
NEWS RELEASE

Agriculture Award Winners Announced at 20th B.C. Agri-Food Industry Gala *Richmond potato and vegetable farmer Bill Zylmans recognized for Excellence in Agriculture Leadership*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Abbotsford, B.C. – March 30, 2022: Richmond farmer Bill Zylmans and long-time agriculture consultant Christine Koch were recognized for their contributions to B.C.'s agriculture sector this evening at the virtual [B.C. Agri-Food Industry Gala](#) hosted by BC Agriculture Council (BCAC). In addition, Royal Bay Secondary teacher Robin Ruff was presented with an Outstanding Teacher Award by BC Agriculture in the Classroom (BCAITC).

Bill Zylmans was honoured with BCAC's award for Excellence in Agriculture Leadership. The award honours leaders in the agriculture industry who exemplify leadership, integrity, and innovation within the farm community.

A farmer for over 50 years, Zylmans is an industry leader who is known for his commitment to the betterment of agriculture and his advocacy for the sector. Zylmans and his wife Sandra work as partners operating W&A Farms where they produce and market a wide range of products including strawberries, potatoes, beef, and hay.

Serving as the Chair of the BC Potato and Vegetable Growers Association for the past decade and as the Chair of the BC Certified Seed Growers Association for 20 years, Zylmans represents over 100 B.C. growers and plays an integral role in the industry. He has served on over a dozen organizations including the BC Agricultural Land Commission and the City of Richmond's Agricultural Advisory Committee. He was also instrumental in the creation of BCAITC's Spuds in Tubs Program in 2006.

Christine Koch was recognized with the Scotiabank Champion Award for Ally of Agriculture. Koch is the general manager of two BCAC member organizations, the BC Pork Producers Association, and the BC Poultry Association. She is also the general manager of Mainland Milk Producers, Mainland Young Milk Producers, BC Hog Marketing Commission, BC Sustainable Poultry Farming Group, and manages the Meat Industry Sustainability Program for BC Food and Beverage. She is an agriculture consultant in Abbotsford with a vast reach in the industry. In the past, she has worked with the Fraser Valley Farm Direct Marketing, BC Young Farmers, United Flower Growers Co-op, and the Ministry of Agriculture.

Koch has also been very involved in emergency operations for the sector, working in emergency operations centres on several occasions including flood and avian flu response. As one of BCAC's first employees, Koch was the force behind the BC Agri-Food Industry Gala and Ag Day in Victoria – two events which continue to build opportunities for collaboration and advocacy for producers in B.C.

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Robin Ruff, a teacher at Royal Bay Secondary in Victoria received the Outstanding Teacher Award from BCAITC. Robin has been a leader in food literacy education for over a decade. She focuses on local agriculture, school gardens, and local food systems education. Through her food studies class and collaboration with District teachers, Robin leads both students and her colleagues to create and expand local food education.

“The past year has illustrated how important it is to recognize and celebrate those in British Columbia who go above and beyond for our sector,” said Stan Vander Waal, BCAC President. “Congratulations to Bill, Christine, and Robin on their awards. The ways in which each of them has helped to advocate for and grow understanding of agriculture in B.C. is inspiring and we’re truly grateful for their contributions.”

Those who missed it can view the Gala and find the online silent auction at: <https://bcac.ca/aggala2022/>.

About BC Agriculture Council

BCAC is a non-governmental, not-for-profit organization and the lead industry advocate for key sector-wide priorities in British Columbia. The Council proudly represents a membership of 27 farm associations who in turn represent over 96% of farm gate sales in B.C.

About BC Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation

BCAITC is a non-profit, charitable organization that works with educators to bring agriculture and food education to students throughout the province.

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