

Feed B.C. Value Chain Industry Stakeholder Advisory Group Meeting #3: March 11 2019

Prepared for
BC Ministry of Agriculture, Agriculture Science and Policy Division

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29 March 2019

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this report is to summarize the findings and recommendations arising from the March 11, 2019 Feed BC Value Chain Industry Stakeholder Advisory Group meeting for the BC Ministry of Agriculture's Feed BC Value Chain initiative. Feed BC aims to effect long-term system changes that will increase the use of BC-grown and processed foods in healthcare facilities, post-secondary institutions, and other government facilities. To support this initiative an advisory group of industry experts was formed in March 2018. To date the Value Chain Advisory Group has met three times:

Meeting #1: March 23 2018 - an initial meeting that introduced the Feed BC Program to stakeholders. Stakeholders then made recommendations to the Ministry to help it achieve Feed BC's goals and to officially form the Value Chain Industry Advisory Group with a Terms of Reference.

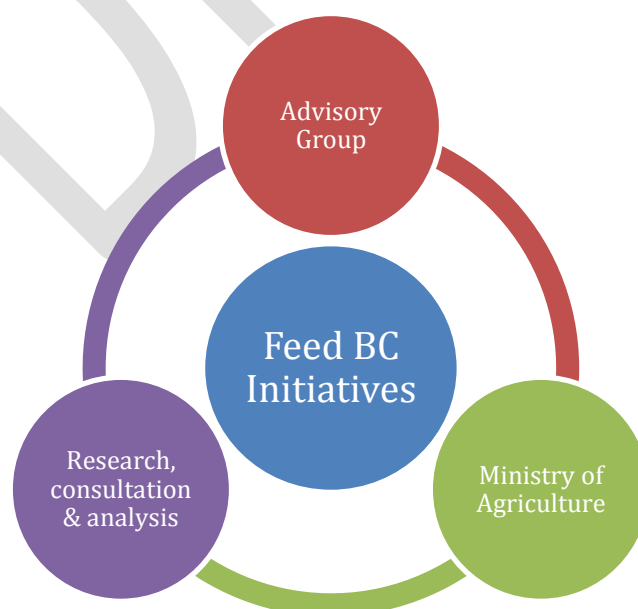
Meeting #2: September 28 2018 – the Advisory Group made additional recommendations, provided further feedback on each of them (especially 3 key recommendations) and then prioritised them all, for the government to develop an action plan.

Meeting #3: March 11 2019 - The Ministry provided an update on key activities to date and an overview of their Feed BC action plan. Stakeholders were then asked to provide specific feedback on the action plan, and provide input on two initiatives, Post Secondary Institutions (PSI) and Good Agricultural Practices (GAP). A workshop was also held that same afternoon with small and emerging producers and processors to introduce new participants of the project to Feed BC and to discuss some specific issues and interests of this sub-sector. .

This report summarizes the discussions and feedback from the larger Value Chain Industry Advisory Group meeting held during the morning and early afternoon on March 11th. A separate report details the discussions and findings of the small and emerging producers and processors session held in the later afternoon.

The Value Chain Advisory Group is one part of three inputs the government is receiving to support the Feed BC initiative. As shown in Figure 1, the other inputs are BC Ministry of Agriculture staff and their resources as well as additional outside research, consultation and analysis.

Figure 1 Feed BC Inputs



2. Value Chain Industry Advisory Group

The Advisory Group is a body of industry stakeholders with expertise that can be shared with government to help build understanding of key challenges and opportunities to strengthen supply chain opportunities for B.C. producers and processors in the BC 'government facilities' market. . Currently, there are 30 industry experts who have agreed to be part of the Advisory Group. This includes representation from the small and medium sized producers and processors sector (SMEs) and representatives from different regions of BC, a gap identified by the Ministry. To have a full roster of experts across BC's value chain, representatives are still being pursued from other geographic regions of BC, as well as representative from new entrants and other commodity sectors.

