
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2020AFF0062-001983
Dec. 1, 2020

Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries

COVID-19 recovery programs to support farmers

VICTORIA – Two new programs, and increased support for a third one, will help improve food security and build a stronger economy following COVID-19.

“During COVID-19, we have seen the incredible importance of having a strong local food economy to put food on the table and keep people working,” said Lana Popham, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries. “B.C.’s farmers and food producers have stepped up to the challenges of COVID-19, and we are working with them to put us on the path to a strong recovery with investments in new and improved programs that will feed people and strengthen our economy.”

As part of making it easier to get a farm up and running, the new Small Farm Business Acceleration Pilot Program is offering funding up to \$800,000 for business plan coaching for small and new farmers, as well as cost-shared funding for commercial farm infrastructure and equipment, to increase productivity and sales.

For this pilot, a small farm is defined as one with a total annual gross revenue of less than \$60,000 in the last two years. The program funding will cover 50% to 75% of total approved project costs to a maximum of \$17,500 for individual farm businesses.

“My team and I are excited to see the Province invest in small and new farms,” said Sara Dent, co-founder and executive director, Young Agrarians. “Providing support to a new generation of people brave enough to start farming in today’s land market requires innovative programs that address the needs of new farmers, and I hope this investment will continue to grow in the coming years. Small-scale farms are the bedrock of local food economies and key to strengthening short supply chains. They are essential to healthy and resilient food systems that can weather the changes we are experiencing today.”

To help growers increase the acreage planted with raspberry varieties that are ideal for B.C.’s climate and suitable for the fresh and individually quick-frozen raspberry markets, the B.C. government is investing \$90,000 in a new Raspberry Replant Program. The program is cost shared with growers, which will result in a minimum of \$162,000 of investments in the sector.

“On behalf of B.C. raspberries, I would like to thank Minister Popham and ministry staff for allocating funds toward a raspberry replant program in British Columbia,” said James Bergen, chair, Raspberry Industry Development Council. “It is my hope this program will aid in revitalizing the B.C. raspberry industry.”

Additionally, the Province is boosting the Beneficial Management Practices Program, which supports farmers in taking steps to better protect the air, land and water, and aligns with government’s CleanBC climate goals.

The Province is investing an additional \$800,000 into this program, both this year and next.

Projects funded by this plan may:

- improve air quality and reduce emissions;
- improve land and water quality, and enhance or protect biodiversity;
- improve nutrient management (fertilizer use);
- achieve more efficient agricultural waste management; and
- result in more efficient irrigation water management.

To be eligible, farms must have a complete environmental farm plan, and approved projects will address topics identified in these plans.

“We were grateful to see the Province’s Stronger BC plan, which supports farm resiliency while putting food in grocery stores and dinners on tables,” said Stan Vander Waal, president, BC Agriculture Council. “Investment in the agriculture sector right now is critical. Not only is it a core component of the province’s economy, it will play a major role in helping the province weather and recover from the pandemic-induced economic downturn, particularly in rural communities.”

Funding for these and other agricultural programs was included in B.C.’s Stronger BC economic recovery plan.

Quick Facts:

- Most B.C. farms, about 98%, are family owned and operated.
- In 2019, B.C. had a record \$3.9 billion in sales in farm cash receipts.
- 2019 set a record for B.C. exports with \$4.7 billion in sales of agricultural, seafood and food and beverage products to 152 different international markets.
- British Columbia is the largest raspberry-producing province in Canada with over 607 hectares (1,500 acres) of raspberries grown by around 90 commercial growers and leads the nation in sales of raspberries.
- The B.C. Agricultural Research & Development Corporation delivers both the Environmental Farm Plan and the Beneficial Management Practices programs.

Learn More:

Applications for the Small Farm Business Acceleration Pilot Program will be accepted between Dec. 7 and Dec. 15, 2020. Further details are available here:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/programs/small-business-acceleration-pilot-program>

Application intake for the Raspberry Replant Program will be open Dec. 1, 2020 to Jan. 11, 2021, to support the spring 2021 raspberry planting season. Further details here:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/programs/raspberry-replant-program>

To access and apply for funding for the Beneficial Management Practices Program, visit:

<http://ardcorp.ca/programs/environmental-farm-plan/efp-program-resources/>

For more information about the Environmental Farm Program, visit:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/programs/environmental-farm-plan>

B.C.'s Economic Recovery Plan is available online: <https://strongerbc.gov.bc.ca/>

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