



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

For many of us, the start of October means that summer is really over. We're well into the feeling of fall and all it brings – crisp leaves, a chill in the air, comforting food and Thanksgiving.

Good health is certainly something to be thankful for. On Sept. 28, the Province launched the Conversation on Health, which will be the largest and most comprehensive public discussion on the health system ever undertaken in B.C. Agriculture links to health in many ways, including good food for healthy eating and active lifestyles. I encourage everyone in the agri-food industry to participate in this conversation through the website at www.gov.bc.ca, by email to ConversationonHealth@Victoria1.gov.bc.ca, by calling 1-866-884-2055 or through your MLA.

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Minister Bell (second from left) joins representatives from the BC Wine Institute in a toast to B.C.'s growing food and wine sector. From left are: Trish Morelli, project consultant; Peggy Athans, Executive Director, BC Wine Institute; Scott Fraser, Board Chair, BC Wine Institute; David Scholefield, Wine Educator, BC Wine Institute.

Government Supports New Wine and Culinary Centre

The Province is providing a \$50,000 grant to the BC Wine Institute (BCWI) to develop a business plan for a new B.C. Wine and Culinary Centre. The centre, which BCWI plans to establish in Vancouver, will be designed to replicate the wine country experience and will establish a focal point for residents and visitors to B.C. interested in a wine and culinary experience. The preliminary plan calls for the development of a creative space featuring a retail boutique offering local B.C. wines and specialty food items, a tasting bar, an education and theatre room, a demonstration kitchen to be utilized by local chefs and a travel kiosk where guests can book wine and culinary travel packages.

Island Chefs Supporting Local Farmers

A group of chefs on Vancouver Island is helping spread the word about local farmers and the food they produce. The Island Chef's Collaborative (ICC) is a non-profit organization made up of chefs whose mission is to promote local food through an "ethical approach to food and a commitment to locally-grown, high-quality ingredients."

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This month, B.C. will hold seminars to help cattle and dairy farmers deal with a potential feed shortage in the North and Peace regions. While this situation is challenging, these sessions will provide farmers with expert advice on how to best deal with this shortage. The seminars will include information on how to best utilize current supplies, where to look for additional feed and how to develop alternate feeding strategies.

Finally, I want to wish all of you a happy Thanksgiving. I encourage everyone to think about - and give thanks for - B.C.'s hard-working farmers as you dig into your Thanksgiving meals, which will hopefully be made using delicious B.C. foods.

Until next month,

Pat Bell

Minister of Agriculture and Lands

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Ministry of
Agriculture and Lands

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ICC focuses on consumer education and has made education their theme for this year. Member restaurants use their menus to acknowledge local farms as ingredient suppliers and train staff to answer questions about the locally-produced food offered. Chefs and restaurant staff are able to reinforce the economic and environmental benefits of supporting local agriculture simply by taking the time to talk to people.

The group also works directly with local farmers. Member chefs visit the farms that supply their restaurants to talk about the types and amounts of particular products they will need. ICC also raises money each year that goes directly to local farms to support their infrastructure.

Through participation in a wide variety of events, festivals and fundraisers throughout the year, ICC chefs are spreading the message about the importance of supporting local agriculture.

Leah Sheffield: Supporting Northern Agriculture

Leah Sheffield is a Resource Stewardship Agrologist in Smithers, B.C. Her passion for her job is evident from the northern region's adopted motto: "supporting, nurturing and defending northern agriculture."

Leah began her public service career in the early 1990s with the Ministry of Forests. She then spent five years with Agriculture and Lands on the lands side before moving to agriculture, where she has worked for the past three years.

As the sole representative for agriculture in the northwest corner of B.C., Leah has an elaborate list of responsibilities, including identifying strange insects that arrive in jars (usually left on her desk when she's not there), helping cattlemen sort out environmental issues and planning seminars and trade shows among much else.

Leah's favourite part of her job is interacting with people in the industry. She works with local agricultural groups, acting as advisor and mediator in resolving potential environmental issues as well as providing ongoing learning opportunities to the community.

Leah is married with three daughters. The Sheffields share their home with a multitude of farm animals and are developing their ten-acre farm into an equestrian centre where Leah, an equestrian at heart, hopes to train and teach horse jumping.



Leah with Cher, a thoroughbred mare, at a cross-country jumping clinic in Chase, B.C.