



## **The Path Forward: A Blueprint for B.C.s Tree Fruit Industry** **(Tree Fruit Industry Stabilization Plan)**

**Project Update**  
**November 5, 2021**

### *What is the Tree Fruit Industry Stabilization Project?*

The Tree Fruit Industry Stabilization Project is assessing the circumstances leading to the challenges the tree fruit industry is facing and creating a tactical plan to respond to the difficult economic circumstances facing producers.

BC's tree fruit sector (most notably apple production) has been in decline for several years. Despite several studies of the industry and a considerable number of recurring recommendations, no organization has assumed the leadership role necessary to revitalize the industry. No plan has been developed on which to act.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries committed to a comprehensive process to clarify the foundational challenges facing the sector and how to address them, with an aggressive timeline. This reflected the significant challenges facing the tree fruit sector (especially among apple producers) and the need for prompt but informed action.

### *Who is involved in the Tree Fruit Industry Stabilization Project?*

The Tree Fruit Industry Stabilization Project is led by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries in consultation with an External Advisory Committee. The internal (Ministry) Project Team includes several core units (e.g.: Professional Agrologists, Economists, and staff from Policy, Marketing, and Business Risk Management department(s)).

### *Which industry organizations are represented by the External Advisory Committee?*

The Advisory Committee represents key industry stakeholders, including the BC Fruit Growers Association (BCFGA), the BC Cherry Association (BCCA), the New Tree Fruit Variety Development Council (NTFVDC), the Sterile Insect Release Program (SIR), the BC Grape Growers' Association (BCGA), and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC). Recently, staff from the Agricultural Land Commission have also been attending meetings.

### *What is the role of the Advisory Committee?*

A project plan was developed and endorsed by the Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee informs project direction, including project methodology, the consultation



process, interpretation of the findings, and nature of the final recommendations and plan.

The Advisory Committee meets at least bi-weekly (but usually more frequently) and is regularly updated on progress, as stated in the Terms of Reference. The Advisory Committee has met 20 times.

As part of their participation on the Advisory Committee, members agreed to represent their organizations and the full industry and to update their organizations.

Members of the Advisory Committee are provided with information (project scope and progress, meeting agendas, meeting minutes, key messages, presentations made to the Advisory Group, consultation findings, etc.) which they can use to update their organizations after each meeting and share publicly (including with their organizations, producers, etc.).

Relying on members of the Advisory Committee to keep their organizations and members appropriately informed was both prudent and ensured communications to them could be timely and in a format that each organization preferred.

*Are growers equally represented on the advisory committee?*

Each industry-led organization has one representative on the Advisory Committee, except for the BCFG, which has two members. There is no one industry association that represents the majority of growers in the different commodities that form the tree fruit sector. A combination of representation from BCFG, BCCA and BCGA – supplemented with our consultation efforts, captures the perspective(s) of most growers.

*Who has been consulted during this process?*

There have been 30 consultation sessions with over 165 individuals representing all aspects of the industry, including producers, packers, marketers, retailers, researchers, and government.

*What efforts were made to allow producers and others the opportunity to participate?*

The 165 participants in those sessions represents a participation rate of somewhere around 20%. Significant effort was made to ensure that voices from all parts of industry were captured. All growers and their organizations were given every opportunity to participate and support the project every step of the way, and encourage participation by others.



The Minister introduced producers to the process at the BCFGAs 2021 AGM and encouraged participation through a video shared with members of the Advisory Committee.

The Ministry:

- Increased awareness and encouraged participation through information about the initiative available on its website and through AgriService BC.
- Made members of the Ministry's project team available to any organization or group that wanted to discuss or inform the process.
- Committed to engagement session on weekdays or weekends and at any time of day to accommodate growers' and others' schedules.
- Had translation services available for every engagement session.

The Ministry engaged every organization that is a member of the Advisory Committee to encourage and support participation. For instance:

- Each member group of the Advisory Committee was provided an opportunity for their Board of Directors and/or staff to be briefed on the project and/or provide input into the process. Only some member groups accepted that offer.
- Every member group of the Advisory Committee was provided communications materials to distribute to their members, as drafted or edited as they preferred. Some member groups did communicate to their members.

Further, organizations that were not members of the Advisory Committee were provided an opportunity for their Board of Directors and/or staff to be briefed on the project and/or provide input into the process. Some member groups accepted that offer.

For instance, the BC Tree Fruits Cooperative created the opportunity for its Board of Directors and senior staff to be briefed on the project and provide input into the process. They also arranged two similar sessions for their members to provide input to the process.

*What has been found so far regarding the state of the tree fruit industry?*

Overarching themes repeatedly brought up by industry participants include:

- Lack of leadership or a long-term strategy in the industry, which is directly contributing to the current industry crisis.
- Access to labour, housing for Temporary Foreign Workers, and a long-term labour strategy.
- The need for targeted horticulture and extension services.



- A strategy regarding new varieties.
- A strategic, coordinated plan for marketing and sales.
- The need for consistent and reliable data to inform decisions.
- The need for a review of Government policies and programs.

### *What is the status of the project?*

The Tree Fruit Industry Stabilization Project is on schedule as per the commitment made by the Ministry at the BCFG Annual General Meeting on February 25, 2021.

