



BC's AGRI-FOOD

Update



Honourable Pat Bell
Minister of Agriculture and Lands

Featuring News From the Agriculture Sector of B.C.'s Ministry of Agriculture and Lands

APRIL 2006

FROM THE DESK OF PAT BELL

Signs of spring are finally here and there is a lot of activity in the agri-food sector.

In early April, I announced that government was providing support for meat processors to assist with the transition to the new Meat Inspection Regulations. In addition to an extension to the implementation date, we are providing \$5 million in funding to help industry upgrade or build facilities, and the Ministry of Health will continue to cover the cost of inspection fees. As well, retroactive funding will be provided for plants that have already upgraded to provincial licensing standards. This assistance will help small plants meet the requirements of the new regulations and will contribute significantly to our goal of increasing B.C.'s slaughter capacity.

We are also working with the B.C. cattle industry to encourage implementation of cattle age verification by April 2007. A common theme across many areas of

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Domenic Ramponi took Minister Bell on a tour of his family's orchard on Mar. 3, 2006. The Minister was at the farm to announce a \$75,000 grant to help the fruit growers prepare a strategic plan for the future. The Ramponi family are sixth generation farmers who have been farming in Kelowna since 1893.

Progress in B.C.'s tree fruit industry

On March 3, 2006, Minister Bell presented a cheque for \$75,000 to the B.C. Fruit Growers' Association to help the tree fruit industry develop a long-term strategic plan.

The grant is part of government's strategy to support the tree fruit industry in B.C. At the association's AGM in January, Bell committed to helping the industry prepare a long-term strategy for moving forward. The funding aligns with the ministry's goal of enhancing the flow of knowledge and will enable the association to work with a consultant to begin creating a strategic plan to guide the industry over the next several years. The goal is to help the association develop their plan to be competitive both in B.C. and in the global marketplace.

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my responsibility is enhancing the flow of knowledge in agriculture. We are encouraging B.C. farmers and ranchers to record and enter animal birth dates for animals being born now. Full participation by the B.C. cattle industry will support long-term industry sustainability and increase the industry's ability to remain competitive in world markets.

On March 19 and 20, I attended a meeting of federal, provincial and territorial agriculture ministers where we discussed important issues in the agriculture sector. We will continue to collaborate in developing a solid policy foundation to ensure a competitive agriculture industry.

Finally, during the first two weeks in May every farm in Canada will receive a Census of Agriculture questionnaire. On May 16, farmers across the country will help create an up-to-date picture of agriculture in Canada by completing and returning their census questionnaire. On May 16, 2006, tell *your* story by counting yourself in as part of Canada's farm community!

Pat Bell

Minister of Agriculture and Lands

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Ministry of
Agriculture and Lands

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About 1,200 growers, of which 400 to 500 are large commercial growers, are involved in the B.C. tree fruit industry. These growers farm about 15,000 acres of apples, pears, cherries, peaches, nectarines, apricots and plums. The tree fruit industry is estimated to generate \$130 million annually. Orchards are estimated to generate 5,000 direct and 2,500 related jobs.

The B.C. Fruit Growers' Association provides excellent representation for growers and works hard to make all levels of government aware of industry issues. This funding will enable the B.C. tree fruit industry to develop a comprehensive strategy that identifies and builds on the strengths of the industry.

B.C. Wine Authority Established

The new British Columbia Wine Authority, an arm's length body from government that will administer the provincial wine quality assessment certification program, has now been established under the Society Act and is moving quickly to develop the program's infrastructure. The Province created the B.C. Wine Authority to protect designated wine quality terms such as British Columbia Vintners Quality Alliance (BC VQA) and provincial geographical indications from inappropriate use and to enhance the quality reputation of our wines. The program is expected to help wine makers move into new international markets and to strengthen current export markets, especially those for Ice wine.

The wine industry in B.C. is one of our great success stories. It is emerging as a world-class industry, and the quality of B.C. wine is becoming recognized throughout the world. B.C. wineries contribute greatly to the local economy and to the tourism industry in rural communities.



Minister Bell tries his hand at pruning vines at the Cedar Creek Estate Winery in the Okanagan.