

Growing Tomorrow

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National Science and Innovation Strategy Focuses on Partnerships

A new national strategy for agricultural science and innovation will maximize research opportunities and breakthroughs by building partnerships between government, the private sector, academia and industry.

"The time is ripe for a new science and innovation strategy that will ultimately increase farmer income," said Minister for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Chuck Strahl in presenting the strategy in Montreal on May 30.

With concentration on both short and long-term results, the new agricultural science and innovation strategy is expected to pursue opportunities in such areas as the prevention

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Floating cranberries collected during wet harvest. Photo: BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands

Cranberry Industry Thinking Strategically

A few years ago the North American cranberry industry was facing low market prices that resulted from rapid expansion and overproduction. The commodity sector weathered this period by reducing production and focusing on promotion and product development. Today the BC industry is tackling new growth and fresh challenges with confidence, thanks in part to an industry strategic plan and implementation funding provided by IAF.

The BC Cranberry Marketing Commission and the BC Cranberry Growers Association developed the

strategic plan, completed this year, to establish priorities and identify research and education objectives.

The total cost of developing a strategic plan came to just under \$15,000, of which IAF contributed 50 per cent. After the plan was approved, IAF made a further funding allocation of \$500,000 for implementation of the plan over five years. Funding is accessible following submission and approval of annual work plans. Some projects approved in the 2006 work plan aim to develop: effective responses to pests that interfere with growth, pollination and fruit;

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Cranberry Industry Thinking Strategically *continued*

and ways to combat weeds that compete for nutrients, sunlight and space. The commission plans to identify integrated pest management programs for cranberries.

“The strategic plan has given us the focus to tackle industry challenges and the implementation funding has given us the means to fulfill our goals,” said commission chair John Savage. “The commission feels confident that the BC cranberry industry will grow substantially in the coming years.”

The BC cranberry industry includes 87 growers producing 85 million pounds of fruit annually. At 2005 crop prices, BC cranberry farm gate sales are valued at almost \$34 million and production is expected to surpass 100 million pounds in the next few years. While most of the production has traditionally been used in the juice market, the commission is increasingly licensing sellers of specialty and frozen products such as wine, and fresh and frozen fruit.

BC cranberry production constitutes about 12 per cent of North American production. The provincial industry works closely with US producers on common horticultural production problems and on opening new foreign markets. Over 95 per cent of BC's cranberry production is exported to the US for processing.

Email the commission for a copy of the strategic plan: cranberries@telus.net ■

Investment Agriculture Foundation Expands Small Projects Program



Joyce Dick helps another participant get her hands dirty in the seed-saving workshop at Sorrento Gathering 2005 – a conference that addressed community health and the food security movement. *Photo: Abra Bryne*

After a successful first year pilot, the IAF Small Projects Program is being continued with an increase in funding. The funding cap of this popular program has been doubled to \$10,000.

“The program has been able to provide quick decisions on small project applications, generally within two weeks,” said IAF director Bob McCoubrey. “Now that the program has been expanded we are hoping to receive more applications from smaller and emerging industry groups.”

The program is ideally suited to address the needs of smaller industry organizations undertaking lower cost projects. Due to reduced paperwork at both the application and report stages of the project, it has been successful in offering efficient access to funding.

Projects funded during the first year of the program include demonstration projects, applied research, speaker costs, marketing plans and educational projects. Funding grants ranged from \$500 to \$5,000; the ratio of industry funding has varied.

The BC Food Systems Network received \$3,000 for a food security conference held in September 2005.

“I was very appreciative that the Foundation was able to fund this type of project,” said Cathleen Kneen, executive director of the BC Food Systems Network. “The application was very straightforward and the program manager helped shepherd us through the process.”

The BC Grain Producers Association received \$2,220 to conduct a small-scale study about the viability of producing field pea varieties for short growing season areas such as the Peace River region. The study, which is currently taking place, will determine whether a five year breeding project is feasible.

“For us, the small project avenue has fit in well with our research as we needed to do some preliminary work before investing anyone's time and efforts in a larger project,” said Clair Langlois, research manager of the BC Grain Producers Association.

