



Council Capsule

Volume 2 - Number 5 - Month May

Canada BC Environmental Farm Plan Program Continues in 2008/09:

In November 2007, Ministers agreed to seek the authorities from their governments to continue existing programs under the current Agriculture Policy Framework for up to one additional year, starting April 1, 2008, while *Growing Forward* programs are being developed and implemented. The National Farm Stewardship program is included in these continuity agreements.

The Canada BC Environmental Farm Plan Program will continue in the 2008-2009 year. To do an Environmental Farm Plan for your farm; contact one of the Delivery Groups listed below.

EFP Delivery Groups	Primary Contact	Telephone
BC Cattlemen's Association	Peter Spencer	250-764-0376
BC Fruit Growers Association	Don Magnusson	250-762-5226
Floriculture and Greenhouse Vegetable	Hedy Dyck	604-591-5349
BC Milk Producers' Association	Dave Melnychuk	604-534-7772
BC Potato and Vegetable Growers Association	Jyl Singh	604-807-5659
BC Poultry Association	Allen James	604-795-7656
Certified Organic Associations of BC	Paddy Doherty	250-747-3287
Island Farmer's Alliance	Peter Versteeg	250-743-2243

Beneficial Management Practice (BMP) applications will be accepted as of April 3, 2008 at the Abbotsford ARDCORP office by fax, email or mail. Funding for the program is limited for the 2008-2009 year and as a result a maximum of two BMP applications will be accepted per farm. Applications for funding will be accepted until all funding is allocated. Projects are to be completed by December 31, 2008 and invoices must be received at the Abbotsford ARDCORP office by fax, email or mail by January 31, 2009. For more information, see the EFP website at:

http://www.bcac.bc.ca/EFP_pages/about_us/index.html

Canada British Columbia Water Supply Expansion Program Update:

The National Water Supply Expansion Program (NWSEP) will also continue in 2008/2009. The Government of Canada will provide technical and financial assistance for projects in BC. The province of BC will provide in-kind support through technical and administrative assistance. For farmers and ranchers, eligible projects include all Tier One on-farm water infrastructure projects: individual on-farm water projects such as wells, dugouts, water storage systems, and supply pipelines. For these types of projects, Canada will contribute up to one-third of the eligible costs, to a maximum of \$5,000 per project. All projects must be completed prior to March 31, 2009. The final application deadline is May 1, June 1 and September 1, 2008. The CBCWSEP ends on March 31, 2009. To download an application form, for more detailed information on Tier 1 projects, and for information on Tier 2 and Tier 3 projects, please go to the BCAC website: http://www.bcac.bc.ca/agriculture_enviro_programs.htm, and follow the links to the National Water Supply Expansion Program link to the Agriculture Canada Website.

Agriculture's Climate Action Initiative:

Emily MacNair has been selected as the coordinator for the two year climate action initiative for agriculture. Many of you know Emily from her work at the Investment Agriculture Foundation over the past four years.

Her work as a Program Manager has provided her with a broad-based knowledge of agriculture and built bridges with many of our member associations and producers. She has managed hundreds of funding applications and assisted many sectors to initiate projects that are of strategic importance. She is also familiar with many of the government agencies that will be partners in the climate action initiative. Emily will be working out of the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands office in Victoria, but will be travelling around the province to meet with associations and attend meetings.

Emily will be working with the Climate Action Initiative Committee (CAIC) to respond to and address climate change related issues and opportunities that will assist industry to meet Provincial climate action targets. The Initiative will be the center of climate action for agriculture. Over the course of two years, an agricultural climate action plan will be developed with input from across agriculture; the plan will be tailored to BC's unique conditions and opportunities. Emily can be reached at (250) 356-0119 or by e-mail at caic@iafbc.ca.

BC Young Farmers' First Event:

About 80 young farmers attended the BCYF's first event that was held in Abbotsford on April 8th. The evening was organized with a focus on the social side of BCYF's mandate rather than the educational aspect. Dick Klein Geltink and Ravi Cheema provided humorous overviews of working with their parents or children. Bob Brandsma spoke about the many changes that he's seen working with agriculture over his career – yet we're still farming the same land. Reg Ens provided some valuable business tips for young farmers. Two representatives attended from the Canadian Young Farmers Forum spoke about the national organization. Close to half of the audience went home with door prizes. One young farmer went home with the BBQ that was featured at the Pacific Ag Show and a second went home with the Farm Credit Canada computer planning program. A big thanks to everyone that attended and to the agri-businesses that donated door prizes.

