



**BCAC**

BC AGRICULTURE COUNCIL

**2022**

**ANNUAL REPORT**



# Our Vision

BC Agriculture Council is the lead industry advocate for key sector-wide priorities in British Columbia.

# Our Mission

To grow a strong, sustainable, and competitive agriculture sector through building industry consensus and advancing public policy.

# Mission Outcomes

BCAC's success depends on being **included**, having **impact** and demonstrating we are **indispensable** to B.C.'s agriculture industry.







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# President's Message



In 2022, BC Agriculture Council (BCAC) celebrated a historic 25 years of serving and advocating for B.C.'s farmers and ranchers. Yet the need for an advocate for agriculture had never been more clearly apparent as recovery efforts from the devastating floods of fall 2021 had barely begun.

The Council was proud to steward the generous donation fund resulting from the overwhelming community support and organizations who stepped up to help farmers.

**Thank you to everyone who donated.**

***Through our members, BCAC distributed \$800,000 to producers for flood recovery efforts.***

We also appreciated opportunities to represent the concerns of farmers and ranchers to the Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, in our follow-up meetings. The purpose of these meetings was to learn how producers are adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change, and what government can do to support the sector in this work.

**We are confident the voices of B.C.'s farmers and ranchers were heard.**

While 2022 was not without its challenges, we started to see some normalcy returning to our businesses and lives. We were thrilled to conduct meetings in person again, especially during Ag Day in Victoria, BCAC's annual advocacy event, where farmers and ranchers from across the province meet in person with cabinet ministers, MLAs, and senior government officials.



One of the letters of support from students



Accepting donations





*Ag Day 2022 - Meeting with Minister Kahlon (JERI)*

One of the key successes of the year was immediately following Ag Day in Victoria as the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Food asked BCAC to establish a Working Group to help guide the delivery of mandate letter commitments and the related work of the Minister's Advisory Group on Regenerative Agriculture and Agritech (AGRAA).

The Working Group was tasked with advising on the implementation of the draft strategic framework developed by the AGRAA. The group was also asked to identify early, mid-, and long-term opportunities for the



*Ag Day 2022 - Meeting with Minister Farnworth (Public Safety)*

adoption of regenerative agriculture and agritech in B.C. It was, and continues to be, a fantastic opportunity to ensure the voices of farmers and ranchers are heard as policies around regenerative agriculture take shape.

In the fall, B.C.'s Premier David Eby appointed a new cabinet, including a new minister for the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Pam Alexis. I would like to thank Minister Popham for her years of service and look forward to seeing all of the valuable contributions Minister Alexis will make within the agriculture sector.

## **AG DAY HIGHLIGHTS**

***60+ farmers, ranchers, and agriculture leaders***

***30+ meetings***

As BCAC moves into the next quarter century of its work on behalf of B.C.'s farmers and ranchers, I would also like to thank our members and their boards for their tireless dedication to bettering agriculture. I am also grateful for our sponsors, partners, government representatives, and the many, many hard-working farmers and ranchers I have had the pleasure of working alongside in 2022. Every day, you make a real difference in the lives of people across B.C., and it has been an honour representing you.

Sincerely,



Stan Vander Waal, President  
BC Agriculture Council

# Executive Director Report



**By: Danielle Synotte** - This past year was an exciting year for BCAC with the return of in-person meetings, events, and conferences which allowed us much needed face-to-face time to ensure the priorities of British Columbia's producers are at the forefront for all levels of government. BCAC ensured farmers and ranchers were heard on:

**The rising costs of inputs:** In addition to continuously advocating for additional support for the sector provincially, BCAC has been an active participant on the Canadian Federation of Agriculture's advisory committee on the subject, providing solutions for rising input costs at the federal level.

**Task force on land use:** BCAC initiated discussions with the provincial government to launch a government-industry task force to review the threshold for property tax reductions and lowered municipal levies.

**Securing access to water:** BCAC is an active and integral contributor to the province's development of a Watershed Security Strategy including pressing for protections for agricultural water uses and renewing discussions of an agricultural water reserve.

**Safeguarding farmers and their families:** We have made it clear that meaningful penalties for trespassing on farms need to be included within provincial legislation; these safeguards should ensure the safety of farmers, their families, and their operations. We are proud to report that through our collaborative discussions with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAF), they have committed to striking a joint taskforce with industry in the fall of 2023 to re-open dialogue on this important matter.

