



Investment
Agriculture
Foundation
of British Columbia



gt3
GROWING TOMORROW

FALL 2010 VOLUME 10

The latest from the Investment Agriculture Foundation of British Columbia

Emerging Sectors

Agriculture's Innovators

We're hearing about them more often in conversations about the diversification of British Columbia's agricultural economy. Emerging sectors. That wide array of endeavors embracing everything from agro-forestry to small-scale food processing.

They're an increasingly important part of the industry. In recognition of their significance, the Investment Agriculture Foundation (IAF) has identified emerging sectors as a new strategic priority for support and assistance.

IAF's Emerging Sectors Initiative represents a refinement of the Agri-Food Futures Fund (AFFF), the trust established in 2001 with federal-provincial funding to aid the growth and development of a selection of emerging agricultural and food-processing sectors. More than \$20 million has been committed under 15 separate funding initiatives, including agri-tourism, natural health products and functional foods, First Nations and small lot agriculture, among others.

Following a recent independent program review, IAF decided to strengthen the focus of the remaining funding, and the new initiative was born. A specialist is now dedicated to the initiative to provide direct support; including consulting with industry and funders on the development of a plan that will advance emerging sectors and assist in their efforts to be competitive.

Among the challenges in creating an effective strategy is establishing a workable definition of what constitutes an emerging sector. Traditionally, an emerging sector has been defined as one that has annual sales of less than \$5 million with potential for growth. But according to IAF executive director, Peter Donkers, it's much more helpful to think in terms of qualifying criteria than it is to identify specific sectors.

"Our consultations with industry suggest that emerging sectors share a number of common characteristics," says Donkers. "They tend to be led by innovators – risk takers who identify new business opportunities and take steps to capture those opportunities. They

are often undercapitalized and unorganized, but they have the drive to make things happen. Sometimes they are poised at the intersection of two quite different sectors, such as agriculture and tourism, or they may be responding to shifting consumer values."

As for the kinds of projects that will be considered, Paula Brown, who represents emerging sectors on the IAF board, says the most important consideration is that they contribute to building the entire sector. "We'll look at funding projects that contribute to the successful growth of an emerging sector, such as accelerating the pace of innovation across the sector, facilitating the adoption of new technology, or developing new market opportunities."

Donkers is quick to point out that sectors originally funded through the trust are still eligible for funding, whether through the AFFF or the various other programs delivered by IAF. "We remain committed to providing all sectors of the agriculture supply chain with access to funding to help industry adapt, diversify and grow."

As for next steps regarding emerging sectors, IAF has completed its consultations with previous AFFF clients, funding partners, and representatives of industry groups. A strategic plan has been developed and IAF is now ready to accept applications for emerging sector projects. Interested parties are invited to contact emerging sectors specialist, Miriam Esquitin, for more information. Call (604) 430-2778 or e-mail mesquitin@iafbc.ca

The Emerging Sector Initiative (ESI) will provide funding to eligible projects through the federal-provincial Agri-Food Futures Fund and other programs delivered by IAF.



INSIDE PAGES

- 2 Growing Agriculture in the Comox Valley
- 3 Environmental Solutions for Agriculture / Creating Safer Workplaces / Growing Value Chains
- 4 Beekeepers Solving Pest Problems

Growing Agriculture in the Comox Valley



[far left] Barbara and Bryne Odegard and team at Ironwood Farms in Fanny Bay. Certified organic since 1997, they produce dozens of varieties of vegetables, tree fruits, herbs, flowers and bedding plants.

Agriculture area planning can really put your community on the map. Today, the Comox Valley is internationally recognized for its agriculture and food...and it all started with their agriculture area plan completed in 2002 with funding from IAF.

Covering the municipalities of Comox, Courtenay and Cumberland, plus three surrounding electoral areas, the agricultural plan helped local governments recognize agriculture as a realistic, vibrant opportunity for the region. John Watson, executive director of the Comox Valley Economic Development Society, praises local stakeholders in the agriculture industry.

"We could not have done this successfully without the passion of a number of individuals, allowing us to pull together, in a heartbeat, a team of people for a government review, a planning process or a media familiarization tour."



The future, permanent Comox Valley Farmers' Market as envisioned.