Unlike the regular funding application stream, which has set application deadlines during the year, small projects applications can be submitted at any time. Contact IAF program managers (contact info on back page) or visit the website for more information: www.iafbc.ca/how.to.apply.htm ■

Research Technician Dustin Morton checks peas for early flowering in a study that addresses short growing seasons. The study is currently taking place in Fort St. John, the BC Grain Producers Association most northern research site. *Photo: Clair Langlois*



When the Agri-Food Futures Fund was established in 2001, the sustainable development of BC's mushroom industry was identified as one of 14 priority areas, and the Cultivated Mushroom Industry Initiative was born.

The BC Mushroom Marketing Commission administered the initiative at first, but its regulatory powers expired in 2004. An advisory committee has since been established to manage the remaining funds dedicated to the initiative, and the Mushroom Industry Development Council, established in January 2005, has assumed the role of administrator.

A new five-year strategic plan for the initiative was finalized this year and one of the challenges identified is a lack of industry cohesiveness.

Frank Moscone, a mushroom farmer and chair of the Mushroom Industry Development Council, hopes the strategic plan will give the council and the industry

enough momentum to work together in the face of rising operating costs, a substantial increase in the mushroom supply, and the increasing value of the Canadian dollar.

The four goals outlined in the initiative's strategic plan encompass support for research, development of food quality and safety standards, increased communications, and enhanced market development and diversification.

The BC mushroom industry is comprised of *Agaricus* mushroom growers, who cultivate brown and white button and Portobello mushrooms, and specialty growers, who farm varieties such as Shitake and Oyster.

In 2004, BC mushroom industry receipts totalled \$54.5 million and comprised almost 22 per cent of the Canadian industry. Mushroom farms in BC are concentrated in the Fraser Valley and most of their product is sold fresh with the remainder going into processing. Because there are no major



BC mushroom growers produce fresh mushrooms year round in specially constructed houses with stacked beds.

processing companies in BC, mushrooms destined for canning are shipped to Oregon.

For more information, contact the initiative administrator, Sandy Gordon, at 604-850-6670, or visit the Mushroom Industry Development Council website: www.bcmushrooms.org ■

Reaching Beyond BC Borders

When the Foundation's program managers receive funding applications, they consider whether the anticipated results may benefit industry groups in another part of the country. If so, the project may be a candidate for a collaborative approach.

Like corresponding councils set up in each province and territory, IAF distributes money for the Advancing Canadian Agriculture and Agri-Food (ACAAF) program. The five-year, \$243 million national program – funded by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada – aims to advance Canada's agriculture and agri-food industry.

Many projects funded through ACAAF focus on a local, regional or provincial issue. Others have a broader scope, so IAF may work

together with more than one provincial or territorial council to provide ACAAF funding.

The ACAAF program promotes collaborative projects (termed collective outcomes) when industry groups from two or more provinces or territories share the same priorities. Aside from the obvious benefits of sharing costs and risks, collective outcome projects are valuable because they help form new alliances among groups in different parts of the country.

IAF can help identify project proposals that have broad impact, but industry groups can also consider collective outcome possibilities when preparing funding applications.

"Agriculture sectors across Canada face many similar challenges," said Bert Miles,

new IAF chair. "We encourage applicants to think strategically about projects suitable for collaboration, work with their counterparts in other regions and share the costs, risks and results." The collective outcome process does not slow down funding approvals, he added. In addition, IAF will allow a higher funding ratio on collective outcomes projects. These partnerships may be a good way to attract higher levels of industry investment.

See the article "Horse Sense Available Online" from the Spring 2006 issue of *Growing Tomorrow* for an example of a collective outcome project.

Contact our program managers (contact information on back page) if you have any questions. ■

Foreign Animal Disease Emergency Support Plan in Consultation Stage

BC is preparing for a possible outbreak of a foreign animal disease – diseases that could have devastating production and economic impacts and potential public health consequences. Because national, provincial, regional, local and individual interests would be affected by an outbreak, advance coordination is an essential precaution.

By developing a foreign animal disease emergency support (FADES) plan, five signatory agencies – the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada, the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, the BC Provincial Emergency Program, and the BC Ministry of Health – agree to work together to control outbreaks and manage related consequences in BC.