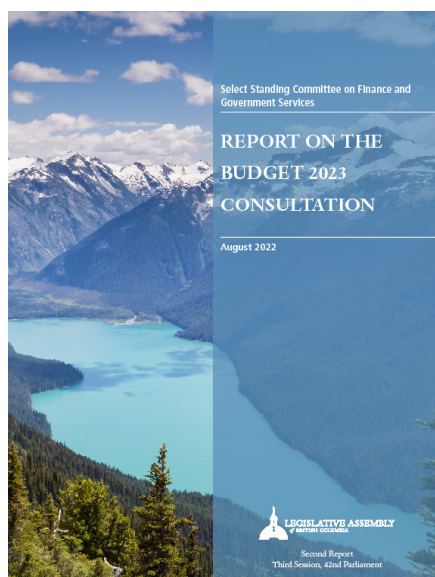
**Ensuring Ag is "on the agenda":** BCAC is committed to ensuring that agriculture is considered in all areas of government policy that may impact farmers and producers, whether intentionally or unintentionally.

***We believe that agriculture should be on the agenda throughout government, not just with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food.***

To that end, we have presented several submissions to governments on topics ranging from hazardous work protection for youth, single-use plastics, integrated pest-management regulation, AgriRecovery negotiations, trespassing, the National School Food Policy, and the Fertilizer Emission Reduction Strategy.



*Ag Day 2022 - Patiently waiting in the hallways of the Legislature for their Minister meeting!*



***Our collective voice was a key driver behind the additional investments for the agriculture sector in the 2023 provincial government budget announcement.***

BCAC, along with its members, presented to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and was pleased to see our recommendations mentioned at the top of the 2023 Budget Consultation Report.

In addition to BCAC's policy projects, our community of organizations dedicated to agriculture have helped to position our sector as an economic driver in British Columbia - ripe with opportunity!

Our relationships within the MAF are strong and I am excited to roll up my sleeves with a new minister and executive team as we - together - advance our shared sector priorities. Thank you all for the parts you have played in BCAC's progress in 2022 - we have a lot to be proud of.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Undoubtedly, the last few years of extreme weather events and the pandemic have brought the need for emergency preparedness to the forefront for every single British Columbian. BCAC will champion support for producers to ensure our food and agricultural systems are ready for future challenges. With the provincial government's emphasis on food security, BCAC sees opportunity to advance many of the sector's priorities:

- **We will push for access to water for farmers and producers. Hotter, drier summers mean more water from irrigation is required to keep crops growing. If we can't keep crops growing, we can't produce food.**
- **We continue to advocate for a robust response from government to the ongoing labour shortages. Without workers, food and plants do not get planted and will not get harvested.**
- **We will look to see investment in processing so that producers can build processing capacity on-farm.**

**As 2023 marks the 50th anniversary of the ALR, ensuring the sustainability of the agricultural sector for the next 50 plus years is key.** BCAC will press for a commitment from the province to carry out a review of Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) regulations – what farmers are allowed to do on their land – to make sure those regulations serve our current and future food needs. The purpose of the review is to better reflect the realities of modern farming and empower farmers and ranchers to make decisions that best reflect the needs of their operations.

BCAC supports the provincial government's focus on building Indigenous food sovereignty and looks forward to exploring ways to support those efforts. We will continue to prioritize influencing the provincial government's impact on agriculture through the Minister's Advisory Group on Regenerative Agriculture and Agritech.

The start of a new five-year Canadian Agricultural Partnership (CAP) agreement funding cycle begins in 2023 and BCAC will work closely with members to ensure programming needs are met as we engage with government on CAP consultations.



# Stakeholder Engagement

The year began with uncertainty related to the COVID-19 pandemic. With the Pacific Agriculture Show being postponed until April, BCAC made the decision to once again hold its popular in-person Gala virtually. However, public health orders were allowing small group gatherings, motivating us to do something in person.

