

Feed BC Value Chain Advisory Group Meeting Notes: November 15, 2019

Prepared for
Feed BC, BC Ministry of Agriculture, Business Development Division

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1. Introduction

Feed BC aims to effect long-term system changes that will increase the use of B.C.-grown and processed foods in healthcare facilities, post-secondary institutions, and other government supported facilities. To support this initiative, an advisory group of industry experts was formed in March 2018, representing the many different parts of the food supply chain. This includes producers, processors, industry associations, distributors, contracted food services, purchasers, institutional food services and facilities representatives.

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 B.C. 'government facilities' market. Currently, there are 34 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 B.C., a gap which was identified by the Ministry. To have a full roster of experts across B.C.'s value chain, representatives are still being pursued from other geographic regions of B.C., as well as representative from new entrants and other commodity sectors.

2. Background

To date the Feed BC Value Chain Advisory Group has met four times:

Meeting #1: March 23, 2018 - an initial meeting that introduced the Feed BC Program to members. Members then identified gaps, opportunities and 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 reviewed earlier input, made additional recommendations on key initiatives, 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. Members 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 them to Feed BC and to discuss some specific issues and interests of this sub-sector.

The following is a list of the organizations who have participated in advisory group meetings up to, and including, November 2019.

Aramark	Good to Grow Consulting	Small Scale Food Processors Association
BC Agriculture Council	Gordon Food Service	Sodexo
B.C. Food & Beverage	Grand Hale Seafood	Sysco
BC Turkey Board	HealthPro Canada	Tofino Ucluelet Culinary Guild
BCIT	Interior Health	University Fraser Valley
CR-FAIR	Long Table	University of BC
Chartwells (Compass Group)	Meadow Fresh Dairy	Vancouver Coastal Health
Compass Group	Nu Tea	Vancouver Community College
Discovery Organics	Organic Ocean	Vanderpol Eggs
Fraser Health	Provincial Health Services Authority	YVR Prep

3. Overview of Meeting #4

A fourth meeting was held on November 15, 2019 for the Feed BC Value Chain Advisory Group. The day consisted of an update of Feed BC initiatives and discussions on specific initiatives to gain feedback from the members (a list of the initiatives discussed is highlighted below). During the day, the Minister of Agriculture, Lana Popham joined the meeting and thanked the attendees for the work they are doing.

Meeting #4 agenda

1. Feed BC Update & News
 - a. Update: Martha Anslow, Director, Feed BC
 - b. Overview: Feed BC Kristina Bouris, Feed BC
 - c. Healthcare Facilities: Natalie Laframboise, Manager, Office of the Provincial Dietician, Ministry of Health
 - d. Post-Secondary Institutions: Elietha Bocskei, Feed BC
 - e. Producers & Processors; Value Chain Innovation: Kristina Bouris; James Street, Manager, Food Processing
2. Buy BC Program Overview & Update - Mat Patterson, Director, Market Development, Ministry of Agriculture
3. Food Innovation Hub Network Updates & News – Julia Diamond, Director, Innovation, Ministry of Agriculture
4. Research Study: Top B.C. Product Needs in B.C. Healthcare - James Street, Manager, Food Processing
 - a. Group Discussion: Sourcing More B.C. Products - Gaps and Opportunities
5. Roundtable Updates from members: Key news and upcoming events
6. Feedback Session: Local Food Champions Recognition Program, Elietha Bocskei, Feed BC
7. Indigenous Foods & Government Facilities: Video & exploration, Natalie Laframboise, Manager, Ministry of Health

4. Feed BC Overview and Update

Kristina Bouris, Elietha Bocskei, Natalie Laframboise and James Street provided the Advisory Group with an update on Feed BC. The update first included an overview of Feed BC's mandate and approach, including a summary of the program's key strategies and the input that was gained from the first three Value Chain Advisory Group meetings. A progress update was then given for several different areas of activity, including:

- Strategic program development and activities planning;
- Raising Feed BC's profile through multiple channels;
- Working with health authorities to track B.C. food spends;
- Developing initiatives with PSI's including the establishment of a new committee;
- How-to-sell to facilities guide for producers and processors;
- Working with B.C. food producers and processors to build the skills, knowledge and capacity of industry to meet the specific product needs and requirements of institutions;
- Exploring the potential for Value Chain Coordination, which would help build new product value chains for facilities, as well as building stronger relationships between producers, processors and buyers; and
- Building a measurement and evaluation framework to help with tracking progress and showcasing successes.

