



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



Thank you for welcoming me in my first year as BC Agriculture Council's new president. It has certainly been a year of learning, listening and growing for myself and for many other new board directors on the Council's Board. I have been proud to serve in this role and work alongside such a knowledgeable group of leaders in agriculture.

The combination of a summer of significant drought and yet another recordsetting wildfire season left producers feeling anxious as they anticipated the outcomes we now know to have occurred - restricted access to water, groundwater licensing issues, fish-protection orders and more. To add to this, the year began tough with rising inflation and interest rates, which contributed to the mental burden of producers by continually increasing costs of production.

In late 2022 we saw political changes including a new Premier for British Columbia followed by a cabinet shuffle resulting in a new Minister of Agriculture and Food, the Honourable Pam Alexis. BCAC was quick to send a letter of congratulations with an invitation to meet and was the first industry association with whom she met. We provided Minister Alexis with an introduction to BCAC and highlighted our sector representation.

Since that meeting, a lot has happened. Our relationshipbuilding efforts with the new Minister and the team at the Ministry of Agriculture and Food (along with other ministries as a result) have gone extremely well. BCAC is seen as the "goto" organization for nearly all cross-commodity consultation needs.



BCAC hosted several Indigenous relations training workshops.

Examples of outcomes from BCAC's advocacy efforts in 2023 include (but not limited to):

- A significant investment of over \$200 million dedicated to food security as a result of provincial budget consultations. This led to establishing programs that support needs such as irrigation infrastructure, emergency planning and preparedness, Indigenous food affordability and food security;
- an invitation to meet with Premier Eby and other concerned stakeholders including two BCAC members to debrief
 on the 2023 drought. Our message to consolidate the water file under one ministry to address the confusion
 and streamline approvals was heard. Shortly after, the Premier announced he was doing just that, and water
 authorizations were transferred to the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship;
- a meeting with both the Premier and the Minister of Finance at BCAC's annual BC Ag Day in Victoria, and
- welcoming the Premier at the BC Young Farmers Farm Fest event for an hour-long Q&A session.
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Federally, we saw another cabinet shuffle and a "new" Minister of Agriculture and Agri- Food Canada, the Honourable Lawrence MacAulay returning to his previous portfolio. Both the Minister and his new Deputy Minister made trips to B.C. shortly after their appointments and met with BCAC at our office. We took this opportunity to share B.C.'s priorities around water security and advocate for the anticipated AgriRecovery package that the Province had applied for - which was approved.

As an organization, BCAC was also looking for training to help grow our understanding of and work toward reconciliation. We recognize that reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples is a long journey and that relationships must be founded on mutual respect. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to reconciliation. Many of our members have worked with Indigenous communities for years and their relationships are shaped by daily interactions, so we often look to our members for guidance. In 2023, the BCAC Board, its staff and the BC Young Farmers Committee participated in its first session on learning on how to work effectively with Indigenous Peoples. BCAC later coordinated a similar workshop that was offered to its members and their board members. Look for more of these sessions in 2024.

As we reflect on the challenges and successes of this past year, I am so proud of the work we have done advocating on behalf of BC's farmers and ranchers. I'd like to thank the rest of the BCAC Board, our members, sponsors, our staff and all other stakeholders for your contributions to the past year's achievements of the Council and the sector as a whole.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Woike, President BC Agriculture Council

AG DAY IN VICTORIA HIGHLIGHTS:



Meeting with Premier David Eby to discuss water security and storage and cost of production

60+ farmers, ranchers & agriculture leaders 39 meetings 2 key messages delivered to government



Meeting with Hon. Katrine Conroy, Minister of Finance

Executive Director Report



No matter what industry or sector you find yourself in, a high-level of communication and engagement with key stakeholders is critical for making any kind of meaningful progress on strategic objectives. That is why cultivating our existing relationships (while building new ones), improving communications and pursuing business development opportunities were key areas of focus, and a strength, for BCAC in 2023.

Speaking of strategic objectives, our organization's mission statement is "To build a strong, sustainable and competitive agriculture sector by building industry consensus and advancing public policy". To achieve this mission, BCAC needs to be invited to the table, maintain strong relationships with government decision-makers, provide well-prepared contributions, be a resource for government and ensure producers are aware of our efforts.

