

BC AGRICULTURE FAST FACTS



BRITISH COLUMBIA'S ANNUAL GDP



TOTAL FARM AREA DECREASED **↓11.8% TO 5,648,160 ACRES**

14,826 FARM OPERATORS



*NUMBERS ARE COMPARED TO 2019

OUR MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS

BC Blueberry Council

BC Broiler Hatching Egg Producers' Association

BC Cattlemen's Association

BC Cherry Association

BC Chicken Growers' Association

BC Cranberry Growers' Association

BC Dairy Association

BC Egg Producers' Association

BC Fruit Growers' Association

BC Grain Producers' Association

BC Grapegrowers' Association

BC Greenhouse Growers' Association

BC Honey Producers' Association

BC Haskap Association

BC Landscape & Nursery Association

BC Pork Producers' Association

BC Potato & Vegetable Growers' Association

BC Poultry Association

BC Strawberry Growers Association

BC Turkey Association

BC Wine Grape Council

Organic BC

Fraser Valley Cole Crop Growers' Association

Fraser Valley Pea and Bush Bean Growers' Association

Horse Council British Columbia

Peace Region Forage Seed Association

Raspberry Industry Development Council

United Flower Growers' Co-Op



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ADVANCING AG DAY AG ON THE AGENDA 2022

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Welcome to Ag Day 2022! On behalf of BC Agriculture Council (BCAC) and its members, I would like to thank you for your collaboration today. It has been three years since we last met in Victoria but one thing has not changed - British Columbia's farmers and ranchers are just as committed to providing healthy and quality products to the hearts and homes of British Columbians.

It is my sincere hope that after today, government will see BCAC as an ally, readily available to collaborate and provide input when developing strategies, committees, initiatives or investments as it relates to agriculture. The result will limit unintended consequences while maximizing effective use of resources.

Our province's agriculture sector has been an important piece of British Columbia's identity for more than a century. With over 200 primary commodities grown, harvested, and raised in the province, the sector is one of the most diverse in Canada. The sector is a significant economic driver and is poised for opportunity as the public's interest in food security and sovereignty is on the rise. Whether it be climate change, labour, environment, or land use, together we have an important role to play in supporting our food system.

We look forward to a productive day working with you and believe there is strong alignment with several of government's priorities that see bringing innovation and rejuvenation to the next generation while creating jobs for resilient rural communities and enhancing food security and economic growth. Enjoy the day!


Stan Vander Waal
President, BC Agriculture Council
Flower Grower, Chilliwack, BC



RISING

INPUT COSTS

From wages to fuel and feed to fertilizer, farmers and ranchers are experiencing skyrocketing input costs. British Columbia (B.C.) is a high cost of production region, however, the future of our family farms' financial viability is under tremendous pressure.

While there are numerous factors contributing to ongoing inflation pressures, many farmers are price-takers and have to sell at prices set by the market and cannot pass along any price increases.

With the cost of living on the rise and British Columbians being squeezed financially, they are more likely to relocate to more affordable areas to live or buy the cheapest food, even if it is imported. As a result, B.C.'s farmers and ranchers lose out.

As other jurisdictions around the world, like California, experience drought and other climate impacts, a proactive business case could be made for the provincial government to further support the growth of domestic agriculture production in B.C.

Through a progressive and solutions-based approach, we can work together to ensure that B.C. farmers and ranchers are able to compete with our closest neighboring jurisdictions.

Forward Action:

The Government of BC has the authority to level the playing field for B.C. farmers and ranchers. BCAC and its members have discussed ideas on ways to ease some of these unforeseen challenges and rising costs while also meeting the priorities of government. For example, we see opportunity for dialogue in areas such as: affordable housing and flexibility, the carbon tax rebate program vs. point-of-sale structure, PST exemptions, current matching contributions, and financial caps on programs or support services for farmers. We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you as soon as possible to advance this issue.

FARM

CLASSIFICATION

Active farmland in B.C. is granted significant reductions in property taxes and other municipal levies to ensure the ongoing viability of primary agricultural production. The current minimum requirement to receive these reductions no longer adequately ensures that farmland is being used for agricultural production.