Questions, feedback and comments regarding the Feed BC update presentations

There were several comments on how to further raise awareness of Feed BC and purchasing local food more broadly. Sharing the BC Bid website with B.C. food producers/processes was mentioned as a way to connect industry with opportunities to sell to public institutions. Relatedly, institutions could be encouraged to include language about Feed BC within their RFPs. Another suggestion was to hold more events, like Every Chef Needs a Farmer, specifically targeted for wholesale-ready producers interested in institutional sales. A comment was made indicating that the Canada GAP workshops have been successful in increasing the number of farms that are GAP certified on Vancouver Island.

Some discussion regarding the work with Health Authorities (HA) took place. It was announced that there is a local food working group for HA's and Donna Koenig, from Interior Health, can invite others to join. For the how-to sell to facilities guide, comments included more accurately reflecting the cost per meal for HA's which may need some further investigation, as well as recognizing BC Bid as a key part of the process for selling to institutions. Discussions also included comments around the benefit of local healthy food for patient wellbeing, designing menus around what is available locally, and fostering collaboration between dietitians, purchasers, GPOs, community leaders, and residents/patients.

Lastly, there were a couple comments regarding PSI's including the desire for programming that can connect suppliers with end consumers to increase understanding of needs and trends, as well as, the identification of a new trend being an increase of international students and an opportunity to provide more culturally-specific food choices.

5. Top 20 Products in Health Authorities

James Street, Manager of Food Processing for the Ministry of Agriculture, presented on the results of a study commissioned by the Ministry of Agriculture under Feed BC, prepared by Ference & Company; James presented on behalf of Don Ference who was unable to attend. The study produced a list of the top 20 products not currently sourced from B.C. that have the potential to be produced in B.C. The top 20 product categories included: chicken, turkey, beef/pork, frozen vegetables, frozen berries, mashed potatoes, muffins, salads, frozen entrees, cheese, salmon, apple sauce, coffee, sugar, tea, frozen soups, ice cream, yogurt, rice, and honey. Specifications for many of these products were provided (e.g. cuts of meat, size, packaging). The study also found that B.C. does have a large number of food processors that can supply similar products that are currently sourced outside B.C., either in whole or in part. As a next step, it was asked of the HAs to provide more detailed information on total volumes and price points to help inform supplier decision-making about potential investments. This information will be used by the ministry to inform the development of new tools including Value Chain Coordination services and technology to help link producers, processors and buyers.

Questions, feedback and comments regarding the Top 20 Products in HA

Attendees were asked to share their reactions to the Top 20 list and study findings as well as comment if they thought anything was missing from the list. Suggestions for items currently not on the list included fresh fruit and vegetables, pudding mix, portion size cheeses, dried pasta, and portion sized yogurts. It was also mentioned that it could be helpful to combine the need for specific products across all local public institutions to identify the potential maximum volume needed, before soliciting for business. Packaging issues present a unique problem as individually portioned items are required yet some health authorities are pursuing waste reduction programs.

6. Buy BC Program

Mat Patterson, Director of Market Development, Ministry of Agriculture, presented an overview of the Buy BC program, including the evolution of the program since 1993 up to current programming. The presentation focused on some of the current advertising and promotions programs involving retailers, restaurants, events such as the annual Every Chef Needs a Farmer, and other online advertising campaigns. Buy BC also recently launched a Partnership Program which has helped fund industry-led campaigns and Buy BC logo licences. These grants range from \$4,000 to \$70,000.

Questions, feedback and comments regarding the Buy BC Program

A participant asked if there were any examples of institutions running a promotional program that is supported by the Buy BC program; Mat and other attendees weren't aware of one. One challenge mentioned with running a Buy BC program for institutional facilities, was that most local items are seasonal and can only be temporarily promoted.

