



MOBILE PRESS

Creston Valley-Kootenay Lake



FACTS



Population: 13,420

Location: Central Kootenay Region

PRESSING INNOVATION

Mobile Fruit and Vegetable Press

In its first year of operation, the Kootenay mobile fruit and vegetable press has produced a wide range of benefits for local farmers and the broader community.

It has led to added-value agrifood opportunities for producers, created jobs, increased businesses' viability, provided environmental benefits and increased in food donations to those in need.



The mobile press is an industrial-scale unit that can process, pasteurize and package 1,500 litres of apple, pear, carrot, beet, cherry, or berry juice a day.

- *The juice is packaged into boxed bags and is shelf stable for one year*
- *The juicing service can cost as little as \$0.94/L for the farmer*
- *Apple juice can retail at \$15 to \$25 for a 5L box*
- *Cherry juice can retail at \$15 to \$25 for a 3L box*

ONE PIECE OF EQUIPMENT

Environmentally Friendly Opportunities

Creston Valley-Kootenay Lake is an important agricultural region in B.C., generating \$27.5 million each year – and that's on only 50% of the land available for production. In early 2016, Fields Forward held a two-day forum in the Creston Valley to look at ways to re-localize the food system while creating meaningful, local jobs and fulfilling the agricultural potential of the valley.

One barrier that local producers identified was the cost of purchasing infrastructure that would allow them to produce added-value agrifood products – such as fruit juice, which can be sold at a higher margin than fruit itself. Although a mobile press travelled to the Creston Valley a few days a year, it barely scratched the surface of all the fruit that could be pressed.

Fast-forward to fall 2017, and the Kootenay mobile press has processed more than 526,000 pounds of fruit, produced almost 120,000 litres of juice, diverted 176,000 pounds of culled fruit from the landfill, and produced a host of other benefits for the community.

BUILDING THE STRATEGY

The Food Venture Collaborative

The mobile press is part of the Food Venture Collaborative launched by Fields Forward, a food and agriculture initiative in Creston Valley-Kootenay Lake.

Fields Forward envisions a vibrant, productive and local agrifood system that builds genuine community wealth by supporting and sustaining the community's environmental, Indigenous, social, cultural, economic and aesthetic values.

The project began with a regional partnership between Creston & District Community Directed Fund and Kootenay Employment Services.

For more information: gov.bc.ca/economicdevelopment



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Fields Forward raised close to \$500,000 to purchase a second-hand mobile fruit and vegetable press with support from the Town of Creston, the Regional District of Central Kootenay, Southern Interior Development Initiative Trust and B.C.'s Rural Dividend Fund. The mobile press arrived in late spring 2017 and, once six staff were hired and trained to operate the press, it was full speed ahead!



The pressing fees pay for staff to operate the press, and include bag-in-a-box packaging. Beyond pressing fruit and vegetables into juice, the mobile press team ran trials using some of the press's features. They packaged local wine, and also made pureed vegetable soups that were pasteurized and packaged. More trials are scheduled for 2018, working with local producers.

Fields Forward has taken the initiative one step further to support local producers to access new markets through a co-operative marketing platform. In partnership with Left Field Marketing and the Business Advisory Team, Fields Forward is developing a regional co-marketing strategy for producers to unify their products under a single, recognizable brand - Kootenay Farms.

This past year, Fields Forward supported producers to use packaging and labelling under the Kootenay Farms brand, with a print-out about each farm on the side.

LOOKING AHEAD

Widespread Community Benefits

In the coming years, Fields Forward hopes to expand its co-operative marketing platform to support farmers with processing, storage, marketing and distribution of juice and other juice/pulp products. The group is investigating how to expand access to new markets and connect farmers to retailers and restaurants from the Creston Valley to Vancouver and Calgary.

The mobile press has exceeded all expectations in its first year of operation and the benefits to the community have been widespread:

- Employment and job creation
- Added-value agrifoods
- Product and business viability
- Water diversion and environmental benefits
- Community food

LESSONS LEARNED & FINAL THOUGHTS

Passionate community champions have been crucial to the success of the initiative. Fields Forward co-ordinator Jen Comer and Kootenay Employment Services economic action manager Heidi Germann say it took a whole community to build the overall vision and get the project up and running successfully.

They recommend finding your community champions early and helping them feel ownership of the project, as well as ensuring that your project team has clear representation from the population you're trying to reach.

The Fields Forward Impact Team has had great success with holding monthly, early-morning breakfast potlucks to move the project forward – a schedule that works well for farmers with a busy day ahead.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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