Participants

The following is a list of organizations participating in the Value Chain Advisory Group:

Organization
Albion Fisheries
Andrea Gray Grant
Aramark
Aramark
BC Turkey Board
BC Agricultural Council
BC Food Processors Association
Compass Group
Capital Region Food and Ag Roundtable
Discovery Organics
English Bay Batters
Fraser Health
Gordon Food Services
Grand Hale Seafood
HealthPro Canada
Interior Health
Meadow Fresh Dairy
Nu Tea
Provincial Health Services Authority
Sodexo
Small Scale Food Processors Association
Sysco
Sysco
Tofino Uclulet Culinary Guild
University of BC
Vancouver Coastal Health
Vanderpol Eggs
VFM Direct
Vancouver Island Health Authority
YVR Prep

Participant Updates

At the meeting, participants were asked to volunteer any updates relevant to the Feed BC initiative to the rest of the group:

- Fraser Health have identified a muffin supplier based in Delta that meets their specifications.
- Interior Health will be sourcing shelled eggs and ground beef from BC suppliers.
- UBC has reached 60% of local food sourcing (according to a recent sustainability rating system called STARS used by universities around North America). They have achieved this through slowly transitioning, step by step, from fixed contract obligations to flexible contracts. They have also focused on quick success stories to share with stakeholders and customers to gather support.
- The Health Authority Local Food Working Group have been sharing BC product leads among each other and posting requests of interest for suppliers to supply BC products. Some participants are also part of a national organization called Nourish, which also share best practices and are currently working on procurement tools to support more BC food in healthcare.

3. Action Plan Update and Feedback

Kristina Bouris, Senior Policy Analyst with the Ministry of Agriculture and program lead for Feed BC, provided the Advisory Group with an update on the new Feed BC Action Plan. The three- year Action Plan, which is a work in progress, has been informed by research and related studies that the Ministry is managing, and in addition, it has been informed by the recommendations and input that has come from the Value Chain Industry Advisory Group.

The Action Plan has the four following key directions:

1. Build capacity of BC producers and processors to increase supply of BC food to government facilities.
2. Build capacity of distributors to expand the availability of BC food.
3. Build demand in government facilities for more BC food.
4. Measure and showcase success.

Kristina presented some of the specific projects and initiatives that are nested within the four key directions, and then highlighted how the total bundle of activities continues to focus on increasing BC food procurement within health facilities, post-secondary institutions and also schools and other government facilities. As it is a work in progress, participants were asked to leave hard copies of the draft action plan. An updated action plan will be shared with participants once it is ready.

Action Plan Feedback

The Advisory Group responded favourably to the Plan and appreciated seeing the organization of the various projects and initiatives and the link back to many of the recommendations that had been discussed at previous meetings. Many expressed how helpful it was to see the linkages between Feed BC, Grow BC and Buy BC and the project targeted as specific institutional sectors. The Advisory Group felt encouraged to see the level of effort that had gone

into understanding the current state of BC food procurement and was excited at the prospect of moving into a program phase more focused on implementation and roll-out of new programming. The following comments and suggestions were provided by the Advisory Group in response to the Action Plan presentation:

- Continue to refine and improve systems for measurement; both at the institutional or sector level but also for overall Feed BC progress tracking.
- Use PSI's as a testing ground for new pilot projects and innovations due to their less restrictive product guidelines.
- Work with menu planning stakeholders to influence menu design to accommodate more BC products.
- Continue to invest in infrastructure to create and consistently deliver the food products needs of menu planners as they evolve (and the form required).
- Improve access to directories of growers, producers, and processors to better enable buyer / supplier networking and increase 'match-making' opportunities.
- Increase awareness around the approved definition of "BC Food" and promote broadly to stakeholders to enable consistent tracking; simultaneously allow for tracking at other levels of details as per interests and capabilities of individual institutions or sectors.
- Continue to address certifications, where they present a barrier to processors, to gain a foothold in the institutional marketplace.
- Several categories for potential opportunities were identified by the group and included:
 - Frozen fruit and vegetables
 - Proteins such as meat, seafood & poultry
 - Muffins
 - Single serve yogurt
 - Single serve juice
 - Fruit cups
 - Coffee

