



IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Orchard Replant Program Extended into 2007 Planting Season

December 1, 2006 – Summerland, B.C. The Orchard Renovation Program has been extended into the 2007 planting season, announced Pat Bell, Minister of Agriculture and Lands; Bert Miles, chair of the Investment Agriculture Foundation of B.C.; and Joe Sardinha, president of the B.C. Fruit Growers' Association.

"I envision an economically viable and competitive tree fruit industry in B.C. and the extension of the 2006 Orchard Replant Program to the 2007 growing season is another step in achieving that," said Bell. "In addition to funding the replant program, the ministry provided the B.C. Fruit Growers' Association with \$75,000 to develop a long-term strategic plan for the industry, and I look forward to seeing what positives come out of that plan."

There is \$2.5 million in funding still available for growers to access under this assistance program, which is funded by the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and delivered by the Investment Agriculture Foundation. The Foundation's board made the decision yesterday to extend the replant program into 2007 after it received a request from the B.C. Fruit Growers' Association.

"Growers are encouraged to apply quickly if they are thinking about replanting this season," said Miles. "Applications will be processed on a first-come, first-served basis as long as there is money available in the fund."

The grant structure remains unchanged from previous years. The deadline for planting is April 30, 2007. Applications for replant funding assistance and further information about the program extension and eligibility will be available December 4, 2006 and can be accessed online at www.iafbc.ca/orchard, at local packing houses, and at Ministry of Agriculture and Lands offices.

"The program has breathed new life into B.C.'s tree fruit industry," said Sardinha. "Growers are grateful to the province and the Investment Agriculture Foundation for making the funds available into 2007 to help with some of the expenses involved in replanting tree fruits."

The Orchard Renovation Program and its predecessors have been in place since 1991. To date, 60 per cent of tree fruit acreage in B.C. has been replanted to higher density, mainly to newer varieties of apples and cherries. The denser plantings make more efficient use of three resources in short supply in the Okanagan: land, water and labour.

Apple orchard densities have increased from 200 trees to the acre to more than 2,000 in some cases. New varieties of smaller, more compact trees on dwarfing rootstocks bear fruit sooner than traditional plantings and are less labour intensive to prune and pick.

According to the B.C. Fruit Growers' Association, the new varieties have appealed to consumers and led to increased sales for local growers.

The Foundation delivers the \$22.65 million Orchard Renovation Program through an agreement with the B.C. government.

The Investment Agriculture Foundation of B.C. is a not-for-profit organization that manages and distributes federal and provincial funds in support of innovative projects to benefit the agriculture and food industries in British Columbia. Funding is available to help industry seize new opportunities and deal with emerging issues.

Contacts:

Sandra Tretick
Communications
Investment Agriculture Foundation of B.C.
250 356-1672

Liz Bicknell
Communications Director
Ministry of Agriculture and Lands
250 356-2862
250 213-3072 (cell)

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