7. Food Innovation Hub Network

Julia Diamond, Director of Innovation, Ministry of Agriculture, presented an overview of the Food Innovation Hub Network program focussing on:

- An overview of the Network Model involving a core centre, regional hubs, and a networking technology;
- A summary of the current food hub locations and the program timeline;
- Profiles of some of the new food hubs, including North Cariboo, Surrey/Langley, and Port Alberni; and
- A description of what has been learned about the application and selection process, opening the floor to discuss next steps and attendees' thoughts on the next intake of food hub applications.

Questions, feedback and comments on the Food Innovation Hub Network

The group agreed that once the food innovation hubs are up and running it would be a good idea to link them with Feed BC initiatives to see how they can support each other. One example mentioned was sharing the top 20 products for healthcare, identified earlier, as an opportunity for businesses that operate or could operate out of hubs. There was also concern expressed that a shared processing space producing multiple products could not be Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP)-certified and therefore the businesses using such a facility wouldn't meet the food safety requirements of public institutions. As a potential solution, it was mentioned that hubs could cater to just one food category so they can become HACCP-certified (e.g. seafood hub, fruit hub) and create regional access to that food category.

Discussion took place regarding the food hub funding and it was clarified that as they are offering one-time funding, a project that was funded for a feasibility study would not be able to apply for another feasibility study, but they could apply with a business plan. Suggestions from the group for enhancing the selection criteria for awarding grants are as follows:

1. Ensure the scope allows for providing education to food producers and processors (e.g. workshops on wholesale readiness programs, business planning).
2. Recognize that aggregation, storage and distribution services are key to food producers accessing the market.
3. Ensure that new applicants have a waste management plan that minimizes food waste.

4. Recognize the importance of having a plan in place to employ highly skilled and experienced staff to add to the success of the initiative.
5. Consider allowing for at least one successful applicant to be a larger scale facility that can be partitioned into sections allowing it to be HACCP-certified.
6. Recognize applicants that have put thought into long term planning, including long term access to local primary food and how it manages this with the changes in climate.
7. Ensure the applicant shows a clear high enough demand for their products that will sustain the costs of its operation.

Other discussions included a suggestion to add information on food innovation hubs into the Feed BC How-To Guide for selling to facilities. Additionally, to enable closer working relationships between institutional buyers and producers, buyers should be informed of food hub products early on. Another question was asked if areas near Abbotsford and further east could still be allowed to apply, given other funded projects in the Lower Mainland. Lastly, the question was raised if whether there were any food hub products being sold in institutions. There were no current examples mentioned, though one soup company was identified as a business that is hoping to access the facilities market.

8. Roundtable updates from members

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

- Compass Group provided an update on the success of their B.C. poultry holiday promotion, having noticed an increase in demand during a promotion of B.C. farms compared to other non-B.C. poultry.
- Some institutional buyers have been able to get more B.C. eggs from national suppliers.
- Compass Group has switched to local coffee in some of their client cafeterias.

9. Awards and Recognition Programs

Elietha Bocskei and Tim Reeve presented and held a feedback session to gain attendee's input on the concept of a Feed BC Champions Recognition Program. Three examples of existing recognition programs were provided, including the Ontario Broader Public Sector Champions Program, the Centre for Good Food Purchasing, and the Sustainable Purchasing Leadership Awards. Additionally, a summary of key findings about common attributes, successes, and challenges of recognition programs was given. Based on research of existing programs, some of the main format options of recognition programs were explored with the group including events/announcements, sharing stories, nominations, certificates, and points systems.

Questions, feedback and comments on a potential recognition program for Feed BC

Attendees provided examples of other successful awards and recognition programs known to them, including:

- B.C. Food and Beverage Awards
- Women's Leadership Program in B.C.
- BC Institution of Technology (BCIT) Alumni Awards
- London Drugs Supplier Awards
- Publication awards (e.g. Scout, Vancouver Magazine and Georgia Straight)
- Seafood Champions Awards (which has 4 tiers)

The group discussed some of the value and benefits of a recognition program and highlighted that awards/recognition can help businesses increase staff loyalty and retention. It was also mentioned that, in addition to public sector institutions, distributors could also gain value from recognition as it helps them demonstrate to clients that they are increasing their offerings of local food.