KEEPING "AG" ON THE AGENDA

BCAC 2023 RECAP

11 submissions *in response to government consultations*

> **12 submissions** in response to industry needs

4 position papers *approved by BCAC Board of Directors*

2 resolutions adopted at CFA AGM

50% of all proposals approved by the CFA Cost of Production Committee

4 presentations to elected officials

13 committee meetings to inform BCAC's policy work With a newly appointed Minister of Agriculture and Food, and many new staff within the Ministry, it was critical to make meaningful connections as often as possible throughout the year and reinforce our role, and the role of our members, within the sector. Of note, BCAC secured some very meaningful interactions between the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture at several of our events just in the past 5 months. We have their attention and we must not waste such an opportunity.

We increased our presence at member and industry-related events, participated and presented at many member board meetings, and conducted quarterly meetings with general managers. And our membership is growing! We welcomed a new member, the BC Hazelnut Growers' Association in 2023, and we have had some exciting new expressions of interest for membership (stay tuned!).

BCAC also established a new membership type – the Associate Member – as an intentional way to grow our network within agriculture with those that have shared interests outside of our primary membership. I am happy to report several expressions of interest on this membership type already - more to come in 2024.

Ongoing engagement with our membership is at the core of what we do. BCAC conducted regular member



meetings throughout the year to discuss sector priorities and to obtain feedback on BCAC's policy development work to date. Member associations were uniformly positive about the need for and effectiveness of BCAC's new policy development role. In addition, BCAC's efforts in policy and building our profile publicly has heightened the level of interest in information from BCAC by elected officials, academia and several other sectors. As a provincial organization, BCAC continues to focus primarily on engagement with the Government of B.C., but it is worth noting that there has been increased interest municipally and internationally in the perspective BCAC's membership can offer on emerging issues related to agriculture.

Continuing to build BCAC's operational capacity to support these increasing needs is an ongoing area of importance as well. At the 2024 Annual General Meeting (AGM), we will be announcing the launch of a new offering by BCAC for member associations, their members and Farmer ID Card holders that seeks to build long-term revenue that further supports the needs of the membership.

BCAC will continue to provide input into government decision-making on matters of integral importance to the agricultural sector and dedicate ourselves towards strengthening strategic relationships. BCAC will also need to demonstrate agility in its policy development work throughout 2024-25, as a provincial election is anticipated in this period. As such, there will be increased public and media interest in the issues affecting the agriculture sector. BCAC will be there to communicate clearly and effectively how the sector can best be supported.

I would like to thank the BCAC membership and all our farmers and ranchers for their ongoing efforts to collaborate and support BCAC in the name of advancing the agriculture sector's priorities.



First meeting with Minister Alexis at Rainbow Greenhouses



Meeting with Hon. Lawrence MacAulay at BCAC's office

Policy Development



Meeting with federal Deputy Minister Stephanie Beck

TOP PRIORITY AREAS: WATER SECURITY & MANAGEMENT ACCESS TO LABOUR ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE FARM BUSINESS

In 2023, BCAC built on the previous year's foundational work by advancing the agriculture sector's interests in several areas. We are excited to highlight some key successes that directly resulted from BCAC's policy work.

Consultations were held with members to reaffirm BCAC's priority areas for 2023 and onward (see "Top Priority Areas" above). Work continues by policy committees tied to most of these priorities, ensuring producers have direct input into the positions BCAC presents to government.

Concerns raised by BCAC and other stakeholders led to the transfer of water authorizations staff from the Ministry of Forests to the Ministry of Water, Land, and Resource Stewardship, which we hope will address the significant backlog of well registrations. BCAC will continue to advocate for improved drought communication, solutions to the

deficiencies in the water licensing process, and protections for agricultural water in the province's Watershed Security Strategy, expected to be released this year.

BCAC presented to the federal Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, making several recommendations on the forthcoming National Soil Health Study. BCAC also delivered presentations to the BC Legislative Assembly's Select Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fish, and Food on incentives for soil carbon sequestration and the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government



BCAC Director Ray VanMarrewyk at the\$200 million Food Security Investment announcement



Services on the need for greater supports for farmers in Budget 2024. Presentations to this latter committee by BCAC and its member associations in 2022 played a critical role in securing the province's historic \$200 million investment in a food security initiative, which includes important funding opportunities for on-farm water storage – a key ask from many members.

