labour innovation sub-committee has been formed with representatives from across Canada.

The objectives of the sub-committee is to check the labour-related innovation in the sector, which innovations should be targeted for action, identification of gaps in government and private-sector activities, and the sharing of knowledge along the entire horticulture value chain.

The first step in the process is a survey to obtain growers’ valuable input.

The goal of the survey is to examine and generate ideas on how innovation can help solve labour issues in the horticultural value chain and help increase the competitiveness and profitability of the horticulture sector.

The survey is open until November 30, 2010. If you are a horticulture grower, you are encouraged to take a few minutes to fill out the survey. The survey can be found at:

<http://agsurvey.hostedincanadasurveys.ca/index.php?sid=49198&&lang=en>

## Highlights from the Regional SAWP Meetings

Representatives from the BCAC Labour Committee attended the regional Seasonal Agriculture Workers Program (SAWP) meetings with Counsel Representatives from Mexico and the Caribbean Islands, HRSDC, WorkSafeBC, the Employment Standards Branch, and participating SAWP farms. The morning meeting was with Mexico and the afternoon was with the Caribbean Islands. **The BC SAWP wage rate for 2011 is \$9.28 per hour.**

HRSDC has developed national housing guidelines that growers are strongly encouraged to use in 2011; they expect that they will be mandatory in 2012. The guidelines will be posted on the HRSDC website. BC has had its own housing guidelines for the past several years, so the new guidelines are not expected to impact BC participants significantly.

Customs and Immigration Canada no longer requires a medical exam for agricultural workers coming into BC. The change raised several concerns with employer representatives; notably whether RBC medical coverage would extend to pre-existing medical conditions. In response to concerns, Mexico is developing a new medical exam that will target more relevant health issues – the previous exam targeted tuberculosis. All concerns raised at regional SAWP meetings across Canada will be brought to the National SAWP meeting in Mexico City in late November. For more detailed notes on the SAWP meeting, please contact [Christine@bcac.bc.ca](mailto:Christine@bcac.bc.ca).

### *Update: Seasonal Agriculture Workers Program*

Growers may now apply for both the Caribbean Commonwealth and Mexican seasonal agriculture workers. The information and forms for the SAWP program are at the websites: General Information: [www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/foreign\\_workers/sawp.shtml](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/foreign_workers/sawp.shtml)  
Forms: [www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/foreign\\_workers/fwp\\_forms.shtml](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/foreign_workers/fwp_forms.shtml)

The Jamaican Government has established an office in the Okanagan (Kelowna) to assist growers in making a transition to the Seasonal Agriculture Worker Program (SAWP). The Jamaican Liaison Service (JLS) provides a complementary advice to employers regarding the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program and the Temporary Foreign Workers Program, and ongoing support service for both employee and employer when the worker arrives here. Given the thorough screening and orientation exercise conducted in Jamaica and the fact that English is the country's first language, Jamaican workers are a natural fit for the Canadian work place.

### **Air Fares**

Air fares from Jamaica are quite attractive, and range from a low of \$300 to a high of \$600 (including taxes) per person one way. The JLS has persistently been seeking ways of assisting BC employers in getting the most affordable rates, and in recent negotiations with Westjet Airlines, a discount package was arranged. For the 2011 Agricultural Season, the airline has committed to offering a 20% discount off regular fares and 10% discount off seat sale fares at the time of booking (before taxes).

### **For more information, please contact:**

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## **BC Agriculture Climate Change Action Plan Available**

The BCAC and the Investment Agriculture Foundation have unveiled the *BC Agriculture Climate Change Action Plan* – which is an industry-led plan developed over the last two years with a focus on both climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Topics cover farm practices and greenhouse gas emissions, energy and fuel efficiency, and clean energy production.

The completion of the plan is important as it identifies the priority areas for implementation, which the BCAC is already moving forward with in a number of areas.

The Climate Change Action Plan is available at: <http://www.bcaqclimateaction.ca/home/news/>.

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## **UPDATE: New format for the BCFGGA Annual Horticultural Forum**

The BC Fruit Growers Association is pleased to announce the merger of its annual Horticultural Forum and Tradeshow with the Okanagan Packinghouse Fieldmen's Group Seminar.

The combined event will take place at the **Kelowna Trinity Baptist Church, March 10-11, 2011.**

The event will provide growers with new opportunities and rewarding experiences through better a than ever tradeshow and workshops.

Keep a close eye on our website for more information in the upcoming weeks at [www.bcfga.com](http://www.bcfga.com)!

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## **BCFGGA Golden Jubilee Bursary: Deadline**

Each year, the BCFGGA offers the \$1,000 Golden Jubilee Bursary.

The deadline to apply for the 2010/2011 bursary is November 30th, 2010.

If you are a member of the BCFGGA and have a close relative attending college or university, then this person can apply for the \$1,000 BCFGGA Golden Jubilee Bursary.