Attendees were then asked how a recognition program could be approached, what could be recognized, and what would motivate participation. The discussion included the following points:

- Recognition for overcoming challenges and highlight given to real people “champions” behind the successes;
- Recognition for successful initiatives that have been especially creative to reach their goals to share how and what they are doing;
- Offering multiple awards/recognitions for different categories because there is a lot of variability in the sector (i.e. small to big organizations and individual people to businesses);
- Recognition doesn’t work if its saturated – if the goal is that everyone is recognized such as institutions, it is meaningless to participate because it’s not about standing out in any way;
- Be cautious in selecting criteria as it can be difficult to validate and for clients/lay person to understand;
- When deciding on the types of businesses or institutions to recognize, use a broad approach that would recognize any and all organizations across the whole local food value chain even those outside of the institution value chain (ex. retailers);
- Small and medium sized enterprises may gain more value from recognition, so consider ways a program/supports could be available totarget this group;
- Ensuring the program has good return on investment for the businesses being recognized, as it can be a good marketing tool; and
- Given that there are lots of award programs, a Feed BC recognition program could be incorporated within existing programs, such as Health Authority awards, or events/summits.

The final discussion gathered thoughts on the different formats of recognition. Points included:

- Use stories to illustrate the successes, as they are important (e.g. BCIT made videos to show some of the progress they have had);
- When designing a program, carefully consider the amount of data needed to recognize a business because this may affect participation due to the effort involved. It needs to be proportionate to the “value” that comes with the recognition received to ensure participation. Data-based recognition also needs to be validated and monitored;
- Logos are a popular way to highlight that a business has been recognized;
- Banners or posters are good mechanisms to showcase the work being done to increase local procurement by the organization; and to showcase the narrative (i.e. the what, where, who);
- Stories/awards/recognitions could be showcased at events such as Every Farmer Needs a Chef, B.C. Food Expo, BC Produce Marketing Association conference and BC Restaurant and Food Services conference;
- Developing a recognition program needs to be considered carefully including the purpose and goals of recognition and the motivation for participants in order to be successful. It should be built over time; and
- There is interest from some advisory committee members in Feed BC recognition to provide support and partnership such as a logo or videos.

10. Serving Indigenous Foods

Natalie Laframboise, Manager of the Office of the Provincial Dietitian, Ministry of Health presented on the work the Ministry of Health is doing, through Feed BC, to explore the opportunity of supporting access to traditional foods in publicly funded institutions. Natalie showed the short documentary produced by Nourish, entitled 'Miichim' and mentioned an upcoming study outlining the barriers and facilitators to serving traditional foods and Indigenous recipes in public institutions.

Questions, feedback and comments on serving Indigenous foods in public institutions

Attendees were asked if they were aware of any initiatives underway at B.C. facilities— health, post-secondary institutions or others – to support access to Indigenous foods or traditional recipes. Attendees then talked about their awareness of current programs happening in Haida Gwaii, with Thompson Rivers University (Kamloops) and University of Fraser Valley (which has an Indigenous program, kitchen and retails their product). Another example included the Indigenous Menu offered every Wednesday through Interior Health. There was some concern with the potential for handling of uninspected meats which would provide some regulation challenges and that a separate kitchen for food preparation may be needed. It was also ascertained that any Indigenous focused program will likely be using a small volume of food, thus there may be potential to link with the Food Innovation Hub Network. Hubs may have the right match of facilities and capacities to facilitate production of Indigenous meals.

Some Indigenous food items and recipes were listed including meats, huckleberries, spruce tip, mushrooms, fiddlehead ferns, blueberry soup, and meat broth. Meat broth was highlighted as an opportunity for local food businesses to produce. However, communication of the differentiation in terminology between Indigenous recipes, Indigenous-produced food, and traditional foods must be made clear. It was noted that food products and recipes vary from community to community. Any program needs to be very respectful to traditions and needs and to involve the Indigenous community in the conversations and planning.

11. Participant Recommendations

Meeting participants provided several helpful clarifying questions, comments and recommendations relating to the overall portfolio of Feed BC Programs most of which are noted in the sections above. However, there were several recommendations of note and they are grouped below under the corresponding appropriate program area.

Feed BC and Buy BC

1. Continue to encourage B.C. public institutions to work with producers and distributors to implement Buy BC programs with a goal of specifically highlighting how B.C. products are being used in their facilities, and a secondary goal of driving higher sales of those products and generating positive publicity for the work they are doing.

