



Ministry of
Agriculture, Food
and Fisheries

INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2021

The Path Forward:
A BLUEPRINT FOR B.C.'S TREE FRUIT INDUSTRY

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Introduction

The Tree Fruit Industry Stabilization Plan is intended to:

- Understand and substantiate the difficult economic circumstances of BC's tree fruit industry (especially the apple sector) and the factors that have led to those circumstances.
- Assess the roles and responsibilities of the various organizations and the opportunities for renewed leadership within the industry.
- Engage industry stakeholders in a process to understand the circumstances and evaluate future potential opportunities.
- Realistically assess the future economic viability of the industry.
- Prepare a plan and accompanying implementation approach to stabilize the industry.

The project will have three key phases, including:

- Phase 1 – Development of Industry Engagement Strategy: project planning, assessment of current activities, context gathering.
- Phase 2 – Implementation of Industry Engagement Strategy: Industry engagement, consideration of options, etc.
- Phase 3 – Development of Tree Fruit Industry Stabilization Plan for BC: Recommendations and Decision-making.

Outreach and Engagement Strategy

Context for Engagement (Research and Analysis)

Phase 1 of the project includes extensive research and analytical work to understand the circumstances in which the industry finds itself. This research and analysis will be reflected, as appropriate and available, in the engagement sessions involving industry to confirm findings and conclusions, understand the implications, and assess future actions.

Phase 1 assessments include:

- Third party reviews of the support that BC's tree fruit industry has received, including the Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Fisheries' (the Ministry's) Tree Fruit Competitiveness Fund and Tree Fruit Replant Program, and other current and past expenditures by the Ministry, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, etc.
- Assessing the industry's current situation through a literature review and summary of previous studies of the industry (including recommendations and any actions in response), a cross-jurisdictional review of apple and cherry producing regions (including Nova Scotia, Ontario, Quebec, and Washington State) to determine how jurisdictions have avoided or responded to similar circumstances, and an in-depth analysis of the industry's economic and market potential.
- Identification of immediate opportunities available to the industry by assessing the retail pricing and marketing structure of BC apples using the Ministry's Buy BC network and determining which current programs (e.g.: business planning, food safety, etc.) are available to support the sector.

- Review of organizations in the tree fruit sector (industry stakeholders) and the overall leadership structure in the industry, including governance, mandates, roles, and responsibilities, etc.

Further, phase 2 of the project will include:

- Analysis and recommendations concerning Industry extension and product quality.

Engagement Framework

Phase 2 includes a comprehensive approach to elicit the views and positions of various associations, organizations, and grower communities. Engagement sessions will be conducted by the Ministry and Inner Harbour Consulting Inc. (IHC). The Ministry, supported by IHC, will be the decision-maker for all engagement activities.

In order to ensure the industry's perspective is reflected in the sessions, the external Advisory Group that the Ministry established to support the development of the Tree Fruit Industry Stabilization Plan will be consulted on the composition and content of the engagement sessions, as necessary.

Engagement Participants

Phase 2 will include up to 20 comprehensive engagement sessions that will be hosted by IHC and Ministry officials, and will involve groups of representative stakeholders from BC's tree fruit industry, including:

- Associations (representing the organizational and advocacy functions of the industry).
- Apple and cherry producers (the major tree fruit products grown in BC).
- Next generation (NextGen) producers.
- Packers and sales agencies (including the BC Tree Fruits Cooperative and private packing houses).
- Various support and/or subsidiary businesses that rely on the tree fruit industry (including Sterile Insect Release Program)

Engagement Topics

All sessions will address:

- The organizational and leadership structure in the industry.
- Recommendations made in previous studies and any action, or inaction, in response.
- The tangible impact of the Ministry's investments to date.
- Opportunities (e.g.: current Ministry programs, market opportunities, etc.).
- The industry's economic and market potential.
- Discussion about what constitutes a successful outcome for this initiative.

Some of the sessions will also reflect topics and issues significant to the future viability of the industry (with targeted participation), including:

- Labour challenges, shortages, and opportunities.
- Horticulture and extension services.
- New varieties or potentially new fruit commodities.
- Organics.
- Innovation and technology (contributing towards increase shelf life, pest management, new production technologies, machine harvesting, etc.).
- Other topics that emerge (e.g.: the cost of water, Columbia Basin Trust, etc.).

Advance Questionnaire

In advance of formal engagement sessions, participants who have been, or will be, invited to the sessions will be sent the questionnaire and asked to respond prior to the session date. The answers will be used to inform and frame discussion at the engagement sessions. Given the topics, the questions will be necessarily open-ended and require follow-up for extensive review to interpret and understand.

It is anticipated the questionnaire will be available for distribution to participants by mid-March,

Session Logistics

Appendix 1 summarizes the involvement of individuals, organizations, and perspectives in the engagement sessions. More comprehensive versions of this information exist in a separate, supporting documents. Those documents address the scheduling, attendees, and other administrative details for each session and are maintained by the Ministry.

Sessions with organizations and supporting groups (e.g.: External Advisory Group) will generally be scheduled first in order to get the most comprehensive views first.

In order to accommodate growers' seasons and schedules:

- Engagement sessions will be scheduled between April 1, 2021 and June 30, 2021.
- Sessions (and especially those involving growers) will be scheduled on weekdays and weekends as required.
- It is anticipated that most or all sessions will be scheduled in late afternoons (beginning at 4:00 pm Pacific time) and last between 1 and 2 hours.

Roles and Responsibilities

Inner Harbour Consulting will:

- Work with the Ministry to determine the nature of the sessions.
- Drafting materials (agenda, speaking notes, PowerPoint presentation(s), etc.), as required.

- At each session:
 - o Provide an overview of how engagement sessions will work, desirable outcomes, etc.
 - o Facilitate discussion of the issues and topics relevant to each session.
 - o Support the Chair in ensuring the orderly management of the agenda during each session.
- Draft the questionnaire for Ministry review.
- Participate with the Ministry in the review and interpretation of the results.
- Support the Ministry in determining the appropriate role for, and involvement of, the External Advisory Committee.
- Prepare a summary report of findings to support the development of a draft Tree Fruit Industry Stabilization Plan for British Columbia.

The Ministry will:

- Work with IHC to determine the nature of the sessions.
- Organize and schedule engagement sessions.
- Identify and invite participants.
- Ensure involvement of the appropriate Ministry officials (executive presence, Ministry branches or units relevant to each session, etc.).
- Chair each session.
- Distribute materials prior or after each session.
- Organize and distribute the questionnaire.
- Receive questionnaire responses.
- Participate with IHC in the review and interpretation of the results.
- Record and decisions or follow-up requirements.
- Determine the appropriate role for, and involvement of, the External Advisory Committee.
- Address any organizational or administrative matters that arise.

The External Advisory Committee will (at the discretion of the Ministry):

- Review and provide input on representative participants
- Review and provide input on questionnaire
- Review and provide input on topics and results of the sessions
- Consulted at any other key points

The engagement sessions will result in a summary report to inform development of an Industry Stabilization Plan.