BCAC also responded to 11 government consultations in 2023, including detailed feedback to make the Disaster Financial Assistance program more responsive to the needs of farmers and ranchers. Active participation in the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) and its committees has also raised awareness at the national level about the unique cost pressures faced by agricultural producers in BC and the needs of the sector.

With a provincial election likely ahead in 2024, BCAC will look for continued engagement and support from members so that together we can ensure farmers and ranchers have the support and policy environment they need to succeed.

RESULTS FROM MEMBER CONSULTATION ON 2024 KEY PRIORITIES:

At the end of September 2023, BCAC hosted a day-long, in-person member meeting (GMs meeting), where we established key messages for Ag Day in Victoria and consulted on key sector-wide priorities for 2024. In addition to a presentation on the BC Flood Strategy by government staff, Assistant Deputy Minister Michelle Koski attended to engage with the membership. This important meeting provided the members with the opportunity to drive BCAC's focus areas for our 2024 workplan while cultivating cross-commodity communication and knowledge sharing.

COST OF PRODUCTION

- Carbon Tax advocacy
- Minimum wage subsidy
- Eliminate tax on insurance premiums
- Advance Payment Program Supplement

WATER SECURITY & STORAGE

- Agricultural Water Reserves
- Investment for storage
- Groundwater licensing
- Increased communication from government to producers and industry associations

EMERGENCY PLANNING & PREPAREDNESS

- Food Security Planning & Preparedness
 Project (PROPOSAL APPROVED!)
- Disaster Financial Assistance Program improvements

LABOUR

- MSP coverage delay for TFW's
- Flexibility for TFW's to move between farms
- Financial support as employers try to construct new (improved) housing for workers

Stakeholder Engagement

With a return to in-person events, BCAC kicked the year off by introducing a new format to our annual **BC Agri-Food Industry Gala** fundraiser. The switch from a seated, plated dinner to a standing, receptionstyle event featuring a variety of food stations made for increased networking opportunities and was very well received by attendees.

In-person attendance at **Canadian Federation** of Agriculture (CFA) events across the country resumed. BCAC's contributions to advocacy at a national level are achieved through our membership with CFA. BCAC representatives participated in three CFA events this year including:



Presenting BCAC's Leadership Award to dairy producer, Ben Brandesma

- the Annual General Meeting in Ottawa, ON;
- the summer board meeting and annual Industry-Government Roundtable in Fredericton, NB where
 agriculture ministers and industry leaders from across the country provided direct input into the federal
 government's work on a Sustainable Agriculture Strategy, and
- the North American European Union Agriculture Conference, which brought nearly 280 attendees from across the globe to discuss pressing issues affecting agriculture and to collaborate to work towards solutions.

We also enjoyed the return to many in-person **member events** and industry tradeshows – the BC Poultry Conference, BC Beef Day, the BC Dairy Conference and United Flower Growers' Diamond 60th anniversary event to name a few!

Efforts to strengthen our **cross-sector and external partnerships** continued. BCAC's President, Jennifer Woike joined a panel at the BC Chamber of Commerce AGM to share the agriculture sector's perspectives on our province's economic outlook. In the fall, Director of Policy, Paul Pryce and Past President, Stan Vander Waal participated in a panel discussion at the Grounded Innovation: Agriculture & Food Summit in Abbotsford.



Panel participants at the BC Chamber of Commerce AGM



Attending BC Beef Day in Victoria



NEW BRAND

COMING SOON:

BC FARMERS & RANCHERS

AGRICULTURE EDUCATION & AWARENESS

The objective of the Agriculture Education and Awareness program is to demonstrate to consumers within British Columbia that they can trust our agricultural system to be healthy, safe, affordable, sustainable and competitive.

Work continued throughout 2023 to transition away from the We Heart Local BC brand to the new BC Farmers & Ranchers brand, including activities such as:

Building BCAC's Agriculture Education & Awareness Committee

- The Committee helps to guide BCAC in public trustrelated activities from sector-specific stakeholders
 - including BCAC members, retail, and other food system partners.
- The first meeting was held in November where members gave input on the 2024 work plan.