The BCYF committee is working on the next event that is planned for early September. The event will feature an outdoor BBQ, a farm tour, and a key note speaker on an agricultural topic. The tour will either be a local winery or a greenhouse vegetable operation.

Look for updates on future events at the BCYF website: www.bcyf.ca

BC BioEnergy Network:

The newly formed BC BioEnergy Network has received a cheque from the provincial government for \$25 million. The BCAC is one of three organizations that will be responsible to implement the Network and set up the process to move forward on meeting the objectives of the Network. Currently, the oversight Board is working on governance matters that will provide the foundation for funding decisions. Steve Thomson represents agriculture until a producer representative is appointed. There is expected to be some important opportunities for agriculture from this initiative.

BC Investment Agriculture Foundation's AGM:

IAF held their AGM on April 15th in Abbotsford. Prior to the start of the AGM, IAF held a two hour session on labour and human resources initiatives in agriculture. Danielle Vinette spoke on the Canadian Agricultural Human Resources Council, Christine Koch spoke about provincial labour initiatives, and Mike Wallis spoke on the Western Agriculture Labour Initiative (WALI) and the temporary foreign worker program. During the business section of the AGM, the Director's Report, Financial Report, and 2008 Corporate Plan was presented and approved. Three Directors retired in 2008, Bert Miles, Jens Larsen, and Garnet Berge. The new Directors for the IAF Board are: Irmi Critchler representing grain, forage and oilseeds, Erinie Willis representing cattle, and Marcel Cloutier representing emerging sectors.

BC Clean Air Forum 2008:

BCAC's Agriculture Environment Initiatives were featured at the March 5th Penticton Forum that included a special focus on agriculture and air quality. Forum participants heard how agricultural producers are working with government and community organizations to take practical steps that reduce emissions. The Regional District Okanagan Similkameen (RDOS), the Sustainable Poultry Farming Group (SPFG), the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands (BCMAL) and the BC Fruit Growers Association (BCFGA), presented information on their innovative ways of addressing air quality concerns.

Janice Johnson spoke about RDOS' Agricultural Environment Stewardship Initiative projects dealing with wood and plastic wastes, using modified burning practices and recycling, respectively. SPFG's Kevin Chipperfield and David Poon from BCMAL, presented findings from the Agricultural Environment Partnership Initiative's project -- research on the use of vegetation buffers and an electrostatic space charge system to trap and lower dust emissions and odours from poultry barns. The Environmental Farm Planning program was introduced to the group by the BCFGAs Don Magnusson, with examples of how fruit and grape growers are using best management practices to address spray drift, and storage of pesticides and fuel. The speakers fielded many questions about their projects and many comments commended the speakers on their initiatives. The presentations are available on the Fraser Basin Council's website:

http://www.fraserbasin.bc.ca/programs/clean_air_2008.html

New Website: Integration of Renewable Energy on Farms:

A new website dedicated to the application of renewable energy for the agricultural community has been jointly launched by Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) and The Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA). The new Integration of Renewable Energy on Farms (IREF) website provides information, resources, and a discussion forum. The site was designed to help Canadian farmers make their operations more sustainable both environmentally and economically. The ultimate goal is to provide information and tools to assist farmers in developing and implementing their own renewable energy projects. The IREF website can be visited at:

www.farm-energy.ca

FARSHA to Provide Assistance for Employers with Spanish Speaking Workers:

With the ever growing number of Spanish speaking farm workers from Mexico, FARSHA recently hired Gregorio (Greg) Lopez who is fluent in Spanish, to assist employers and their guest workers in all areas of occupational health and safety. This appointment is a 4 month full-time term position. Greg will perform health and safety related activities such as, new employee orientation, assist with training and education and help develop and distribute literature, resource materials and information packages in Spanish. To arrange new employee orientation and training, please call the FARSHA office at 604-881-6078 or toll free at 1-877-533-1789.

2008 AgriStability Interim Applications Are Now Available:

Applications are available by calling the toll-free line at 1-866-367-8506 or on the AgriStability website at:

www.agr.gc.ca/agristability

Science Opportunities Fund:

Genome BC recently announced a new funding program entitled Science Opportunities Fund or SOF. The program is expected to support modest endeavours typically in the range of \$25,000 to \$200,000, up to a maximum of \$400,000. It provides one-time funding for projects that cannot be funded in whole or in part through traditional mechanisms. Requests for funding by BC researchers may include: proof-of-concept for cutting edge research applicable to the genome sciences that may be outside the mainstream of thinking; training; as well as new areas of integrated social science and humanities research applied to the genome sciences which require seed funding for workshops and increased social awareness. The deadline for applications is Friday, July 11, 2008, 5:00PM. For more information, please con-

tact Suzanne Gill, Director, New Programs, at 604-637-3088 or sgill@genomebc.ca. Full information on the program and an application form can be found at:

www.genomebc.ca/genomics_programs/funding-programs.htm.

