

Ministry of Agriculture

MANDATE

The Ministry of Agriculture works to promote an innovative, adaptive and globally competitive agrifoods sector that is valued by all British Columbians. The ministry supports B.C.'s priorities for a strong economy and secure tomorrow by stabilizing and expanding agrifoods production and incomes, promoting environmental stewardship, and safeguarding animal, plant and human health.



For 2013, as per the mandate letter provided to our minister on June 10 2013, the primary goals for Agriculture were:

- » Balance our ministerial budget and control spending.
- » Ensure the Agriculture Land Commission is delivering on the improvements promised arising from the budget increase it received in Balanced Budget 2013.
- » Ensure the Agricultural Land Reserve is working for British Columbia and propose any changes necessary.
- » Bring forward ALR changes that will further encourage the stability of farm families and the farming industry in British Columbia.

- » Execute industry growth objectives as outlined in the BC Jobs Plan, and the agriculture sector plan; BC Agrifoods, A Plan for Growth.
- » Execute Strong Economy, Secure Tomorrow commitments including:
 - Implementation of the additional Buy Local program funding;
 - Creation of a long-term and sustainable Tree Fruit replanting program upon the expiry of the current program;
 - Work with the ministry of Finance to implement the 25 percent tax credit for farmers on the value of farmed food that is donated to food banks;
 - Implementation of a new meat inspection system by January 1, 2014, and work with the BC Association of Cattle Feeders to develop and promote their "Certified BC Beef" brand;
 - Work with Intergovernmental Relations to break down interprovincial trade barriers on B.C. wine and create new markets for B.C. vintners;
 - Work with the ministry of Advanced Education to create a new Centre of Excellence for Agriculture and the University of the Fraser Valley; and
 - Work with the provincial organic farming sector to create a "BC Organic" brand to market B.C. organic foods.
- » Work with the Minister of International Trade to ensure trade capacity for B.C. agricultural support is sufficient to secure additional Asian trade export growth.
- » Implement Cohen Commission recommendations pertaining to B.C.
- » Working with the Minister of Finance, ensure that the carbon tax relief committed to the agricultural sector in Balanced Budget 2013 is delivered.

EXECUTIVE COMMITMENT TO MULTICULTURALISM

The ministry is committed to building a welcoming and diverse organization that embraces all individuals and removes employment barriers. The ministry supports multiculturalism in its hiring processes and working culture. Recruitment and selection practices are merit-based and qualifications, experience and expertise are considered regardless of ethnicity, culture or disabilities. Government policies which prohibit discrimination in the workplace are followed.

Our vision speaks to supporting and promoting our agricultural sector. The sector is made up of many diverse groups and cultures so in order for our ministry to serve the cultural diversity of our province we need to provide the right people and services. Part of this service includes providing many of our booklets, pamphlets, and training material in multiple languages.

The Ministry of Agriculture supports the Provincial Government's commitment to a strong relationship with aboriginal people by working with First Nations to use agricultural resources to leverage outcomes that benefit aboriginal people and align with broader government objectives.

EMBRACING MULTICULTURALISM IN THE WORKPLACE

Staff within the ministry represents a diversity of cultures, including Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Indian, English, African and South African, Hungarian, South Sudanese, German, Beninese, Chinese, Sri Lankan, Egyptian, Scottish, Métis, American, French, Dutch, Malaysian, Chilean and Ugandan.

There are many different languages spoken by program staff across the province including English, French, Portuguese, Bengali, Dinka, German, Fon, Hindi, Punjabi, Afrikaans, Cantonese, Mandarin, Malaysian, Spanish, French and Japanese.

Within the agricultural sector, a substantial group of farmers are of South Asian descent, therefore the ministry has hired and promoted a substantial number of employees who are fluent in Punjabi.

One branch specifically within the ministry has also been proactive in dealing with issues of language usage in the workplace — making it okay for people to speak to each other in their first language and ensuring that others can accept and be comfortable with those policies.

We have also participated in multicultural activities such as:

- » Two-week internship with Norwegian student;
- » Hosting two-week job shadow by the Young Farmers' Ombudsman from the Finnish Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners; and
- » Potluck to celebrate multicultural week (Abbotsford Agricultural Centre).

HIGHLIGHTS OF INITIATIVES

International market development staff participated in incoming and outgoing trade missions and undertook other initiatives including:

- » Export Readiness Seminars: In collaboration with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC). The ministry delivered several seminars involving foreign buyers, distributors, and market experts from Asia who spoke to BC companies about the challenges and opportunities in BC's export markets, and helped them understand how to develop strong cross-cultural business relationships.
- » International Tradeshows: The ministry organized and supported a BC booth within the Canada Pavilion at key international tradeshows, including ANUGA (Cologne, Germany), China Fisheries and Seafood Expo (Dalian, China) and FOODEX Japan (Tokyo, Japan). The tradeshows provided BC's agriculture and seafood industries with the opportunity to showcase their products; develop business relationships with European, Chinese and Japanese buyers; and better understand the cultural differences that affect consumer purchasing behaviours and the development of successful trading relationships.

The ministry of Agriculture provides ongoing support for economic and social development of agriculture in First Nations communities through strong relationships based on trust, understanding and respect. This initiative supports the development of enhanced and targeted information resources, tools and education extension services to build the agriculture and food business management capacity of First Nations communities in British Columbia. Examples of activities and achievements include:

- » Ongoing support for agriculture business development in First Nations communities. Response to information inquiries and facilitation for enhancing business networks.
- » Continued support for local food initiatives and participation with the First Nations Food Systems Steering Committee.
- » Developed resources and delivered workshops and skills training to First Nations clients to promote and support start-up and growth of agrifood businesses and projects.
- » Facilitated access to market for First Nations products through the “Taking Community Produce to Market” project. The project focused on building marketing awareness and skills development in three communities.
- » Collaborated with opportunity assessments to establish First Nations Agriculture projects in areas of Innovation, Market Development, Food Safety and Environmental Farm Planning.
- » Because of the multi-cultural nature of agricultural producers and farm laborers, the on-farm Food Safety GAP Manual, a manual to assist producers to improve on-farm food safety practices, has been translated into four languages: Spanish, Punjabi, Mandarin Chinese, and French. Food Safety staff are periodically asked to interpret for non-English speaking producers and the general public who make inquiries at our Abbotsford office. Meat Inspection staff have drawn on many of these languages to more effectively communicate with the operators and staff in our provincially-licensed abattoirs.

- » A range of education and program outreach and tools were provided in the language of prominent ethnic groups represented in the B.C. agricultural sector, whose first language is not English.
- » In cooperation with industry partners, translation services (Punjabi) have been offered at industry extension meetings on plant health issues.
- » Also, in cooperation with industry partners, outreach materials on critical plant pests such as the spotted wing drosophila have been prepared in both English and Punjabi to reach the majority of growers of these commodities.

In the past year, some staff completed the following courses — Diversity in the BC Public Service and Respect in the Workplace — both offered by the Public Service Agency. These participants learned to understand diversity and recognize how important this understanding is to our work both within the BC Public Service and for the citizens of British Columbia.