During 2003 and 2004, the society took elements of their agriculture plan for overall economic planning, carefully evaluating industries that could be attracted to the area. Agriculture had everything they wanted: economic viability, relatively low infrastructure costs and most importantly, a huge capacity to grow and attract new investments.

"We completed a number of projects since our first plan and the Investment Agriculture Foundation has been with us all along the way, taking us forward to our current pilot project," says Watson, referring to the recently

completed Comox Valley agricultural development pilot. "One of the most valuable initiatives of this campaign was hosting the Canadian Farm Writers conference in September 2008."

To leverage the attention the region would receive from this conference, the society offered agri-tourism workshops to farmers covering topics such as marketing their product and hosting a media familiarization ("fam") tour. They also worked closely with conference organizers to prepare top-notch media packages. As a result, Comox Valley gained national media coverage and was named one of Canada's top eight agriculture destinations.

"If we had to pay for the media coverage we garnered from the conference in advertising, it would have been cost prohibitive," adds Watson.

This media experience helped prepare Comox Valley for future events. When 33 National Olympic Committee teams trained at Mount Washington, an exciting opportunity emerged to showcase local food to international team chefs, while welcoming the

accompanying press with tours and media kits.

In total, the society participated in more than a dozen Olympic-related events, highlighting Comox Valley agriculture to potential investors, tourists, consumers and residents.

Comox Valley is becoming known worldwide as an agriculture and culinary destination displaying dynamic and delicious diversity. Cheese, milk, wines, berries, vegetables, shellfish, specialty meats and crops produced on farms, large and small, organic and conventional – all combining to create a successful industry.

The society's winning formula comes thanks to enterprises such as Beaufort Vineyard and Estate Winery. In only its third year of production, Beaufort received 14 national and international awards in 2010. Owners Susan and Jeff Vandermolten are pleased with their decision to settle in the Comox Valley.

Jeff notes the importance of industry collaboration. "We have a great relationship with other farmers, local and provincial government and other industry partners since we first considered moving here. This support, combined with that from local consumers, restaurants and other businesses, has really helped us to achieve what we have in such a short period of time."

What is the next big project for the Comox Valley? Watson beams when he talks about plans for a new facility, offering local food products year round. "Our residents and ag community are committed to build a permanent farmers' market in the region. With support at the political level, we have begun the capital campaign to fund this initiative."

Looking back, Watson notes the improved attitude toward agriculture since he started with the society in 1998. "It has been a 180 degree turnaround; Comox Valley now has a community that is very proud to support and showcase its agriculture."

Funding: \$10,000 through the former federal Canadian Adaptation and Rural Development fund (area plan). (B0016.03)

Up to \$105,000 through the Agri-Food Futures Fund, Islands Agri-Food Initiative (development activities). (IAF002-10461)

Environmental Solutions for agriculture

Are you familiar with AESB? Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's (AAFC) Agri-Environment Services Branch (AESB) was created last year.

This new national branch brings together broad expertise in land, water, climate variability, geomatics and policy development. It combines the expertise and experience of AAFC's Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA), the National Land and Water Information Service, and the Agri-Environmental Policy Bureau. AESB integrates technical, professional and practical expertise and works with various partners to help the Canadian agriculture sector improve its environmental performance, enhance on-farm profitability and compete better globally.

The innovative and creative spirit of the former PFRA is the foundation of the new AESB. For over 75 years, PFRA offered valuable technical and financial assistance in a range of areas including soil and water conservation, water supply development, irrigation, agroforestry, economic planning and rural development, and environmental analysis.

AESB is building on the PFRA legacy in British Columbia by working closely with AAFC's Research Branch and other partners to achieve results for producers and the agricultural sector by:

- Exploring / researching new technology and strategies to help manage the agricultural landscape;
- Investigating and demonstrating agri-environmental practices;
- Reviewing tools and management practices from around the world and adapting them to Canadian conditions;
- Providing information and decision-support tools for clients and partners; and
- Supporting agri-environmental risk assessment and planning.

AESB has offices located in Kamloops and Dawson Creek. To learn more about AESB, call (250) 554-5200 or visit: www.agr.gc.ca/aesb

Growing Value Chains

This spring, IAF launched the BC Value Chain Initiative to assist groups interested in value chain development. A group of Cariboo ranchers and meat processors were first to try out this new service.

