



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

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FROM THE DESK OF PAT BELL

The recent federal budget highlighted the importance of the agriculture industry on a national level. The federal government has committed to providing an additional \$2 billion over two years to the farming sector. The industry will benefit from a \$1.5 billion investment this year which includes \$500 million for farm support. \$1 billion will help farmers during the transition to more effective programming for farm income stabilization and disaster relief. This support is incredibly important as farmers are facing financial challenges that must be collectively addressed in ways that will contribute to the long term profitability of the sector.

In other news, I was pleased to welcome ten students to our Summer Extension Assistant program last month. I had the chance to meet these students in Prince George following their orientation, and their enthusiasm for the work they

Continued on pg. 2, see FROM THE DESK OF PAT BELL



Minister of Agriculture and Lands Pat Bell (back centre) with 10 post-secondary students hired for four-month postings to regional agriculture offices. The students are, back row, from left: Jacqueline Dennett, Cameron Quesnel, Daichi Shinozaki, Dustin Griffin and Clinton Quesnel. Front row, from left: Sharla Ziegeman, Mathew Masi, Adrienne Montgomery, Kimberley Will and Tara Dempster.

Summer Extension Assistants Support Agriculture Sector

The Ministry of Agriculture and Lands has provided funding for a Summer Extension Assistant Program that will put ten post-secondary students in direct contact with farmers, 4-H Clubs and other agriculture stakeholders. The program's aim is to ensure that those involved in the agriculture sector have the most up-to-date information on the industry and the programs and assistance available through the ministry.

The students, most of whom are enrolled in agriculture-related courses, will be posted through August in offices in Fort St. John, Dawson Creek, Prince George, Smithers, Williams Lake/100 Mile House, Kamloops, Vernon and Cranbrook.

They will be involved in a variety of work, depending on regional needs. Possible assignments include working with farmers on animal health surveillance, invasive plant management, food safety, environmental farm planning or water management.

This exciting program is mutually beneficial for the industry, who can tap into this valuable resource, and the students, who get direct experience in their area of study. Their work with fairs and 4-H Clubs will also help raise public awareness of the farming community.

Continued from pg. 1, FROM THE DESK OF PAT BELL

will be doing over the summer was obvious. I have no doubt that having these students working with the ministry will be beneficial for everyone involved.

As usual, this summer is going to be a busy one for me, and I am looking forward to touring the province to see agriculture in action. There are many innovative things going on in the industry, and I'm looking forward to seeing more of them firsthand.

I have had the pleasure of attending meetings with several industry associations recently and will meet with several more over the coming weeks. These are great opportunities for me to talk to people and I am always open to hearing from the farming community.

I want the agriculture industry to continue to grow and prosper and am confident it will if government and industry work together.

Pat Bell

Minister of Agriculture and Lands

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



Ministry of
Agriculture and Lands



Plastic tunnels provide many advantages for berry growers in B.C.

Innovation In B.C.'s Berry Industry

B.C. berry growers have begun to make use of an innovative growing method using plastic tunnels. This method has been in use in Europe for a number of years and, while the tunnels are expensive, the result provides growers with several advantages. Plastic tunnels protect the crop against rain, which can delay the harvest as berries cannot be picked when wet. Rain can also reduce berry quality and increase problems with mould and disease. Growing berries under cover means crops can be picked any time and results in significantly improved yields and fruit quality. Use of plastic tunnels also allows B.C. growers to benefit from an extended season – both earlier and later – which can have a positive effect on income.

Several B.C. growers are experimenting with this technology to grow blueberries, strawberries and raspberries. One example is a research project now underway at a farm in Langley. The project is being run in co-operation with the Fraser Valley Strawberry Growers Association and the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, with funding from the Strawberry Industry Development Trust Fund and the Industrial Research Assistance Program. The objective of the project is to assess and demonstrate the potential of producing everbearing strawberries under tunnels in order to extend the season through October and November.