
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Agriculture and Food

B.C. strengthens food supply for people in rural communities

VICTORIA – A new fund will help improve the availability and affordability of food in B.C.’s remote, rural and Indigenous communities by strengthening the food supply chain and streamlining logistics, storage and transportation options.

“British Columbians rely on strong, local food systems and it is imperative that we look at ways to help strengthen our supply chains with new and innovative ideas,” said Pam Alexis, Minister of Agriculture and Food. “By supporting this sector, we are helping increase food security and affordability, and strengthening local economies throughout B.C.”

The Food Affordability and Innovation Fund is providing as much as \$15.5 million for the new B.C. Food Storage, Distribution and Retail Program, helping recipients improve regional distribution networks and shared storage capacity; including:

- reducing costs with improvements to warehouse and storage facilities at key locations along the supply chain;
- introducing shared transportation networks that will pool shipments;
- increasing food supply to rural and remote B.C. communities with new partnerships and collaborating on direct sourcing or bulk purchasing of ingredients;
- reducing food waste, strengthening supply chains and increasing food availability; and
- implementing technologies that will improve the efficiency of the food supply chain, such as modern inventory-management technology.

By improving transportation and food storage, this investment will help increase food security and support B.C.’s rural, independent grocery-store operators who have been dealing with higher costs and slimmer margins to expand their capacity and serve their communities.

The Food Affordability and Innovation Fund is also providing an additional \$2 million for the new B.C. Small Food Processor Scale-Up Program. This stream will support B.C. food processors and abattoirs to help them grow their operations and increase productivity, business opportunities and competitiveness.

To help inform the design of the programs, BC Food and Beverage was provided with as much as \$1 million for conducting focus groups and providing advice on affordability and innovation relating to the supply chain and food systems in B.C.

The funding for both programs will be delivered by the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC.

Quotes:

Arif Ahmed, owner, SuperValu in Gibsons and Agassiz –

“Having all experienced some type of disruption to our provincial food systems, in part due to climate change and with the pandemic, this investment is vitally important for independent retailers in British Columbia. Having a new fund that can help equip stores with generators, modern refrigeration and updated systems, especially in the rural and more remote areas of this province, means that we can serve our communities in a reliable, safe way.”

Lyndsay Scott, CEO and founder, Kindred Cultures –

“As a small beverage processor in B.C., supply chain disruptions and price increases since the pandemic have created expensive and complicated problems in our business. I’m happy to see the launch of the Food Affordability and Innovation Fund to support a stable and affordable supply chain for local businesses.”

James Donaldson, CEO, BC Food and Beverage –

“A strong and sustainable food system is essential for our industry to continue to feed British Columbians and consumers around the world. BC Food and Beverage is pleased to see this type of investment that will serve to improve access and bring more consistency to our food system.”

Jack DeWit, chair, Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC –

“Food processors are an integral part of the B.C. agriculture and food sector. We are pleased to be delivering the Food Affordability and Innovation Fund and its related programs to this important part of the sector.”

Quick Facts:

- The recipients for the B.C. Food Storage, Distribution and Retail Program will include B.C.-based suppliers, producers, processors, co-packers, distributors, wholesalers, independent retailers, industry associations, commercial food hubs and Indigenous organizations working within B.C.’s food system.
- The recipients of the B.C. Small Food Processor Scale-Up Program will specifically be B.C. food processors and abattoirs making less than \$500,000 per year to help scale up their operations and increase productivity, business opportunities and competitiveness.
- The Food Affordability and Innovation Fund is part of the \$200-million food security announcement made in March 2023.

Learn More:

For information about the Food Affordability and Innovation Fund, visit: www.iafbc.ca/food-affordability-and-innovation-fund/

Application packages and criteria for the two programs are available online:

B.C. Food Storage, Distribution and Retail Program: www.iafbc.ca/food-storage-distribution-and-retail-program/

B.C. Small Food Processing Scale-Up Program: www.iafbc.ca/small-food-processors-scale-up-program/

B.C. government news release about the \$200-million March 2023 food-security announcement: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2023AF0016-000277>

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