Producing videos featuring member associations

- As part of our ongoing commitment to showcase the care and commitment of B.C. farmers and ranchers, BCAC collaborated with three members to develop producer videos:
 - BC Potato & Vegetable Growers' Association,
 - BC Honey Producers' Association, and
 - Horse Council BC.

Developing new BC public trust branding

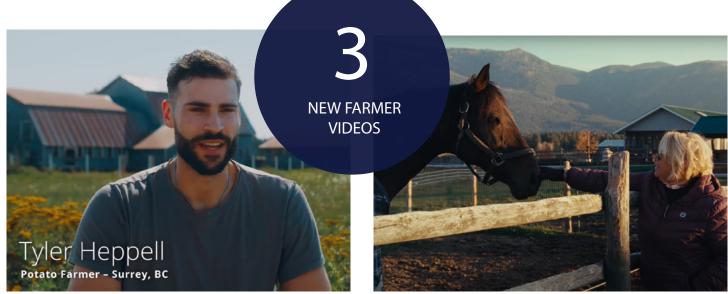
• Efforts continued to shift our branding to a look that clearly represents B.C.'s farming and ranching community.

Representing agriculture at public-facing events

• BCAC attended the BC Northern Exhibition in Prince George and the PNE in Vancouver.

Strengthening partnerships for collaboration

• BCAC continued to build relationships and explore potential partnerships with other organizations and initiatives with the aim to strengthen our messaging about B.C.'s food system. This includes varying sectors such as government, retail and academia.



New video with Tyler Heppell of Heppells Potato Corp

New video with Stride Away Thoroughbreds in Armstrong, B.C.

Western Agriculture Labour Initiative

WALI continued to focus on evolving into a customer-centric, service-oriented business. This saw us refocusing our efforts on specific activities that help fee-paying employers bring workers to B.C. now and will directly support them in years to come.

HIGHLIGHTS

Financial sustainability: Since the pandemic, WALI has made changes to become financially independent and sustainable. The implementation of a new pricing model in 2023 has worked to achieved this result. The new pricing distributes costs equitably across all employers who hire temporary foreign workers (TFWs). This provides the necessary financial resources to be hire the staff needed to respond to client needs, while investing in tools, such as the employer portal and webinars, that streamline managing TFW processes for employers.

Improved response times: WALI hired additional staff to help with processing Labour Market Impact Assessments (LMIAs) and preparing communications. With this support, the rest of the team was able to



WALI staff meeting with the Consul General of Guatemala

dedicate more time towards helping manage change requests and support complex issues. LMIA processing times were reduced, message response times improved (in the portal, emails and phone calls), and more WALI updates were sent out. Providing effective and efficient support remains a core focus.

Digital housing inspections implemented: The new housing inspection report system was launched in August. This process is improving the consistency of inspections between inspectors, has reduced staff administration time and is allowing improved information collection. Housing photographs are uploaded in real-time and can be shared with regulatory agencies as needed. Service Canada and the BC Ministry of Health have expressed support and appreciation for the improvements to this process implemented by WALI.



CANADA-MEXICO SAWP BINATIONAL MEETINGS

Mexico City, MX

WALI was specifically recognized by Service Canada and the Ministry of Labour in Mexico as a key partner for our efforts to continually improve working conditions for workers in B.C.



Increased housing deduction

Improving confidence in housing inspections and ongoing relationship building with the Consulate of Mexico and the Ministry of Labour in Mexico allowed us to successfully negotiate a 6% increase to the SAWP Mexico housing deduction. Future increases, based on the rate of inflation, are also now part of the agreement.

Building support for AgStream

WALI continued building our relationship with Working Link, a BC-registered recruiter supporting employers. WALI and Working Link will be establishing formal arrangements to collaborate and provide centralized support for employers hiring AgStream workers.

Improvements to LMIA fulfilment

Through ongoing work with the Ministry of Labour in Mexico (STPS), WALI continues improving the operational efficiency of linking workers with LMIAs. This will be critical in coming years as the number of workers coming to Canada continues growing and government support for processing applications remains unchanged.

Increased employer engagement

Outreach and information sharing continue to be popular services by WALI. We have over 1,500 subscribers to the WALI e-news with an average open rate of 61% (industry average is 21%). Participation at WALI employer webinars continues to grow with 50-100 participants per session.

7100+ SAWP worker arrivals 600+ Employers served **1,500+** WALI e-news subscribers

COMING SOON...