They were shopping for funding for a consultant to help get the ball rolling on a grass-fed beef value chain. Instead, IAF value chain coordinator, Bill Henderson, met with them on two separate occasions. The first meeting involved a value chain workshop tailored to the group.

"It was great. Thanks to IAF, we made a lot of progress in one day and took a huge step to creating our value chain business," says rancher and group chair, David Zirnhelt.

During the session, it became apparent they needed an action plan, and so a second session was added. Although still in the early stages of formation with more work ahead, the group's vision is now clear.

"We need a premium to make it work," adds Zirnhelt, who's pleased the savings on consulting fees can be used for other activities down the road, like market research. "We're just starting out, so our resources are pretty scarce."

To learn more about the BC Value Chain Initiative and upcoming value chain workshops, visit: www.iafbc.ca/valuechains and www.iafbc.ca/workshops

Funding for the BC Value Chain Initiative is provided through the former federal-provincial Safety Nets framework. (B0025)



Creating Safer Workplaces



The injury rate in the BC food processing industry is 50 per cent higher than that of the manufacturing sector as a whole and almost three times that of all BC industries combined.

A 2008 survey conducted by the Food Industry Occupational Safety Association or FIOSA (formerly the BC Food Processors' Health & Safety Council) showed strong industry support for an industry networking initiative to collaboratively address the high injury rate. In response to this, FIOSA created a pilot program called SYNERGY (SafetY Network EneRGY) with funding from IAF. It offers resources to food processing businesses wishing to establish health and safety management systems that build competitive advantages into their operations and keep workers safe.

"SYNERGY is a unique program in BC. It helps companies build health and safety systems as efficiently as possible, reduce injuries and establish a safety culture in the workplace," says Lisa McGuire, executive director of FIOSA. "No other safety program offers the supported learning and networking opportunities of SYNERGY."

The program takes two years to complete and offers training workshops, advisory services, facilitated group networking and an online discussion forum. Participants work in small groups to gain greater insight into health and safety challenges, resulting in better individual solutions for their companies.

"Networking is the most cost-effective way to learn about and develop health and safety management systems," says FIOSA's director of services and resources, Heinrich Beukes. "Working in small groups and one-on-one with safety consultants means participants don't need to reinvent the wheel."

SYNERGY can also help participants work towards their WorkSafe BC Certificate of Recognition and reduced WorkSafe premiums.

After the great success of the pilot program, FIOSA launched a new SYNERGY program cycle in June that currently includes 10 participating companies from across BC.

"Over the long-term, our goal is to reduce the injury rate in the food processing sector," says McGuire. "We'd like to see as many companies as possible enrolled in the program to collectively learn and implement ways to make workplaces safer."

For more information visit: www.bcfphsc.com/synergy.php

Funding: \$80,000 through the Agri-Food Futures Fund, Food and Beverage Processing Initiative. (IAF014-A125)

UPCOMING APPLICATION DEADLINES

OCTOBER 29, 2010
DECEMBER 17, 2010
JANUARY 21, 2011

IAF DIRECTORS

Stuart Wilson
Chair, Lower Mainland

Debbie Aarts
Fraser Valley

John Berry
Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada

Paula Brown
Lower Mainland

Chris Byra
Fraser Valley

Don Claridge
Okanagan

Irmi Critcher
Vice Chair, Peace

Gay Hahn
Secretary, Lower Mainland

Bar Hayre
Fraser Valley

Derek Janzen
Fraser Valley

Jens Larsen
Central Interior

Peter Levelton
Treasurer, Lower Mainland

Harvey Sasaki
BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands

Jim Tingle
Central Interior

Ernie Willis
Similkameen

IAF OFFICE

Peter Donkers
Executive Director

T 250.356.1662

E info@iafbc.ca

www.iafbc.ca

Beekeepers Solving Pest Problems

Many crops – including all soft fruits, many types of vegetables and livestock feed – are dependent on bees for pollination. Honey production is a viable sector in its own right, as a food source and a health product.

However, BC apiculturists have increasing cause for concern about the impacts of pests, such as the varroa mite, that can wreak significant damage from lost honey production, pollination and honeybee livestock. Unfortunately, chemical controls are expensive, time-consuming, potentially hazardous and many pests are growing resistant to them.