*(On the right): BC Chamber of Commerce AGM - BCAC President speaking on supply chain challenges for the ag sector*



*Kevin Boon, BCCA General Manager, at the President's Dinner.*

In March, we held a President's Dinner in Abbotsford for the lead board representative from each of our member associations. Then Minister of Agriculture and Food, Lana Popham, also attended with her newly appointed Deputy Minister, Peter Pokorny. The evening also included BCAC's awards presentation, recognizing three British Columbians who have made significant contributions in terms of advocacy, leadership, and growing understanding of agriculture in B.C. They were:

- **Bill Zylmans** - BCAC Excellence in Agriculture Leadership
- **Christine Koch** - Scotiabank Award - Ally of Agriculture
- **Robin Ruff** - Outstanding Teacher Award

The summer of 2022 included negotiations for what would become the new Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (SCAP) agreement, a 5-year, \$3.5 billion agreement between federal, provincial and territorial governments. At this time, the Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) roundtable meetings took place in conjunction with the Canadian Federation of Agriculture's semi-annual meetings. This is where all provinces had the opportunity to openly discuss possible changes to investment in the government programs. BCAC attended the FPT meeting in Saskatoon and represented B.C. alongside our Minister of Agriculture.



*Stan and Minister Popham at FPT Meeting*



*Federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Marie-Claude Bibeau*

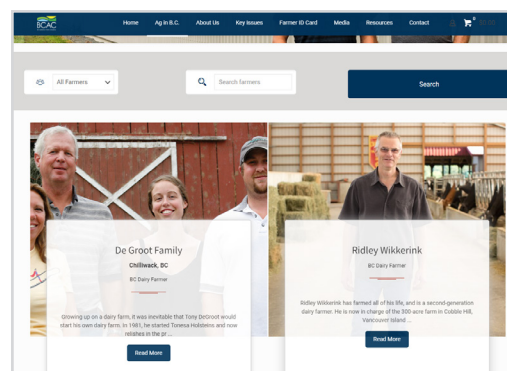
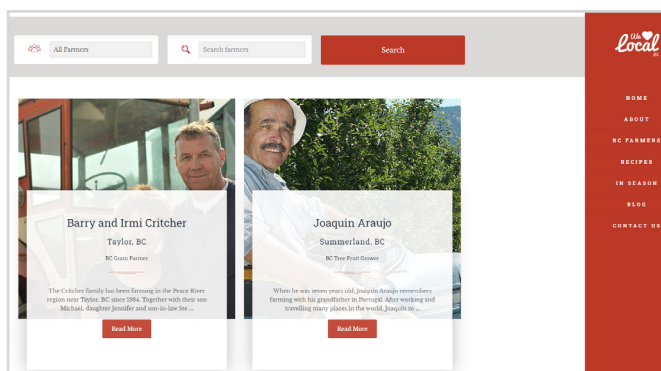


*Vaughn Palmer, Keith Baldrey, and Bill Zylmans at a BCAC Board/GM event*

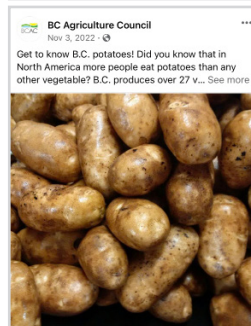


## AGRICULTURE EDUCATION & AWARENESS

Coming out of the pandemic and the 2021 flooding events, consumers' heightened sensitivity to food security has shifted people's concerns about farming. In the spring of 2022, **BCAC embarked on a transition year for its work on growing our community's understanding of agriculture in B.C., starting with undertaking a consumer study of greater depth that would primarily be used to assist with decision making about how to best communicate with the public about the agriculture industry. We then started the transitioning of content (e.g. farmer profiles) from We Heart Local (WHL) over to BCAC digital platforms (see websites below).**



## SOME TOP SOCIAL PERFORMERS!



## ACTIVITIES

- We conducted in-depth consumer research to:
  - Uncover/ explore what information British Columbians are interested in knowing about B.C. agriculture and B.C. grown/ produced food and plants,
  - Learn what we don't know about consumer interests about agriculture and farming practices,
  - Determine, beyond what is "interesting", which types of information might be used to most effectively influence opinions of B.C. agriculture in a positive way, and
  - Identify subgroups that could be the best possible targets for future communication efforts – for example, those that are less knowledgeable, or less positive about B.C. agriculture and/or most open to receiving information.
- BCAC staff transitioned the We Heart Local content that consumers are most interested in over to the BCAC website.
- Worked to increase the social presence and profile for B.C. agriculture (see insert).
- Added new information to BCAC on "B.C. Farm Facts" with shareable infographics.
- Promoted/amplified all member public trust content through social.
- Attended tradeshow.
- Ratified a new terms of reference for a BCAC advisory committee on Agriculture Education and Awareness.
- Worked on a new "BC Farmer" brand to replace WHL. 6