WALI objectives for 2024:

- Improving customer experience with the employer portal. WALI has identified several ways to improve how employers access information in the portal. The goal is to make information easily accessible. We are also working on changes that will streamline processes for staff to improve processing times.
- Supporting SAWP Jamaica. The Jamaican Liaison Service has asked WALI to provide services like those provided for Mexico in linking LMIAs with workers. We are working on system improvements that will allow us to launch the service in 2024.
- **SAWP Mexico transfers**. The Consulate of Mexico has requested assistance in supporting worker transfers. We are working with them to determine how best to cooperate.
- Support for AgStream. WALI plans to formalize and expand services provided in collaboration with Working Link.
- **SAWP 50th anniversary**. The 50th anniversary of the Canada-Mexico agreement forming the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) is in 2024. Both governments are looking at how to recognize this milestone and expand labour mobility between the two countries.



Celebrating Mexican Independence Day with workers at Village Farms

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
- Recipient of funds raised from *BC Agri-Food Industry Gala (Ag Gala)* silent auction
- Co-hosted booth at Pacific Agriculture Show
- Attended BC Agriculture in the Classroom's *Taste of BC Agriculture* fundraising event
- Contributed to a 4-H BC scholarship

APRIL TO JUNE

- Sponsored two awards in the Fraser Valley Regional Science Fair and served as a judge
- Chair attended the Canadian Federation of Agriculture's Annual General Meeting
- Welcomed Amrit Dhaliwal as a new committee member

JULY TO SEPTEMBER

- Welcomed Tyler Heppell as a new committee member
- Attended the Mainland Young Milk Producer's Evening with MLAs and MPs
- Attended the Canadian Federation of Agriculture Summer Board Meeting and Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Ministers Roundtable
- Hosted a committee development workshop on government advocacy
- Chair attended the North American European Union Agriculture Conference
- Shared booth space with BCAC at the Abbotsford Agrifair
- Shared booth space with BCAC at the Pacific National Exhibition (PNE)

OCTOBER TO DECEMBER

- Actively participated in BCAC's Ag Day in Victoria
- Hosted signature *Farm Fest* event in person, featuring Premier Eby and Minister Alexis, panels on labour challenges and farm business, and two farm tours in Chilliwack
- Hosted two webinars focused on the Agricultural Land Reserve and communicating with consumers (*Speak Up! training*)

2 NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

\$6,400+

RAISED AT BCAC'S AG GALA SILENT AUCTION





BC Young Farmers Farm Fest Event in November



Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) AGM



Tyler H. representing BCYF at FPT Roundtable



Pacific Agriculture Show



Committee Development Workshop on Advocacy and Government Relations



BC Agri-Food Industry Gala (Ag Gala)

2023 BCYF COMMITTEE

Rebecca Senicar CHAIR

Russell Reitsema VICE CHAIR

- Corne Quik TREASURER
- Amrit Dhaliwal MEMBER
- Tyler Heppell MEMBER

Jacintha Kulchar MEMBER

Jeffery Spitters MEMBER

Campbell Woike MEMBER

Jennifer Woike BCAC DIRECTOR, EX-OFFICIO

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BC Farmer Identity Card Program

BCAC's efforts to improve the Farmer ID Card renewal rate are paying off. We saw an increase of almost 10% in renewals over 2022. This has been a specific focus in recent years as it safeguards the program's short to medium-term stability.

There continues to be a strong perceived value of the BC Farmer ID Card program – this is supported by an 8% increase in the number of 3-year accounts compared to 2022.

Marketing efforts included a large focus on events and tradeshows including both member and external events across the province. We also introduced promo codes as a tool to offer discounts to applicants to encourage and track conversions related to specific promotions.

The partnerships that make up the BC Farmer ID Card affinity program are continually evaluated to ensure we are bringing maximum added value to BC producers through their card purchase. Savings at Mark's is a constant leader and continues to be the most used and recognized by cardholders. We anticipate several new offers to launch in 2024 based off relationships developed in 2023.

LOOKING AHEAD

In 2024, gaining a better understanding of the commodities and demographics of non-member cardholders is a key goal. This will give us more insight into the perceived value of the program from this large segment of accounts.