The BC Bee Breeders' Association undertook a project to test honeybee queens, with the intent of finding lines that show resistance to varroa and perform well economically. Select populations from BC and across Canada known to be resistant were observed over three years for their overwintering capabilities and spring build-up. Once these traits were identified, queens were distributed to interested

beekeepers and breeders, resulting in new colonies throughout the province that show good productivity and increased natural resistance to varroa.

According to lead researcher, Brenda Jager, bee breeders would like to continue distributing resistant stock throughout BC and follow up with newly established colonies to monitor performance. Says Jager, "Not only will this help improve spring pollination for producers here, but it will also benefit everyone who buys bees from BC."

While the testing program identified resistant bees, it did not answer the question of why certain bees are resistant. The APIS project (Apis mellifera: Proteomics for Innate Resistance) brings together scientists from the University of British Columbia, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the US Department of Agriculture to identify molecular markers that predict resistance. Results from this collaborative three-year research project – supported by IAF and adaptation councils from Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia – will be used to develop tools that can be used by queen breeders in their breeding programs.

In addition to this research, the BC Honey Producers' Association organized a series of workshops this spring to educate beekeepers on current strategies for integrated pest management and provide a forum for discussing effective and environmentally sustainable management practices.

Funding: \$77,010 (\$59,810 + \$17,200) through the Agri-Food Futures Fund, Beekeeping Industry Development Initiative. (AF011-S0001, AF011-S0011) \$96,682 through Advancing Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food program.* (W0125)

People of the Land

Eleven hundred acres of underutilized scrub near Chase may soon be green and fertile if the Adams Lake Indian Band is successful in securing federal funding for a new irrigation system. But before the band could submit a full proposal, they needed to prepare an agricultural development plan, and approached IAF to fund that part of the work. In addition to mapping the area, identifying potential crops and preparing plans to get the land ready, the band set up an agricultural division to farm land owned by band members, as well as band-owned land. They've started small and intend to build on it. This year, 100 acres were plowed in preparation for crops next spring and the community is already reaping the benefits. The band hopes to know by the fall if they get the funding to extend the pipeline.

Funding: \$23,800 through the Agri-Food Futures Fund, Aboriginal Agriculture Initiative. (AF007-071)

Putting "Community" in Agriculture

The FARM Community Council wanted to connect the thousands of small farm operators scattered around the province and spark discussion. So they came to IAF for funding to pilot an online discussion forum that gives farmers and ranchers a place to discuss agricultural issues and share information. The BC Farm Knowledge Network was launched early this spring and membership is growing, thanks in large part to efforts by Dennis Lapierre to get the word out at regional farmers' meetings. Lapierre represents community agriculture on the BC Agriculture Council and masterminded the forum. He says the first steps are getting people to join and participate in the discussions. "For the forum to be effective, we first have to reach a critical mass," he says. "Right now, everybody seems to be waiting for someone else to go first." It's free to join and open to BC farmers. Check it out at: forums.bcac.bc.ca

Funding: up to \$5,350 through the former federal-provincial Safety Nets framework. (SP145)

Pass the Salt

IAF and adaptation councils across Canada joined forces to enable the Quebec Food Processors' Association to produce the Salt Reduction Guide for the Food Industry. According to Small Scale Food Processor Association executive director, Candice Appleby, it's a valuable resource for food processors looking to develop sodium-reduced products. Health Canada warns that a high sodium diet poses a serious health risk and that Canadians consume twice the sodium they should.

"The guide provides an objective, easy to read and balanced presentation of the challenges and issues surrounding the salt issue. In particular, there is an excellent reference for potential salt substitutes," adds Dave Eto, president of the BC Food Processors' Association. The guide – designed with small and mid-sized companies in mind – is available online at: www.foodtechcanada.ca (click on Resources)

Funding: \$9,299 through Advancing Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food program.* (W0124)

* An Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Program. Pour la version française veuillez consulter www.iafbc.ca/français.htm



gt3
GROWING TOMORROW

Editor Sandra Tretick

Contributing Writers

Cheryl Davie
Andrea McGavin
Sandra Tretick
Bohdan Zajcew

Print Metropolitan Fine Printers

Publication Number 40675600

For the latest IAF news, program updates and upcoming events, subscribe to our e-newsletter **Growing Today** at: www.iafbc.ca/subscriptions.htm

Funding provided by

Canada

BRITISH COLUMBIA
The Best Place on Earth