# Western Agriculture Labour Initiative

As we began emerging from the pandemic, 2022 proved to be a good year but it did bring with it some new challenges. We must start by saying thank you to the B.C. government for coordinating and funding the centralized quarantine program for foreign workers. Looking after this requirement allowed employers to focus on keeping staff safe while working. It also reduced the concerns that workers had about travelling during the pandemic.

We would also like to thank the team at Mi Tierra Holidays for all their help in 2022 in arranging travel for workers. Re-opening the economy brought forward the critical labour crisis several industries had anticipated about even pre-pandemic. From construction to hospitality, several sectors were struggling to find enough qualified staff. This shortage magnified the labour challenge that farmers have faced for several years.

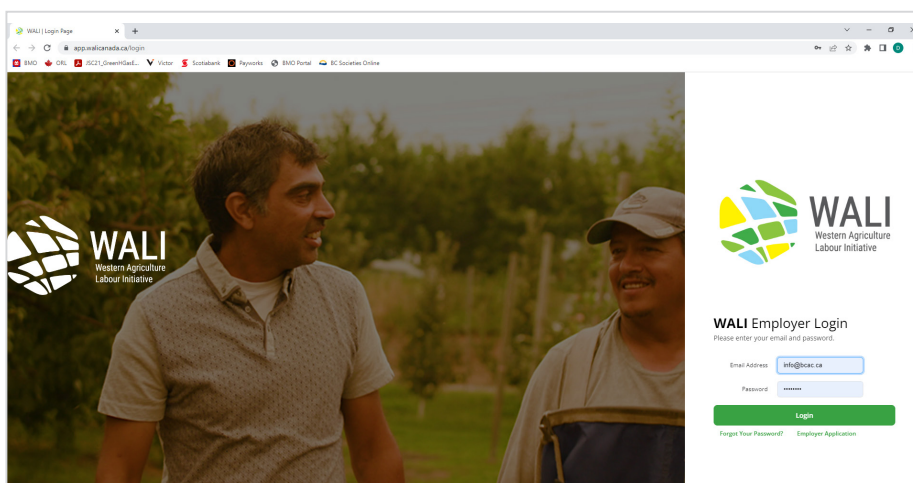
BCAC's subsidiary, the Western Agriculture Labour Initiative (WALI), continued working with employers and source countries using the Seasonal Agriculture Worker Program (SAWP). WALI also worked with governments and B.C. registered recruiting companies to assist employers wanting to hire workers through the AgStream program. We saw expanding interest in using AgStream and will continue to develop this service.

***The total number of temporary foreign workers (TFWs) that arrived in B.C. in 2022 saw levels recovering to those nearing pre-pandemic numbers.***

WALI launched its online Employer Portal in 2022 to provide employers better access to information. We experienced the expected start-up hiccups, but thanks to employer patience and input, the system helped us to better manage and share information.



*Reg Ens, WALI General Manager, with Karl Samuda, Minister of Labour and Social Security of Jamaica*



While TFWs continue to be critical to the farm labour market, we must look at all solutions. WALI has actively participated in the development of the National Workforce Strategic Plan. This plan provides a holistic look at the labour challenges facing Canadian farmers and food manufacturers. It will provide the framework that WALI and BCAC will use to continue helping farmers meet their labour needs.





*B.C. delegation in Mexico for SAWP meetings*

## LOOKING AHEAD

As we look forward, the WALI team is adding capacity for the 2023 season to ensure the timely processing of LMIA's and responses to employer inquiries.

To improve the integrity and consistency of housing inspections, WALI is working towards including the inspection process in the online Employer Portal.

Working with the Consulate of Mexico, WALI will work towards administering most of the SAWP transfers in B.C. The Consulate has managed the transfer process since the start of the program in B.C., but no longer has the resources to do so.

BCAC has received federal funding for WALI to conduct end-of-term surveys with workers before they return home. This data will help employers identify and prioritize ways to improve the quality of life for workers while in B.C. and, in turn, contribute to higher return rates.