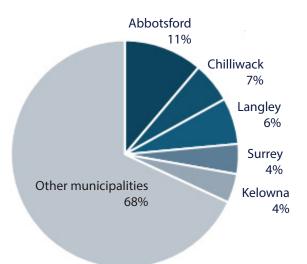
We will also be working to implement more automation and use of digital marketing to maximize program marketing dollars. By better understanding our current users, marketing and advertisement efforts will be more accurate, less expensive, and ultimately, increase acquisition rates.

USE PROMO CODE: **MEMBER24** FOR \$20 OFF YOUR NEXT CARD!

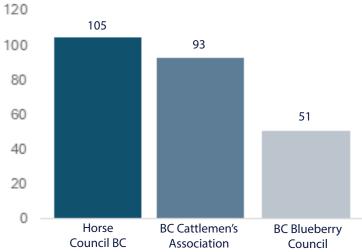




TOP 5 CITIES WITH THE MOST ACCOUNTS IN 2023



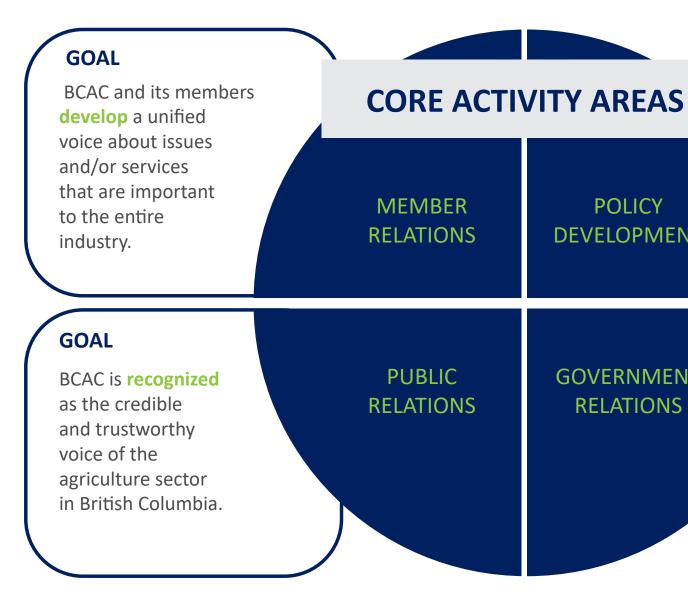
TOP FARMER ID CARD MEMBERS



Strategic Plan At-a-Glance



OUR VISION BC Agriculture Council is the lead industry advocate for



OUR MISSION To grow a strong, sustainable and competitive agricul

2022-2025

or key sector-wide priorities in British Columbia.



Education and Awareness

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.

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

IT

GOAL

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

ture sector through building industry consensus and advancing public policy.

Our Members

BC Blueberry Council	BC Honey Producers' Association	
BC Broiler Hatching Egg Producers' Association	BC Landscape & Nursery Association	
	BC Pork Producers' Association	
BC Cattlemen's Association	BC Potato & Vegetable Growers' Association	
BC Cherry Association	BC Poultry Association	
BC Chicken Growers' Association	BC Strawberry Growers Association	
BC Cranberry Growers' Association	BC Turkey Association	
BC Dairy Association	BC Wine Grape Council	
BC Egg Producers' Association	Fraser Valley Pea and Bush Beans	
BC Fruit Growers' Association	Growers' Association	
BC Grain Producers' Association	Horse Council British Columbia	
BC Grapegrowers' Association	Organic BC	
BC Greenhouse Growers' Association	Peace Region Forage Seed Association	
BC Haskap Association	Raspberry Industry Development Council	
BC HazeInut Growers Association	United Flower Growers	

2023 Board of Directors

Jennifer Woike - President *Poultry*

Len Smit - Vice-President Landscape & Nursery

Ray VanMarrewyk - Treasurer Greenhouse Vegetables

Niklaus Forstbauer - Director at Large *Organics* Lynda Atkinson - Director Equine

Henry Bremer - Director Dairy

Jennifer Critcher - Director *Grain*

David Mutz - Director Coastal Horticulture Peter Simonsen - Director Interior Horticulture

Brian Thomas - Director Beef Cattle & Pork

Alex Vander Eyk - Director *Floriculture*

Rebecca Senicar - BCYF Ex-Officio (dairy farmer)



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