
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2019AGRI0130-002412
Dec. 13, 2019

Ministry of Agriculture

Buying BC like never before: 2018 record year for food sales

VICTORIA – B.C. farmers, ranchers, seafood and processing workers contributed to a record-setting year in 2018, with annual revenue from businesses in those sectors reaching \$15 billion for the first time.

“It was an excellent year for agriculture in British Columbia. The hard work of many has led to record results,” said Lana Popham, Minister of Agriculture. “The people who make up B.C.’s agriculture industry are hard working and dedicated, and their passion for growing, raising, harvesting and producing fresh great-tasting food and beverages is why the industry is reaching new heights.”

The milestone includes increases such as a 4% rise in food processing, 6% in agriculture and 11% in seafood revenues. The number of overall sector employees in B.C. also increased to a 10-year high of 63,400 in 2018, with 2,300 more jobs than the year before.

B.C. consumers and companies continue to be the main buyers of B.C. products, with an estimated \$6.4 billion of purchases.

B.C. also set new record in 2018 with exports of \$4.5 billion — about 10% higher than in 2017. B.C. producers sent \$3.1 billion worth of farm and food products and \$1.4 billion worth of seafood to 149 international markets, with the United States, China and Japan as the top importers. B.C. companies also sold an estimated \$4 billion worth of products in other Canadian provinces and territories.

The Ministry of Agriculture began a new mandate in 2017 to support B.C. farmers through a three-pronged approach:

- Grow BC, which creates a network of food hubs supporting entrepreneurs and food processors around the province, and has programs to increase production and support new farmers;
- Feed BC, which encourages the use of B.C. products in government-operated institutions and facilities; and
- Buy BC, which is helping more than 200 B.C. companies promote their products in B.C., as well as developing partnerships supporting local foods in retailers.

Quotes:

Stan Vander Waal, president, BC Agriculture Council —

“Congratulations to all my fellow farmers and ranchers for their hard work and innovation that makes British Columbia a great place to live, work and enjoy local products.”

Christina Burridge, executive director, BC Seafood Alliance —

“2018 was a great year for B.C. seafood with strong supply, strong demand and strong export prices — and that’s good news for fishing families and communities up and down the coast. British Columbia has a first-rate reputation for safe, sustainable and healthy products from our ocean, while Buy BC is increasing domestic demand, and the Province’s international trade program is supporting exports.”

Doug Cochrane, board chair, Interior Health —

“Through the Feed BC initiative, Interior Health is working more closely with B.C. vendors to increase B.C.-grown and B.C.-processed foods at our hospitals and care facilities. These fresh, nutritious foods support health and recovery, and this partnership reflects the strong connection between Interior Health and the communities we serve.”

James Donaldson, CEO, BC Food & Beverage —

“This new data really underscores that B.C.’s economy is fuelled by farm, fish and food. The export growth numbers are also exciting, as an increasing number of people around the world are getting to appreciate the amazing products that come from our province.”

Heather O’Hara, executive director, BC Association of Farmers’ Markets —

“This is a great revenue milestone and affirms the growth in consumer demand and support by British Columbians for farm and food products grown and made locally in B.C. The thousands of farm and food vendors who sell direct to consumers at over 145 B.C. farmers’ markets across the province are proud of their contribution to reach this milestone in the B.C. agriculture sector.”

Learn More:

2018 statistical snapshots: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/statistics/industry-and-sector-profiles>

2018 export highlights: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/statistics/market-analysis-and-trade-statistics>

Buy BC – a program supporting local products in B.C.: <https://buybc.gov.bc.ca/>

Every Chef Needs a Farmer – an annual event of chefs, farmers, entrepreneurs and food businesses to promote local ingredients in restaurants:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/every-chef-needs-a-farmer>

A backgrounder follows.

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BACKGROUND 1

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Facts about agricultural sales in B.C.

- B.C. farm, fish and food sales reached \$15 billion in 2018. Total sales include \$3.5 billion in agriculture, \$1.3 billion in seafood and \$10.2 billion in food and beverage processing.
- In 2018, B.C. consumers and companies purchased from B.C. producers an estimated:
 - \$1.1 billion of wines, beers and spirits
 - \$800 million of meat and poultry
 - \$750 million of milled grains, cereals, pastas and breads
 - \$650 million of dairy
 - \$440 million of seafood
 - \$200 million of fruit and vegetables
 - \$125 million of eggs
 - \$70 million of floriculture and nursery products
- B.C.'s top export markets in 2018 were the United States (\$3.1 billion), China (\$533 million), Japan (\$224 million), South Korea (\$73 million) and Hong Kong (\$73 million).
- B.C.'s top 2018 exports were \$541 million in farmed Atlantic salmon, \$361 million in food preparations for processing and natural health products, \$243 million in blueberries, \$230 million in baked goods and \$189 million in mushrooms.

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BACKGROUND 2

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Contributing B.C. businesses

The following B.C. businesses contributed to the record setting year and achieved success with support from programs offered by the Ministry of Agriculture:

Anita's Organic Mill:

Anita's Organic Mill is an artisan-quality, certified organic and kosher mill in Chilliwack. Its last round of funding from the Buy BC Partnership Program helped launch an online, membership-based bake club to help connect and educate baking enthusiasts. As a result, Anita's reported that sales were up 36% and recently, the company released a new line of gluten-free products in 100 local stores.

"Thanks to Buy BC, we are excited to report that we have strengthened our brand connection with consumers online and through social media — it's really helped our sales continue to grow," said Jayda Smith, vice-president sales and marketing, Anita's Organic Mill. "The Buy BC effort by this government has helped our business thrive and grow."

Effingham Oysters:

Effingham Oysters is a collective of oyster farmers in Barkley Sound. The collective received funding from the B.C. government's oyster recovery fund to help replenish stock after experiencing challenges in 2018. The company is a partner of the Alberni Valley Regional Food Hub project being developed in Port Alberni with B.C. government funding. Effingham Oysters plans to process its product locally once the hub is operational, meaning it will no longer need to transport its oysters on a five-hour trip by truck and ferry.

"We are excited to be part of the Port Alberni Food Innovation Hub," said Mica Verbrugge, owner, Effingham Oysters, "It will allow us to move processing operations from the mainland to the local area, employing residents from the Alberni Valley. It will also allow us to expand operations and invest in our business."

Cutter Ranch:

Tyler McNaughton and Sacha Bentall from Cutter Ranch in Fort Steele believe that when it comes to ranching, care reflects quality. Their animals are pasture-raised with low animal density, which is good for both the animal and the land. They credit their strong relationships with local abattoirs and butchers for the health of their business and supply local restaurants in the Kootenays. The pair are advocates of the Ministry of Agriculture's Every Chef Needs a Farmer, Every Farmer Needs a Chef initiative, as local businesses can network and establish business relationships there, make deals and increase the demand and enjoyment of B.C. foods.

“As a relatively young farm, hard work and planning has driven our farm business to where we find success today. In recent years, our farm has seen year over year double-digit growth as a result of the buy in of consumers and chefs who recognize the value and quality of local farm products,” McNaughton said. “This is strengthened to greater effect for the whole of the B.C. farm economy by the support of the Province through investments into agriculture and food research, support programs to encourage good farming practices and implementation of sound agriculture policy.

“An initiative like Every Chef Needs A Farmer provides a new opportunity for local farm and food businesses to network with each other and stakeholders of the B.C. food industry. This is a key factor for growth and long-term stability in the B.C. food economy.”

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