For an application form, go to [www.bcfga.com](http://www.bcfga.com), under our “Members Services” section. You can also call our office at 250-762-5226 ext.21

## Update from CHC Apple Working Group

The Apple Working Group, composed of representatives of all 5 apple producing provinces, submitted an application for a national replant and removal program in the Spring. We have not yet received word on this application and we encourage growers to contact their Member of Parliament (MP) to express support and make sure to explain why renewal of your orchard program is important. You may get in touch with your MP's office through the Government of Canada toll-free directory assistance: 1-800-0-Canada, or 1-800-622-6232. You may write to your MP, ask to speak with him/her by telephone, or make an appointment to meet at his/her Constituency office.

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## Marketing Agency Update

At the regional meetings held this past summer, growers expressed extreme disappointment and frustration with low apple returns at the grower level. The provincial agriculture minister announced that there would be no direct, special payment to growers; however, the AgriFlex program was announced and an initial meeting to review projects and establish priorities was held November 10. At the regional meetings, growers directed the BCFGGA to look into establishing a national marketing agency to ensure a fair return for growers. The CHC Apple Working Group reviewed a stepped process and strategy to achieve a national apple marketing agency. Many hurdles remain, specifically those raised by government about the 1992 Marketing Plan which proposed a national supply management agency for apples:

- 'capacity' - the ability to track apple sales – specifically demonstrated by the ability to collect a levy on all apples.
- 'discipline' – the ability to enforce rules in a fair manner that treats all growers equally. Specifically, the ability to levy all growers, without exception, would demonstrate discipline.
- 'trade negotiations' – uncertainties around NAFTA and GATT and the breakdown of the current round of trade negotiations.

The first step of the strategy will be to demonstrate discipline and capacity within each of the five apple producing provinces. The good news is that 3 of the provinces have research and promotion agencies in place that adequately demonstrate capacity and discipline (New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario). It was agreed at the meeting that BC should be the next province to ask its growers to consider a provincial research and promotion agency. A proposal is being prepared for the consideration of BC growers, and industry organizations such as Okanagan Tree Fruit Cooperative, independent packers, and the New Variety Development Council need to be consulted. If BC and Nova Scotia get provincial research and promotion agencies in place, then the next step will be a national vote to implement a National Research and Promotion Agency (a benefit of this approach is that all imports will also be levied, effectively doubling a national research and/or promotion program). Then, if successful, the work to achieve a National Apple Marketing Agency (regulated marketing) could proceed. The stepped process, viewed all at once, seems insurmountable, but taking one step at a time will help to break the project into achievable goals. Watch for more information in future newsletters, attend the BCFGGA Annual Convention, or contact a BCFGGA Executive member for more information.

## Product of Canada Requirements

About two years ago, the federal government responded to the furor over Product of Canada labeling requirements by implementing a new rule: processed food items could only use the Product of Canada label if more than 98% of the content was grown or produced in Canada.

The Canadian Horticulture Council and Canadian Federation of Agriculture positions to support 85% Canadian content, mainly established prior to the new 98% rule, carried on, even though the government had announced the stricter rules.

Over the past year, there has been some interest, mainly from food processors, in reducing the Product of Canada label requirement to 85%. A national consultation was announced on the subject.

On October 28, after being made aware of the review and possible imminent change to the Product of Canada rule, the BCFGAs presented a strongly worded letter opposing any watering down of the Product of Canada requirement.

About October 28, the Minister of State for Agriculture announced that any revision to the Product of Canada label requirement would not be made before the end of the year, as proposed, due to the lack of support from consumer groups.

The BCFGAs will attend upcoming meetings with other agriculture organizations and attempt to get the national agriculture organizations to update their positions and support a strong Product of Canada label.

## Upcoming 2010 Meetings & Events

- |                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| <b>November 22-27, 2010:</b> | Canadian Western Agribition (Regina, Saskatchewan)                  |
| <b>November 23-28, 2010:</b> | Canada's Outstanding Young Farmers National Event<br>(Victoria, BC) |
| <b>November 29-30, 2010:</b> | <i>BC Agriculture Council policy Session</i>                        |
| <b>December 6, 2010:</b>     | <i>BCFGA Municipal Council Meeting in Keremeos</i>                  |
| <b>December 13, 2010:</b>    | <i>BCFGA Municipal Council Meeting in Salmon Arm &amp; Oliver</i>   |
| <b>December 14, 2010:</b>    | <i>BCFGA Municipal Meeting in Peachland</i>                         |
| <b>December 20, 2010:</b>    | <i>BCFGA Municipal Council Meeting in Osoyoos</i>                   |



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The BC Fruit Growers' Association represents the 840 commercial orchards in BC, with a mandate "to foster a business environment for the long-term prosperity of BC tree fruit growers". The BC tree fruit industry generates over \$130 million in fresh fruit sales annually at the wholesale level, with a further \$120 million in sales from Sun-Rype, the main processor of fruit in the Okanagan

**BCFGA Executive**

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