



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

JULY 2006

FROM THE DESK OF PAT BELL

Touring farms can be fun any time of year, but summer is a great time to visit a farm to buy fresh B.C. fruits, vegetables and flowers, take tours, navigate a corn maze or simply to sample B.C. food. On June 7, I visited a dairy farm in Abbotsford to announce a new program that will help people find agri-tourism destinations in B.C. Agri-tourism is not only a great way to spend a summer day but also helps to raise the public's awareness of our agriculture industry, its products and the people behind it. Over 60 farms have already been approved for signs, so look for these over the summer.

I also recently had an enjoyable visit to a beekeeping operation to highlight the importance of the apiary industry in B.C. Our 2,100 beekeepers produce over 4.4 million pounds of honey each year, worth approximately \$7 million. Bees are used to pollinate many crops as

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Minister of Agriculture and Lands Pat Bell lifts a bee-covered comb from a hive at Honeyview Farm in Rosedale.

Farm leads industry with creative products and growing methods

Greenhouse growers have long been known for producing crisp cucumbers and juicy tomatoes, but some greenhouses in B.C. have started growing interesting new products. Glenwood Valley Farms in Langley has grown long English cucumbers for over 20 years, and is now generating some new products that you may have seen on the shelves at your local grocery store or farmers' market.

A popular new product is baby seedless cucumbers, which are smaller and sweeter than conventional cucumbers. Production of these cucumbers has increased over the last couple of years, but Glenwood Valley owner Tom Reinhart now finds that the demand exceeds what they can supply – an enviable position for any farmer.

Glenwood Valley also grows bell peppers, and has recently added sweet baby bells to their list of products. These mini peppers are about one-fifth the size of regular peppers and much sweeter. The packages of red, orange and yellow mini peppers make an excellent, healthy and colourful snack.

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well as produce honey. Studies have shown that honeybee pollination in B.C. is responsible for more than \$160 million per year in agricultural production. My visit to this farm was certainly educational and a lot of fun as well.

Speaking of education, high school students starting post-secondary studies in agriculture or forestry could be eligible for a \$1,500 scholarship from Monsanto Canada. Applications must be post-marked no later than July 14, 2006 and more information is available at www.monsanto.ca.

Until next month,

Pat Bell

Minister of Agriculture and Lands

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Ministry of
Agriculture and Lands

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People with slightly braver taste buds may want to try Glenwood Valley's "Lil' Hotties." These are chili peppers that come in red, yellow, orange and even lime green, and are hot enough to add some zest to your cooking without being overpowering.

All of these products are grown pesticide-free in the Glenwood Valley greenhouses, which cover 10 hectares and employ 85 people. The farm uses grow lights - high intensity lights that produce beautiful product year round. These innovative products and growing methods can be critical to the long-term success of a farm, particularly now that land for agriculture is more costly than in the past. As Reinhart notes, growers have to be proactive in searching for new products and growing techniques to be a leader in the industry. Glenwood Valley Farms has been doing just that since the late 80s, and it appears to be paying off.



Glenwood Valley Farms grows innovative products like these sweet baby bells and chili peppers known as "lil' hotties."



New ministry information sessions support cattle industry

In May and June, the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands hosted information sessions on cattle age verification in six locations around the province. The sessions provided information to cattle producers about the benefits of age verification and the process for entering data on the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA) system.

Age verification is an important step to support continued access for B.C. cattle to markets that specify maximum ages for Canadian cattle and beef. The ministry continues to work with the beef and dairy industries to encourage implementation of cattle age verification by April 2007. Full participation by the B.C. cattle industry will support long-term industry sustainability and the industry's ability to remain competitive in world markets.

Additional age verification information sessions for beef and dairy producers are planned for later this summer and more information on specific dates and locations will be available soon. Summer Extension Assistants are also available at Ministry of Agriculture and Lands district offices to help producers record cattle age information on the CCIA system.