Changes to the Canadian Immigration System:

The federal government recently announced two immigration policy changes that may benefit agriculture. The changes may make it easier to fill positions that require a higher degree of management and technical skills; the changes are not geared towards seasonal workers.

The *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* has been changed to result in a more responsive immigration system where waiting times are reduced so that families are reunited faster and skilled workers arrive sooner. The immigration Minister will have the authority to issue instructions to immigration officers related to the processing of applications, including in relation to the jobs available in Canada, so people with those skills and experience can be brought to Canada more quickly. Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) would have greater flexibility in processing new applications, especially from skilled workers.

The second change is around work permits for international students who want to stay in Canada after completing their university studies. New rules will make it easier for recent graduates to obtain work permits and to remain in Canada for up to three years. The workers can apply to stay permanently in Canada after one year of work experience in a managerial, professional or technical position.

New Provincial Immigration Tool:

The province recently launched its first comprehensive online tool for immigration to BC. The website targets prospective newcomers and new immigrants to British Columbia, providing information to help guide every aspect of the immigration journey – from the first decision to select British Columbia, to all the information required to help newcomers settle and integrate into their new communities. The website features a wide cross-section of program areas that may impact an immigration choice – from the availability of settlement and social programs, to housing costs in each region, and information on our transportation corridors. The site can be found at:

www.welcomeBC.ca

Livestock Transportation Requirements in Canada:

The CFIA has published a new brochure that provides an overview of the regulations around transporting livestock and poultry. The brochure can be downloaded from the following site:

<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/anima/heasan/transport/broche.pdf>

Spring 2008 Farmland Values Report:

Farm Credit Canada recently released its national study on land prices in Canada. Below is the section on farmland values in BC.

British Columbia has seen a significant 14.5 per cent land value increase between July and December 2007. This compares with a moderate increase of 3.7 per cent during the first six months of 2007. Much of this increase can be attributed to a very strong demand for land suitable for grape production in the Southern Interior, including the Creston and Okanagan areas of B.C.

Demand for land in the B.C. Peace region remains stable with slightly higher prices, thanks to a strong economy and optimism resulting from a rise in grain prices. Land sales in the north and central interior area are stable in spite of the challenges faced by the cattle industry. The full impact of the downturn in the forestry sector was somewhat delayed due to substantial harvest of cheap beetle wood. This wood is quickly being harvested before it becomes unusable.

The Southern Interior and Okanagan areas continue to see increasing land values. Much of this increase can be attributed to a very strong demand for land suitable for grape production. There is a noticed increase in demand for small wineries as well as wineries consolidating to achieve economies of scale and secure their own production base.

The Lower Mainland of B.C. is experiencing continued high demand and increasing prices partly due to the ongoing expansion of the blueberry industry. Continued consolidation in agriculture and the strong local economy both contribute to the demand level as well. In addition, out-of-province investors are purchasing more real estate which is driving up the price of land in the Southern Interior and the Lower Mainland areas.

Land values on Vancouver Island have been relatively stable during the last six months of 2007 as limited farmland sales activity has taken place. Agriculture on the Island continues to be dominated by small to mid-size farms which continue to operate on a status quo basis.

Low and relatively stable interest rates and credit availability has also positively impacted the overall demand for British Columbia real estate.

The complete 2008 spring Farmland Values Report is available at:

<http://www.fcc-fac.ca/en/Products/Property/FLV/Spring2008/index.asp#bc>

ESA Tip of the Month: Industry Commitment under the MOU:

Under the MOU, BCAC and industry associations agreed to conduct educational sessions for agriculture. This is a reminder that if your association is having an AGM or grower/field day, please consider having a short *Employment Standards Act* session as part of the event. BCAC staff can deliver a concise presentation on the key ESA points that specifically target agricultural and information on agriculture's commitments under the MOU. If you don't have an upcoming industry event; BCAC has two ESA factsheets that can be sent out to members. The factsheets, available with either a livestock or horticulture focus, summarize the unique aspects of agriculture and the ESA. If your association would like a more in-depth presentation on the ESA; the Employment Standards Branch can provide longer sessions free of charge for ten or more people.

Meetings/Presentations:

- Presentation to Investment Agriculture Foundation's AGM – Christine
- Tour of the Lynden anaerobic digester facility for MP Mark Warawa – Garnet, Dick Klein Geltink, Christine.