4. Post Secondary Institution Initiative

Kristina Bouris provided a short overview of some recent research that was conducted on behalf of the Ministry with 25 Post-Secondary Institutions across the Province. Key findings from the research included:

- PSIs face many similar barriers to BC food procurement including lack of awareness around BC products, lack of consistent quality and quantity of BC foods for institutional menus as well as catering to the food interests of customers (e.g. students, staff and campus visitors).
- PSIs also have more flexibility to change and alter their menus than healthcare and other types of institutions where menu planning and dietary requirements are more stringent. The implication is that PSIs may have lower overall barriers to advancing BC foods.
- Some PSIs have direct access to BC produce (e.g. UBC Farm) and although these BC supply sources do not have the capacity for supplying significant portions of total food required, they do seem to raise awareness about the opportunity and importance associated with BC food. Not surprisingly, those campuses with a higher exposure to locally grown food seem to have more activity in this area.
- There can be restrictions in contracts with Food Distribution companies which can make it difficult to source BC food when it is available – as this can be seen as buying 'off contract'.

PSI Specific Feedback

Following the presentation, participants were asked what new or existing initiatives could best support the post-sector sector to increase procurement of BC foods. The following suggestions were provided by the Advisory Group in response :

- Make a point of engaging key decision makers such as the Director of Food Services, Food Service Management, Executive Chefs and related roles in promoting the concept of more BC food procurement.
- Use more total cost of ownership or full cost accounting methodologies to show the potential business case for more BC food procurement.
- Make more use of longer term contracts that guarantee a market for small and emerging producers thus allowing them to make the necessary investments to increase supply quantity or consistency or meet the processing / packaging requirements of buyers.
- Run promotional campaigns when BC food is 'in season' to raise awareness of BC food options and to stimulate demand for more BC food; additionally, consider competitions between student groups building on the 'meatless Monday' idea to promote more BC food demand and to 'shrink' the total food miles within their diets.
- Explore the idea of a levy as part of student fees that could be used to help cover the cost of BC food where it may be more expensive than traditional choices, similar to fees collected to help subsidize transit services.
- Increase engagement with key decision makers by addressing senior PSI finance representatives at upcoming events such as Canadian Association of University Business Officers (CAUBO) and Canadian Association of University Finance Officers (CAUFO).

5. Good Agricultural Practices Initiative

The need for CanadaGAP certification is one of most commonly cited barriers to getting more BC food into government facilities, particularly by smaller producers and processors. The Value Chain Advisory Group had earlier recommended funding to help support producers to gain relevant certifications. The Ministry was interested in hearing from participants about whether there are other strategies, in addition to funding, that could also support more farms in becoming GAP certified.

Gray Daniels and Kristina Bouris, BC Ministry of Agriculture, presented an overview of CanadaGAP (Canada Good Agricultural Practices) and some of the barriers facing smaller farmers. CanadaGAP is a third-party certification for companies that produce, handle and broker fruits and vegetables. It does not include all crops (e.g. nuts or mushrooms) and does not include animals. CanadaGAP is required by many distributors, retail outlets and institutions for producers to sell to them. The program has received full Canadian Government recognition and is designed to help implement and maintain effective food safety procedures within fresh produce operations.

Among all provinces in Canada, BC has the largest percentage of farms that are CanadaGAP certified. However, there are many challenges to increasing this number including; administration burden, cost and farmer questions regarding the return on investment. The BC Ministry of Agriculture and Federal Government currently do have some programs and funding in place to increase the number of farms but asked the advisory group for further recommendations.