The Auditor General of Canada's 2021 report on the *Health and Safety of Agricultural Temporary Foreign Workers in Canada During the COVID-19 Pandemic* stated that government needs to do a better job protecting TFWs. WALI, together with other national and provincial farm organizations, has been working with the federal government to take steps to ensure workers have a safe and rewarding experience while in Canada. This, in turn, helps ensure farmers have access to reliable and affordable workers. We expect more developments on these policies in 2023.

***WALI understands that finding and keeping labour is a growing challenge for all B.C. farmers and ranchers. We have a talented and dedicated team to help tackle this issue.***

# Policy Development

With the strategic restructuring mid-year of 2021, BCAC was successful in transitioning the on-farm programs, previously administered by Agriculture Research & Development Corporation (ARDCorp), to Investment Agriculture Foundation. By 2022, we were well-positioned to continue our focus on building BCAC's policy development capacity. In February, Paul Pryce, Director of Policy, was welcomed onto the BCAC team to advance the priorities of the agriculture sector. We are excited to highlight some key successes as a result of his direct contributions.

## HIGHLIGHTS

Consultations were held with members to identify key priority areas for 2022 and onward:

### Water Security and Management

### Land Use

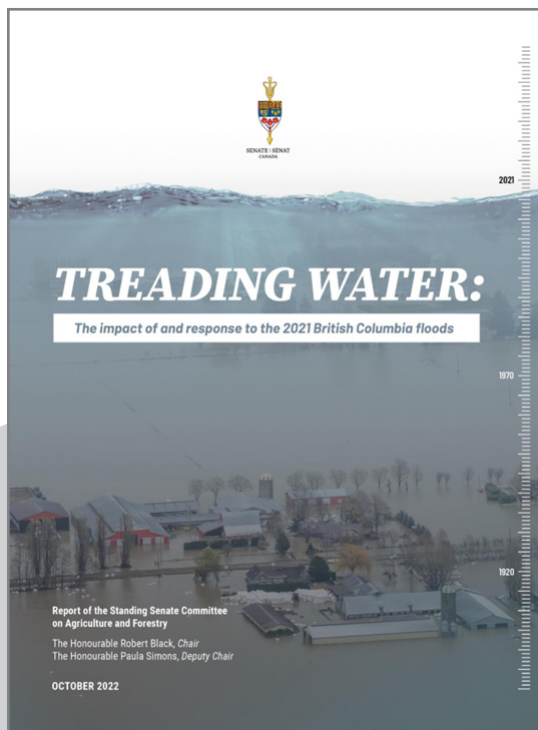
### Access to Labour

### Environment and Climate Change

### Farm Business

Since then, policy committees have been formed for most of these priorities, ensuring producers have direct input into the positions BCAC presents to government (See Table 1).

With B.C.'s *Watershed Security Strategy* consultations, BCAC advocated for measures to ensure agricultural production is supported by reliable access to safe, quality water. BCAC is also pressing for significant changes to groundwater licensing that will make the process more responsive to the needs of farmers and ranchers.



BCAC presented to the **Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry**, and many of our recommendations were included in that committee's final report *Treading Water: The Impact of and Response to the 2021 British Columbia Floods*. BCAC also actively participated in a Canadian Federation of Agriculture committee, highlighting and advocating for policy solutions to rising input costs. BCAC also consulted on B.C.'s Single-Use Plastics Action Plan.

BCAC also pressed for continued access for farmers to pest management tools like second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides. By working collaboratively with policy-makers, **BCAC also prevented burdensome new regulations that would have duplicated existing workplace safety standards.**

Concluding the year, we were thrilled to have Emily Townsend join BCAC in a part-time Policy Coordinator role. This position will further advance the important work of ensuring the needs and interests of B.C.'s farmers and ranchers are reflected in government policies.



*Table 1:  
Standing Board Strategic Priority  
Advisory Committees*



*BCAC is having a tangible influence on government policy, ensuring the interests of farmers and ranchers are front and centre. This has only been possible through the support and close collaboration we enjoy from our members. Thank you for contributing your feedback and perspectives!*

- PAUL PRYCE  
DIRECTOR OF POLICY

# BC Young Farmers

BC Young Farmers (BCYF) is a working committee of BCAC that represents the voice of the next generation of farmers and ranchers in B.C. BCYF participates on the BCAC Board, attends key industry events, and hosts events of their own.

