



# 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

DECEMBER 2006

## FROM THE DESK OF PAT BELL

It's hard to believe the holiday season is here already. Holidays in December, more than any other, are often focused on food. This is a perfect opportunity to support local farmers and producers by buying B.C. turkey, fruit, vegetables, wine and anything else you desire as you celebrate with friends and family.

We all know that the food products we buy from our local farmers and farmer's markets taste great, but I'm sure many people will be surprised to learn just how much of an impact these markets have on B.C.'s economy. A study has shown that B.C.'s farmer's markets contribute \$118.5 million annually to the provincial economy. That's an amazing number, and it reinforces the connection British Columbians have with our farming community.

In mid-November, I unveiled the plans for a new \$14.5-million, high security, level-three containment lab that will allow the Province to respond faster and more efficiently to animal disease incidents.

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Minister Bell attaches the new Containment Level 3 lab to a model of the existing Abbotsford Agriculture Centre. The \$14.5-million lab is expected to be ready for operation by late 2007.

## Support Local Tree Growers This Christmas

Some of the best Christmas trees – a holiday tradition for many B.C. families – are grown right here in B.C. The Southwest B.C. Christmas Tree Association has developed voluntary standards for their members this year to increase the competitiveness of the B.C. industry.

The standards include three categories: No. 1, No. 2, and culls. Better quality trees must be at least medium density, with the main stem not visible in most places. A No. 1 tree has no more than two minor defects on three of its faces and no more than one noticeable defect on the remaining face. Trees in the No. 2 category are also high quality but may have additional minor defects. All others are considered culls. The B.C. Christmas tree industry contributes more than ten million dollars to the provincial economy each year. Look for a "B.C. Christmas tree" tag when you buy your tree this year - it's one more way to support our growers by buying B.C. for the holidays.

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The Containment Level 3 (CL3) lab will be an addition to the existing Animal Health Centre in Abbotsford, and will allow staff to test samples for highly infectious viruses and bacteria in a safe, secure location while preventing escape of agents back into the environment. The facility will be completed within one year of start of construction and will be ready for operation by late 2007.

Last month we also implemented a new, one-of-a-kind pilot program to help shellfish growers retrieve lost equipment and reduce the amount of debris that washes ashore. The shellfish industry is an important economic driver in coastal B.C. and we are constantly working with industry to ensure economic gain is not coming at the expense of environmental sustainability.

Overall, 2006 has been a busy and successful year, and 2007 looks just as promising. All the best to you and your families this Christmas and into the new year.

### Pat Bell

Minister of Agriculture and Lands

To respond to this newsletter, or for more information, please e-mail: [AL.MINISTER@GOV.BC.CA](mailto:AL.MINISTER@GOV.BC.CA)



Ministry of  
Agriculture and Lands

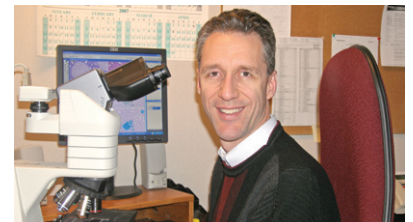
## First Nations in Agriculture

The Ministry of Agriculture and Lands is supporting the New Relationship with First Nations through a great resource for First Nations in agriculture. The ministry has two agrologists working directly with First Nations throughout B.C. Brian Harper, P. Ag., is a First Nations Agrologist who brings a wealth of experience to his work with First Nations. He provides advice and leadership to those people involved in farming and ranching and those developing land for agriculture. Jammi Kumar, P. Ag., is a First Nations Development Agrologist who applies his background in economic development and planning to his work with First Nations bands and councils. Jammi has helped many First Nations identify development opportunities in agriculture.

To support this emerging component of the agriculture sector, there is funding available through the Aboriginal Agriculture Initiative (AAI) to support projects for increased awareness and involvement in agriculture, to develop under-utilized land, and to increase participation of Aboriginal youth and women in agriculture. For more information, please contact Brian Harper in Vernon at 250 260-3009 or Jammi Kumar in Kelowna at 250 861-7200.

## Gary Marty: Fish pathologist and healthy fish advocate

Gary Marty has been known to convert dinner guests to farmed-fish eaters by describing his role in government programs ensuring fish are healthy and fish farms leave only a small footprint on the environment. As the fish pathologist for the Animal Health Centre in Abbotsford, he certainly knows what he is talking about.



Gary Marty with two tools a fish pathologist can't live without – his computer and his microscope.

Gary's main area of expertise is diagnostic histopathology (the study of disease in cells and tissues) and, among the 106 board-certified veterinary pathologists in Canada, he is the only one working full time as a diagnostic fish pathologist. His work includes histopathology of fish tissues collected as part of the ministry's fish farm Auditing and Surveillance Program; diagnostic pathology for clinical case submissions from fish farms, public aquariums, and pet fish owners; and collaboration in research projects on wild and farmed fish.

Gary is also no stranger to the outdoors. He cycles to work year round, and enjoys running or walking the hills of his Abbotsford neighbourhood. He has also taken many canoe trips with his father in the bush of northern Manitoba over the past 22 years.