Formal consultations through roundtable discussions were completed on June 28, 2021. These included both general engagement session and other discussions focussed on particular challenges (e.g.: labour supply and housing, horticulture and extension services, etc).

The Advisory Committee has received comprehensive information on what was said during the consultations with industry, discussed how best to respond to those challenges and was provided insight on potential recommendations on every topic.

### *How was the plan developed? Were then Public Timelines Achieved?*

The Ministry project team drafted recommendations informed by extensive engagement sessions and the Advisory Committee in July 2021. These have been reviewed by senior managers in the Ministry.

The Advisory Committee reviewed drafts of the recommendations to be included in the report on October 7, 2021, and October 14, 2021.

The Advisory Committee received a comprehensive draft of the Tree Fruit Industry Stabilization Plan on October 13, 2021 and had a two hour discussion on that draft on October 14, 2021, and a five-hour meeting about the draft on October 25, 2021. This fulfilled the Ministry's public commitment to have a draft Plan by the end of October 2021.

The Tree Fruit Industry Stabilization Plan was prepared based on extensive consultations with producers, packers, organizations, and associations in BC's tree fruit industry. It reflects the extensive and thoughtful contributions of the members of the External Advisory Group that is advising the development of this Plan through 20 discussions.

The Plan has been informed by staff from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada who provided information and expertise on relevant AAFC policies and programs as participants on the External Advisory Group and through a separate discussion to confirm how AAFC is reflected in the Plan.



Staff from the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) were consulted on content and recommendations that related to the Commission to ensure they were appropriate and the ALC's independence was not compromised. This was done through ALC staff attendance at the External Advisory Group and through a separate discussion to confirm how the ALC is reflected in the Plan.

To ensure Advisory Committee members could discuss the contents of, and ensure the support of their organization for, the draft report, the draft was shared with the Boards of Directors of the members of the Advisory Committee that completed, signed, and returned the required Non-Disclosure Agreement to the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries. Only the BCFGA took advantage of that opportunity.

### *What is the status of the plan?*

The Plan has been unanimously endorsed by the industry members of the Advisory Committee. The Committee confirmed implementation of the recommendations in this Plan would have a significant positive impact on B.C.'s iconic tree fruit industry.

The Plan represents the ideal path forward for improving the circumstances of B.C.'s tree fruit sector.

The Plan is entitled: The Path Forward: A Blueprint for B.C.s Tree Fruit Industry. It is sub-titled Tree Fruit Industry Stabilization Plan.

The Plan is supported by the following documents that outline much of the process and findings that directly informed the Plan:

- Tree Fruit Industry Stabilization Plan - Industry Engagement Strategy
- Tree Fruit Industry Stabilization Plan - Analysis and Audit of Organizations
- Tree Fruit Industry Stabilization Plan – Report on Stakeholder Engagement (Summary)
- Tree Fruit Industry Stabilization Plan – Report on Stakeholder Engagement (Detailed)
- Economic Contribution Study of British Columbia's Tree Fruit Sector (Deloitte)
- Tree Fruit Competitiveness Fund (TFCF) Program Assessment Report (KPMG)

### *What are the Next Steps?*

The Plan is on schedule to be released in early November 2021. Implementation will be finalized and actioned following release of the Plan. The Advisory Committee (potentially with additional organizations being represented) will now support informing the implementation of the Plan.



This next phase will include prioritization of the recommendations, determining specific actions to achieve the intent of the recommendations, assessing the feasibility of specific actions, assigning roles and responsibilities among organizations, identifying resources required to implement specific actions, an implementation schedule, and tracking and reporting on progress.

The expanded External Advisory Committee will serve as the interim steering committee, until a new organization is established, as recommended in the Plan.

*Who will ensure recommendations made in the final report are implemented?*

The Ministry will be actively involved in working towards implementation of recommendations made in the final report alongside industry. Goals will be set, and achievement progress will be monitored on a consistent, and specified basis.

The Advisory Committee has been invited to be the initial group informing implementation (potentially with additional organizations being represented). This will include the scheduling and timing of the plan, assigning responsibilities across the sector, and monitoring the progress of implementation to ensure success.

*What about the other complementary activities that are underway as part of the industry stabilization project?*

Several related activities have been completed. This includes:

- An analysis of the organizations in the industry.
- A performance assessment of the Tree Fruit Competitiveness Fund.
- A review of the relevant literature.
- A summary of previous studies of the industry.
- A cross-jurisdictional review of other apple and cherry producing regions.
- An in-depth economic analysis of the industry.
- An assessment of current programming available for immediate producer support.

Other complementary projects that are completed but did not significantly impact on development of the Plan include:

- A review of current and past Ministry and/or Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada expenditures (data limitations).
- An assessment of the current pricing and marketing structure of BC apples using the Ministry's Buy BC network (work underway separately by the Ministry).
- An analysis of extension and product quality services (Ministry will launch a pilot program with the tree fruit sector)..



The remaining complementary projects that is underway (but not essential to completion of the Plan) is:

- A performance assessment of the Tree Fruit Replant Program.

Questions? Please reach out to the Tree Fruit Industry Specialist

Adrian Arts

[Adrian.Arts@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Adrian.Arts@gov.bc.ca)

250-878-9053