Through support from BCAC, BCYF offers an opportunity for young agriculture leaders to actively participate in policy-building advisory committees, share their perspectives with government, and ensure that future public policies support the long-term sustainability of agriculture. This includes organizing networking and leadership-development opportunities for young farmers aged 19 to 40 from across the province.

## JANUARY TO MARCH

- Administered the Ministry of Agriculture and Food's Young & New Entrant Skill Development Program
- Hosted virtual Farm Fest events that had been postponed due to the 2021 flooding
- Hosted booth at Pacific Agriculture Show
- Attended BCAC President's Dinner

200

NEW SUBSCRIBERS

## APRIL TO JUNE

- Hosted two virtual events (on business planning and land access options)
- Sponsored two awards in the Fraser Valley Regional Science Fair and served as a judge

## JULY TO SEPTEMBER

- New Terms of Reference established with BCAC Strategic Plan and subcommittees streamlined
- Onboarded two new committee members

26

YOUNG FARMERS  
ATTENDED EVENTS

## OCTOBER TO DECEMBER

- Actively participated in BCAC's Ag Day in Victoria
- Released three more original video tours featuring the experiences of young farmers in Abbotsford, Vanderhoof, and NanOOSE Bay
- Hosted signature Farm Fest event virtually, with a series of speakers who discussed funding for farm best practices, mental health, and networking opportunities
- Contributed to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food New Entrant Advisory Committee meeting
- Secured \$30,000 again for the 2023 Ministry of Agriculture and Food-funded Skill Development Program





Ag Day in Victoria



Pacific Agriculture Show



Attending the "Advancing Women in Agriculture" Conference



Fraser Valley Regional Science Fair



Attending CFA AGM



Ag Day in Victoria

## **2023 BCYF COMMITTEE**

**Rebecca Senicar** *(Rudi Meier 2022)*  
**CHAIR**

**Russell Reitsema** *(Rebecca Senicar 2022)*  
**VICE CHAIR**

**Corne Quik** *(Russell Reitsema 2022)*  
**TREASURER**

**Jacintha Kulchar**  
**MEMBER**

**Jeffery Spitters**  
**MEMBER**

**Campbell Woike**  
**MEMBER**

**Jennifer Woike**  
**BCAC DIRECTOR**

# Farmer Identity Card Program

***As the impacts of the pandemic lessened throughout 2022, BCAC's Farmer ID Card sales increased, seeing sales rise by 18% compared to 2021!***

BCAC continued to partner with the Advanced Selling class at the University of the Fraser Valley on a Farmer ID Card sales campaign. After two months of classroom training, students worked in teams, contacting farmers on the renewals list, from their personal networks, and from their own prospecting efforts. By the end of November, students had succeeded in selling Farmer ID cards resulting in \$4,305 in renewals and new sales for BCAC.

Our team continues to look at ways to grow the Farmer ID Card program by understanding how to improve awareness of the card among farmers and which marketing channels are most effective at reaching prospective cardholders. With the benefits it offers, the Farmer ID Card can save B.C.'s farmers and ranchers both time and money so we want to see it reach as many producers as possible.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The potential to grow this program is tremendous and BCAC relies on the support of its membership to support our marketing efforts.

Look for communication from BCAC in 2023 regarding new improvements to the program!