An interim version of the FADES plan was completed in April 2006 and will be finalized after consultations with stakeholders wrap up in October.

“The consultation process allows for the building and strengthening of relationships and partnerships to effectively respond to a foreign animal disease event in BC,” said Paul Littlewood, Canadian Food Inspection Agency regional coordinator for the BC coast.

An effective response will protect people from a preventable health risk, sustain the plant and animal resource base, and promote the security of Canada’s food supply. The plan addresses 14 foreign animal diseases ranging from avian influenza to foot and mouth disease.

“BC had a FADES plan developed in 1994, but when we had our first avian influenza outbreak, we realized there was room for improvement,” said Rick Van Kleeck, coordinator of IAF’s Livestock Waste Tissue Initiative. He added that during the second avian influenza outbreak, aspects of the new plan were applied and the coordinated response was much more effective.

The plan is designed to serve a number of purposes, including the following:

- **Inform others:** explain how the principal organizations intend to work together in response to foreign animal disease outbreaks;
- **Support training:** incorporate the FADES plan into training programs for those responsible for emergency response;
- **Guide emergency response:** summarize key policies to promote coordination and guide responders in appropriate action;
- **Record lessons learned:** allow important lessons from actual disease events to be captured in concise, tangible guidance.

Although prepared on behalf of the five coordinating agencies, all stakeholders should consider and adopt relevant elements of the plan in responding to a foreign animal disease outbreak in BC.

The development of the FADES plan is funded by the Livestock Waste Tissue Initiative. This \$5 million initiative is administered by IAF with financial investments from the BC government.

For information about the FADES plan consultations, contact Rick Van Kleeck at 604 556-3145 or Rick.VanKleeck@gov.bc.ca. The FADES interim plan can be viewed on the IAF website: www.iafbc.ca/livestock/index.htm ■



Photo: Walter Goerzen, PAg

National Science and Innovation Strategy Focuses on Partnerships

continued

and control of threats to Canadian food and food production; the development of new, healthy food products that improve nutrition and wellness; and the production of renewable fuel as a cleaner source of energy. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) will also continue its role of providing science support to the sector with a focus on research where no other providers exist.

The strategy builds on recent nationwide consultations with the agriculture and agri-food sector and the research community and will form the basis for the development of AAFC’s Science and Innovation Business Plan and a subsequent Research Work Plan.

The future sees AAFC’s research efforts being complementary to those of other players in the national and international research community and supporting the collective research investments of governments, universities, and the private sector. ■



Students from Godsen Elementary in Abbotsford take part in Agriculture in the Classroom's CowFolks in Kindergarten program.

Developing a strategic plan can be a daunting process for any organization, but the BC Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation is more than happy with the one it recently completed.

"I was afraid of the process, but once the plan is done it can only move your organization forward," said Lindsay Babineau, the organization's executive director. The new five year strategic plan has given Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC) new focus, she added.

AITC is a non-profit foundation dedicated to providing teachers and students with quality educational resources that highlight agriculture as an important part of the BC economy and way of life.

With financial support from IAF, AITC hired a strategic planning specialist and resolved to seek advice from its stakeholders while developing the plan. After consulting educators, the Ministry of Education, various commodity sectors and its own board, the foundation distributed the final plan.

"We brought a lot of groups together to develop a plan to bring agriculture to students," said Babineau.

The group had a strategic plan from 1998, but a current, comprehensive plan was needed to guide the board and staff. The new plan includes a revised mission statement: *working with educators to bring*

BC agriculture to our students, and identifies five priority areas: learning resources and programs; financial sustainability; visibility and programs; organizational effectiveness; and governance.

The plan is intended to help AITC in its ongoing search for financial assistance. Present and future supporters of the program will be encouraged when they see that the foundation is organized and focused on its goals, said Babineau.

"This is a great example of an organization thinking strategically, especially with regards to identifying how to secure ongoing financing," said new IAF chair Bert Miles. "Our Foundation provides one-time funding for projects like strategic plan development to help agriculture organizations become self-sustainable so they can continue their important contributions to the BC agri-food industry."

Babineau has shared the document with sister organizations because its vision can be applied across the country.

AITC is supported in kind by the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands as well as a number of industry, post secondary educational institutions and private business sponsors. IAF provided \$21,500 towards the total strategic plan project costs of \$27,000.