Feed BC and Procurement

2. Continue to systematically increase stakeholder awareness of the BC Bid website – especially among B.C. food producers and processors - so they have a clear understanding of how to find bid opportunities related to institutional food procurement. BC Bid website could be shared at “wholesale-ready” workshops and on related materials, the Business Development section of the Ministry of Agriculture’s website, social media or through agri-food industry associations and organizations (e.g. BC Association of Farmers’ Markets, BC Fruit Growers’ Association).

Food Innovation Hub Network

3. Review and enhance where appropriate the selection criteria related to supporting food innovation hubs so there is a direct connection between the goals of the B.C. Government, financial viability and the product sectors that have high or growing demand.
4. Monitor the HACCP certification process for Commissary Connect (and support where necessary or appropriate). If they are successful in getting their HACCP certification then it will be invaluable for other food innovation hubs to understand how they can follow a similar protocol and become HACCP-certified, which are critical steps in becoming more market-ready for supplying public institutions, particularly healthcare.

Feed BC Recognition Program

5. Start with a low administration program that is based on telling the stories of successful initiatives that span a broad range of participants within the value chain. Use short video clips that can be repurposed on a variety of platforms and shared on participants own platforms for maximum exposure and reach for budget investments.
6. Ensure nominees/recipients represent the range of value chain stakeholders from individuals to multi-national businesses, from cities to remote areas of B.C., from producers to end consumers. Enable success stories or nominations to be submitted by anyone through an easy to use mechanism (e.g. Feed BC website form or email)
7. In the early stages of program roll-out, give extra focus on initiatives that have creatively increased the procurement and use of B.C. foods in public institutions; perhaps emphasizing the partnership aspect of many successful programs. It may be necessary to actively invest in finding successes in the early stages and participants may need to be recruited by Ministry of Agriculture staff.
8. Recognize both leadership and solid demonstrable progress against any starting baseline, thereby allowing ‘newer’ entrants in the local food purchasing movement to gain recognition.
9. Consider a program that includes a recognition letter from the Minister and other Feed BC branded marketing material to help recipients cross-promote their program and stories. The Ministry of Agriculture could have a

formal element that supports cross-promotion with recipients through social media and, in some cases, create short videos to be shared (e.g. social media and events such as Every Chef Needs a Farmer).

Appendix: Meeting Evaluation

15 evaluation forms were received after the workshop. Most respondents indicated 4/5 when asked if they felt adequately informed about the current Feed BC priorities and activities; however, one outlier indicated 1/5, bringing the average to 3.7/5. When asked whether they felt “well informed about the Feed BC Initiative” and that the “Feed BC Update & News session was informative,” most responses indicated ‘yes’ while two indicated ‘somewhat’.

Responses regarding each of the different sessions was largely positive, with the Buy BC presentation, Food Innovation Hub NetworkUpdate, and the Indigenous Foods session all receiving 12 ‘yes’ and three ‘somewhat’ responses. The BC Product Healthcare Needs and Local Food Champions Recognition sessions received slightly lower satisfaction scores with 10/15 and 7/15 ‘yes’ responses respectively. Regarding the Recognition session, attendees were asked whether the session was “engaging and made me excited for a recognition program”. Attendees found the session helpful though an insight gleaned from the responses may indicate that some attendees are not “excited” for a recognition program and feel more research/feedback may be needed for this initiative.

All 15 respondents indicated that they “felt engaged and encouraged to share my perspective” as well as “felt that my feedback was heard and recorded”. Additionally, when asked if they were able to make helpful connections 12 indicated ‘yes’ while three indicated ‘somewhat’ and when asked whether they would participate in future Feed BC Advisory Group sessions, 13 indicated ‘yes’ and two indicated ‘somewhat’.

Lastly, attendees were given the opportunity to ask any further questions or provide additional feedback. The following four responses were submitted:

- “I think we should be careful to tell the public that healthcare is going to be using 30% B.C. food. If I was a member of the general public, I would assume 30% to be the minimum.”
- “Make sure no conflict with Buy BC logo/message versus Feed BC.”
- “Is there plan for future TV commercials? Maybe can be sponsored by distributors/suppliers.”
- “Structure session more frequently?”