18%

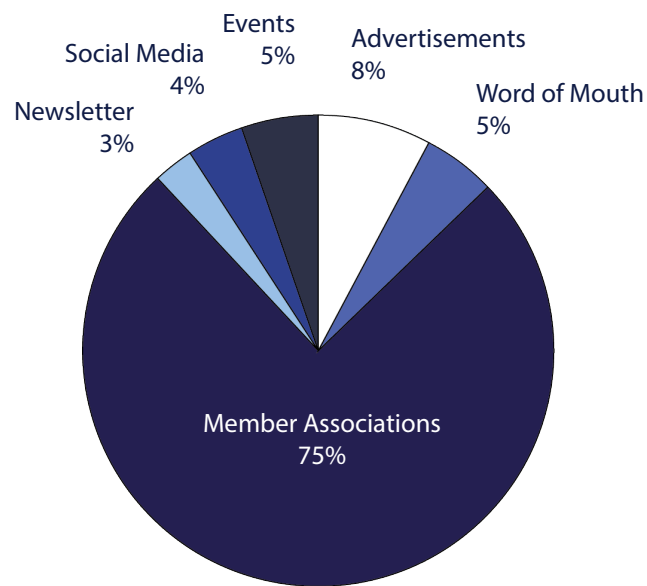
INCREASE IN  
SALES FROM 2021

29%

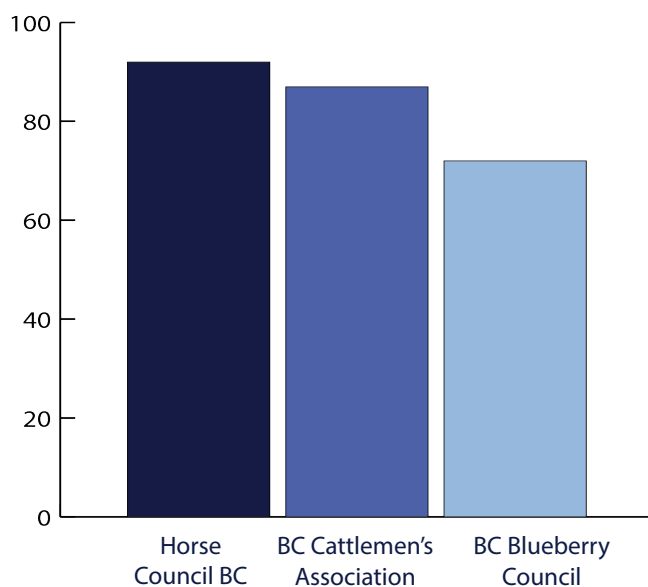
NEW ACCOUNTS



## HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT US?



## TOP FARMER ID CARD MEMBERS



# Strategic Plan At-A-Glance



**OUR VISION** *BC Agriculture Council is the lead industry advocate for*

## GOAL

BCAC and its members **develop** a unified voice about issues and/or services that are important to the entire industry.

## CORE ACTIVITY AREAS

MEMBER  
RELATIONS

POLICY  
DEVELOPMENT

## GOAL

BCAC is **recognized** as the credible and trustworthy voice of the agriculture sector in British Columbia.

PUBLIC  
RELATIONS

GOVERNMENT  
RELATIONS

**OUR MISSION** *To grow a strong, sustainable and competitive agricultural*



# 2022-2025

for key sector-wide priorities in British Columbia.

## GOAL

Stakeholder objectives are **advanced** by the availability of current and prioritized portfolios on key issues that impact BC agriculture.

## PRIORITY ISSUES

Water Security  
Access to Labour  
Land Use  
Environment and Climate Change  
Farm Business  
Education and Awareness

## GOAL

BCAC **contributes** in government policy and processes relating to cross-sector industry priorities.

## KEY MISSION OUTCOMES

### INCLUSION

BCAC is prepared and invited to engage.

### IMPACT

BCAC's interests influence government decisions.

### INDISPENSABLE

BCAC's value is clear to stakeholders.

agriculture sector through building industry consensus and advancing public policy.

# Our Members

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 Haskap Association

BC Honey Producers' 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

Fraser Valley Cole Crop Growers' Association

Fraser Valley Pea and Bush Beans  
Growers' Association

Horse Council British Columbia

Organic BC

Peace Region Forage Seed Association

Raspberry Industry Development Council

United Flower Growers

# Our Board

Stan Vander Waal - President  
*Floriculture*

Niklaus Forstbauer - Vice President  
*Organics*

Ray VanMarrewyk - Treasurer  
*Greenhouse Vegetables*

Sarah Sache - Director at Large  
*Dairy*

Lynda Atkinson - Director  
*Equine*

Jennifer Critcher - Director  
*Grain*

David Mutz - Director  
*Coastal Horticulture*

Peter Simonsen - Director  
*Interior Horticulture*

Len Smit - Director  
*Landscape & Nursery*

Brian Thomas - Director  
*Beef Cattle & Pork*

Jennifer Woike - Director  
*Poultry*

Rebecca Senicar - BCYF  
*Ex-Officio (Dairy farmer)*



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