

# ADVANCING | AG DAY AG ON THE AGENDA | 2023





# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



On behalf of BC Agriculture Council (BCAC), I am delighted to welcome you to Ag Day in Victoria 2023. This is a special event that brings together farmers, ranchers and industry leaders from across the province to share their perspectives on recent challenges and opportunities with you.

This past year has been challenging for all British Columbians; many farmers reported that the drought, wildfires, port strike, high inflation and interest rates added major financial pressures to their farm businesses. When farms and ranches go out of business, it impacts the supply of agricultural products to consumers, and of course, our local food security.

Today we will bring forward positive solutions to the key challenges our sector is facing. We also wish to take the opportunity to celebrate our agriculture sector which is a significant contributor to the provincial economy. We appreciate your support and interest in B.C. agriculture, and we look forward to engaging with you in meaningful dialogue and collaboration. We believe there is strong alignment with several of the government's priorities.

Enjoy the day!

Jennifer Woike  
President, BC Agriculture Council  
Egg Producer, Duncan, B.C.

AGRICULTURE  
CONTRIBUTES



MORE  
THAN **\$1.7**  
BILLION

BRITISH COLUMBIA'S ANNUAL GDP



EMPLOYS  
**33,000** ↑ **8.5%**  
PEOPLE INCREASE

40.6% OF FARMS REPORT  
LESS THAN **\$10,000** IN REVENUE  
NUMBER OF FARMS  
**15,842** ↓ **9.6%** DECREASE

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

**14,826 FARM OPERATORS**

**39.7%** ARE FEMALE OPERATORS  
**2/3** OF FARM OPERATORS ARE **55+**  
AVERAGE AGE IS **57.8** ↑ **2.6%**

\*NUMBERS ARE COMPARED TO 2019



# WATER

## SECURITY

### Establish Agricultural Water Reserves that would provide long-term, generational sustainability for farmers and ranchers.

Provincial food security and the production of other agricultural goods rely on predictable water availability. The last three years brought the sector unrelenting heat, devastating wildfires, catastrophic floods and prolonged dry spells.

The ongoing drought has now put immense pressure on our water systems, affecting everything from agriculture and fisheries to our urban water supply.

Water scarcity is now hindering crop growth and affecting forage availability for livestock; as a result, farmers and ranchers are suffering significant production losses.

This means less local food availability for British Columbians at a time when our communities need more access to locally grown food.

#### THE SOLUTION:

Deliver on the recommendation from your Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services that the province **“Support farmers to address water supply concerns by allocating sufficient financial resources, establishing an irrigation framework, and allocating resources to support farmers to complete applications for groundwater use licences”**. This can be achieved by:

- Establishing agricultural water reserves in conjunction with the Agricultural Land Reserve that would provide long-term, generational sustainability for agriculture, and the assurance that farming can continue in times of drought. In the Watershed Security Strategy, include the requirement that a first step in any Water Sustainability Plan process is the establishment of an agricultural water reserve.
- Prioritizing water for agriculture production at a level consistent with that of drinking water. Further, when developing community plans or considering development permits, local governments should be obligated to consider available water supply and ensure existing agricultural requirements can be sustained to maintain domestic food security, on a priority basis.

The situation is dire and British Columbia's farmers and ranchers are calling on the Government of B.C. to implement agricultural water reserves while also addressing the longstanding issues with groundwater licencing applications.

The government's own Living Water Smart document included the commitment to establish agricultural water reserves and the Water Sustainability Act provides the legal authority for the creation of AWRs as part of the Water Sustainability Plan process.

The establishment of such reserves would allow farmers to plan their needs ahead of time and provide more predictability for other water users.

# COSTS

## OF PRODUCTION

### Help farmers and ranchers manage the increased cost of production and high inflation environment.

The agriculture sector has emerged from the global pandemic into a high inflation and high interest rate environment. At the same time, disruptions to global supply chains have drastically increased the cost of critical farm inputs placing tremendous pressure on producers' farm financial health.

Currently, farmers pay a carbon price on essential farming activities such as irrigation, grain drying, feed preparation, heating or cooling of barns and more. As farmers often have no viable fuel alternatives for critical food production activities, the carbon tax creates a large financial burden without any potential for significant emission reductions.

At the end of August 2023, BCAC surveyed B.C. farmers and ranchers to learn which input cost was the highest concern and the biggest threat to the viability of their business. The cost of fuel came out as number one across the entire sector.

Federally, Bill C-234 will likely soon become law and this proposed legislation would extend full exemptions from the

#### THE SOLUTION:

For farmers to make investments in technologies that enhance their efficiency and sustainability, they need access to working capital. A carbon tax exemption will provide necessary support on farms to help alleviate financial pressures and ensure capital is available to reinvest in our farm operations.

Should Bill C-234 pass, we look to the province to match those exemptions to the carbon tax that would benefit farmers elsewhere in the country. Such exemptions must also take place on the same timetable as in other provinces so that there is a level playing field for B.C. farmers and ranchers.

Government of Canada's carbon price to certain tools and practices that are essential to agricultural production and food security.

As B.C. has its own carbon tax, farmers in our province would not be eligible for the federal exemptions. This will result in a significant disadvantage to B.C. farmers who would be facing much higher costs than their competitors elsewhere in Canada.

Your farmers and ranchers understand our global climate concerns, which is why they are committed to continuous enhancement of their farms' sustainability and environmental efficiency. At the same time, we are also faced with serious food security concerns.

We believe that carbon surcharges pull capital from critical investments that would otherwise augment the sector's potential to reduce emissions further and support food security.



# ABOUT

## BC AGRICULTURE COUNCIL

BCAC is the lead industry advocate for key sector-wide priorities in British Columbia, delivering a unified voice for over 20,000 farm families to government through the unique commodity associations that we represent. The farmers and ranchers who hold membership in these associations generate approximately 96% of provincial farm gate sales.

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 Hazelnut Growers 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

Organic BC

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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