CanadaGap Feedback

Following the presentation, participants were asked: What other strategies could support more producers to be become CanadaGAP certified? Feedback from the advisory group was gathered in 4 key areas, as follows:

	Feedback	Recommendations
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Determine reliable percentage of CanadaGAP certified farms• More retailers are insisting on CanadaGAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Measure percentage of GAP certified farms against farms that are doing >\$100k/annum and also include GlobalGAP certified farms• Understand the opportunity further by analysing GAP certified farms i.e. how many have shifted, who are they, how many new entrants are GAP certified and what size are the farms.
Producer perception	The process is cumbersome and takes 1 to 2 staff participants to focus on maintaining GAP certification	Use distributors to help educate producers on the process and its benefits. Distributors are the door to sales and have a lot of influence.
Is it worth the investment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It is worth it for larger farms, and maybe just larger farms.• There needs to be trust that larger buyers will follow through on promises to buy from farms that obtain GAP certification.• There is current funding for distributors to be GAP certified.• Certification does allow producers to work with broadline distributors.	None gathered on the day
Buyer support	Are buyers aware of BCGAP?	None gathered on the day

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The main conclusion from the day was the importance of partnerships to help meet Feed BC goals. Organizations that are having success in substantively increasing their purchase of BC foods (e.g. UBC and Interior Health) have done so through strong partnerships with distributors, producers and food service providers. For producers to gain a foothold in institutions they need to identify willing 'BC food' champions within those institutions. This is essential because there are so many challenges to listing BC products. For institutions interested in listing certain BC products they need to identify producers and processors and work with them on how they can meet their specifications. This highlights the ongoing need to facilitate more market making opportunities for buyers, distributors and producers.

Below we present recommendations, for key areas of the Feed BC initiative, based on discussions and feedback from the Advisory Group:

Action Plan

- Improve BC Food procurement measurement systems both at the institutional or sector level but also for overall Feed BC progress tracking.
- Use PSI's as a testing ground for new pilot projects and innovations due to their less restrictive product guidelines; use pilot experiences to better understand which types of projects match best with the three institutional sectors within the Action Plan.
- Continue to invest in infrastructure to create and consistently deliver the food products needs of menu planners as they evolve (and the form required).
- Improve access to directories of growers, producers, and processors to better enable buyer / supplier networking and increase 'match-making' opportunities.
- Increase awareness around the approved definition of "BC Food" and promote broadly to stakeholders to enable consistent tracking; simultaneously allow for tracking at other levels of details as per interests and capabilities of individual institutions or sectors.

Post Secondary Institution Initiative

- Leverage the flexibility that exists within this market segment to test and pilot initiatives.
- Build stronger direct relationships with executive chefs and food service directors to promote increasing BC food procurement; make presentations or market Feed BC to the CAUBO and CAUFO groups.
- Leverage the growing interest among students and campus stakeholders in BC food and alternative diets.
- Continue to focus efforts on those PSIs where sustainability is already a strong element of the campus strategic plan and operations so that BC food is connected to existing strategies, plans and priorities.

CanadaGAP Initiative

The advisory group felt that CanadaGAP was key to fruit and vegetable producers accessing the institutional market as well as other large markets such as retailers. They agreed it could be a cumbersome program and there was a cost to it, but neither of these challenges could be addressed. Currently, primarily larger farms were more suited to take advantage of GAP certification. Larger farms are also able to supply the larger buyers interested in ordering from them. Below are some strategic recommendations on how to develop the program:

- Analyse CanadaGAP to understand the challenges and opportunities further in BC. This could look at the types of farms certified, who their main customers are and similar farms that aren't certified and why.
- Once the gap of how many larger fruit and vegetables farms have not been CanadaGAP certified and an understanding as to why, then develop a strategy specifically targeted to those that aren't to increase certification.

- Encourage institutions to partner with farms going through the CanadaGAP process to guarantee them a market once they have become certified. Institutions could choose farms based on what BC food gaps they have.
- Develop a searchable database of farms that are certified CanadaGAP and what products they sell. Share the database with institutional buyers making it easier for them to source from viable BC farms.
- Analyse current Ministry workshops to see how they can be expanded. One recommended way, which is already being implemented, is to partner with producer organizations (e.g. CR FAIR, VFM Direct and Young Agrarians) and co-host CanadaGAP workshops.

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