There is a risk that the minimum threshold requirement, which was established in 1995, could be used by some property owners not engaged in agriculture to avoid property taxes.

We have concerns that the current tax structure enables owners to underutilize farmland for farming and instead use it primarily for non-farm use. This would dilute the effect of the ALR and encourage developers to purchase farmland for other purposes.

In 2018, the Advisory Committee for Revitalizing the ALR and the Agricultural Land Commission stated "...the threshold for farmland to qualify for the BC Assessment Farm Class is too low."

Reviewing this legislation would ensure farmland is poised for growth and used for agricultural production and that municipalities receive appropriate taxation revenues from lands that are used for purposes other than agricultural production.

Forward Action:

Ensuring farmland is used for farm production and activities that support farming is crucial to ensuring our province's future resilience. We recommend the launch of a government-industry taskforce to review the threshold in close collaboration with BCAC and its membership. A review would further strengthen the collaborative relationship between BC Assessment and industry, and the resulting update could help to ensure the ALR supports a vibrant, productive agriculture sector for another 50 years. Such a review would also demonstrate to British Columbians the importance of the Government of BC continues to place on food security, especially as we emerge from the devastating floods of November 2021.

ENVIRONMENT

& CLIMATE CHANGE

The most recent devastating impacts of adverse climate events demonstrate the need for coordinated action to address climate change and environmental sustainability. With both provincial and federal governments prioritizing climate policies and food security simultaneously, an approach that reflects our diverse agricultural sector in B.C. is critical.

Annual floods, coupled with increased wildfire intensity, drought, and intense heat waves across the province pose immediate and significant challenges to maintaining current agricultural production. This impacts our ability to increase the amount of locally produced food and plants to meet the demands of a growing population.

The health and well-being of B.C. communities is directly linked to our capability to provide for them.

We believe that greater incorporation of local food production and future food production needs in watershed security planning and water management infrastructure is necessary to achieve food security in a climate-resilient society.

This includes the prioritization of agricultural water security in any governance frameworks that might be adopted for the province's diverse watersheds.

Forward Action:

Environment & Climate Change - In every past federal-provincial agreement, B.C. farmers and ranchers (through BCAC) have worked with the provincial government on program design. With the next funding agreement set to begin in less than six months, BCAC is eager to hear from and work with government to review programming outputs to ensure they meet the highest priorities of industry and presents a suite of practical options for implementation.

Water Security - The Water Sustainability Act envisions the potential for Agricultural Water Reserves (AWRs). BCAC would welcome the adoption of a regulation formalizing the process for creating AWRs to ensure food security and provide certainty for all user groups within a watershed region. Furthermore, as the government continues to develop its Watershed Security Strategy and Fund, it is important that agriculture be recognized as a distinct water user group.

TRESPASSING

ON FARMLAND

Trespassing on farmland can cause outbreaks, putting our food security at risk while negatively impacting the well-being of our farm families. This is not an issue of animal care standards, but of addressing harmful criminal activity to better protect our farmers, their families, workers, farm animals, and local food security.

In 2019, BCAC and its members appreciated the strong commitments made by Minister Popham, Minister Farnworth and (then) Attorney General David Eby to work together to identify enforcement tools and additional measures to strengthen the protection of farms and deter those who are illegally harassing and intimidating farmers and ranchers. Unfortunately, we have not seen an equal amount of effort and progress on those commitments.

It is worth noting that other provincial jurisdictions are currently working to modernize their approach regarding farm trespass. Alberta, for example, has introduced amendments to its trespass legislation that bring penalties up to \$10,000 for a first offence and \$25,000 for subsequent offences. Ontario has increased penalties to \$10,000 and removed the cap on compensation awards against trespassers. Saskatchewan has removed any requirement for posting "no trespass" signs on agricultural land.

Forward Action:

We are at a critical point in time to protect our farmers and ranchers from extreme forms of trespass through modernized legislation. BCAC and its members recommend the development of a strategy to see the commitments made in 2019 move forward. We are committed to working with government on this important issue as soon as possible, given how serious the biosafety implications of farm trespass are and the growing concerns.