The strategic plan is available online: www.aitc.ca/bc ■

'Recipe for Success' Successful

The Small Scale Food Processor Association (SSFPA) recognizes there is a strong market for products processed in BC, but it also knows that small-scale food and beverage producers face financial barriers when trying to open and expand their businesses.

That's why the association designed a program to increase the business savvy of small-scale processors. Recipe for Success was launched in July 2005 to educate provincial processors through regional meetings and individual outreach.

"There is potential for products processed in BC in the high-end marketplace, but first we have to build a competitive industry from a motivated group of small processors," said Nelson Barsi, SSFPA co-chair. "The Recipe for Success program has been a successful step toward that goal."

Meetings were held in Kamloops, Salmon Arm, Summerland, Creston, Agassiz, Abbotsford and Courtenay with local partners such as the First Nations Agricultural Lending Association and regional branches of the Community Futures Development Corporation.

Individual outreach was conducted with in-person and phone interviews. During the meetings and interviews, 105 existing and potential processors received business development support, financing tips and referrals.

The \$67,500 project was funded by IAF and Coast Capital Savings Credit Union. IAF provided \$25,400 through the Food and Beverage Processing Initiative, under the Agri-Food Futures Fund. More information about the initiative is available on the IAF website: www.iafbc.ca/food.bev ■

New Directors Join IAF Board

IAF welcomes three new industry representatives to its board of directors, appointed following the annual general meeting in April 2006. IAF is pleased to introduce:



Bar Hayre, Abbotsford

Bar represents the berry, field vegetable and mushroom sectors. He chairs the BC Raspberry Industry Development Council and is a board member of the BC Raspberry Growers Association. Bar became involved in the industry through his family's berry farm and later through Fraser Valley Packers, a berry processing plant. He also serves as an account manager with Farm Credit Canada in Surrey.



Derek Janzen, Aldergrove

Derek represents the poultry and egg sector. He owns and operates a poultry farm in Aldergrove and a trucking company that transports chickens to processing facilities. Derek is chair of the BC Egg Producers Association, a member of the BC Poultry Association and a board member of Fresh Start Foods. He has also contributed his experience to IAF's Livestock Waste Tissue and Poultry Biosecurity initiatives.



Stuart Wilson, Surrey

Stuart, who represents the post farm gate sector, is a past regional director of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. He has represented Canadian agriculture on foreign missions and served on the executives of Canada/US organizations aimed at resolving regulatory issues surrounding the movement of agriculture commodities to and from BC. In this position, Stuart also served IAF's Food Quality and Safety Initiative as an ex officio.

"All three directors bring broad experience and new perspectives to the board," said Walter Goerzen, departing Foundation chair. "We look forward to their contributions to the Foundation including the important communication linkage they provide to the sectors they represent."

While welcoming the new faces to the board, IAF and its partners wish the best for the departing directors. "I'd like to thank Walter Goerzen, retiring chair of the Foundation, and departing directors Rhonda Driediger and Walter Siemens for their service," said Ray Nickel, chair of the industry members' group that makes appointments to the IAF board. "Past and current directors have shown exemplary commitment and dedication to the industry." ■

IAF News

New Executive Takes Helm

IAF's board of directors selected Bert Miles to serve as chair, Jens Larsen as vice-chair, Garnet Berge as treasurer and Gary Sandberg as secretary. Bert, representing the post farm gate sector; Jens, representing the cattle industry; and Garnet, representing the grains, oilseeds & forage sector; have been IAF directors since 2002. Gary, who represents livestock industries other than dairy and beef cattle, became an IAF director in 2003.

Contact IAF Program Managers First

If you are interested in applying for funding from IAF, contact one of our program managers so they can help you get started. Plant industries should contact Emily MacNair by phone at 250-356-0119 or by email at Emily.MacNair@gov.bc.ca. Animal industries should contact Coreen Moroziuk by phone at 778-371-7443 or by email at iafcoreen@shaw.ca ■

Application Deadlines

Applicants are encouraged to submit proposals in advance of the following deadline: **October 23, 2006**. Watch for 2007 deadlines in the fall newsletter.

IAF DIRECTORS

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