



Replant Announcement

Statement of Peter Simonsen, President, BC Fruit Growers' Association

April 30, 2023

(Langley) I would like to thank Minister Alexis and the Ministry staff for the Food Security package announced March 7 and today's announcement of the allocation to Perennial Replant Programs. I would also like to thank our partners in the tree fruit stabilization process for their help and support.

BC tree fruit production is mainly apples and cherries (together 90% of tree fruit value), and also includes pears, peaches, plums, nectarines and apricots. The Tree Fruit sector is made up of 400 commercial growers (all family farms) who cultivate approximately 17,000 acres of land.

There are no better locations in North America for fruit growing than the Okanagan and Similkameen valleys. Mild winters, dry sunny summers, the climate moderating effects of the lakes and good supplies of water coming mostly in the form of slow release and captured snowpack has given us a uniquely fruitful place on this planet.

The foresight and courage of our government 50 years ago by legislating farmland protection, our dry desert climate reducing the need for fungal protection and our unique in the world method of dealing with our major insect pest by using sterile insect technology has given us a truly environmentally sustainable industry that should be thriving and expanding.

Canada is said to have one of the most concentrated and least competitive retail environments in the world and this has been to our detriment. Canadian Border Services data of weekly import fruit sales have shown that due to our lack of orderly marketing we have consistently undervalued our products by 20 to 30 cents per lb and this has turned our environmentally sustainable industry into an economically unsustainable one. With Ministry leadership we are now on our way toward a process of orderly marketing combined with the development of a British Columbia apple marketing plan.



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Recent weather events have also taken a toll on fruit grower finances and we continue to work with our government to strengthen the sector and food security overall.

Statistics Canada reported that in 2021 Canada imported \$253 million worth of apples and exported \$42 million of apples. For cherries, we imported \$199 million and exported \$72 million. Together, the trade deficit in apples and cherries is \$338 million. We have some ground to make up, and the replant program announced today will be an important part in increasing the production and quality of tree fruit.

I would also like to thank the citizens of our province who we interact with on a daily basis, who overwhelmingly chose to buy BC products and are as concerned about food security as we all are.

Modernization through Replant is vitally important in terms of increased efficiency and productivity. This announcement sends an important message of government commitment and the replant program is an important part of rebuilding.

So. Thank you again to Minister Alexis and her team for the leadership on replant and other programs to strengthen the nutritional, social and financial contribution of the tree fruit sector to our region, our province and our nation.

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Further Information

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