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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Agriculture and Lands

### **B.C. AGRICULTURE PLAN GOES LOCAL FOR GLOBAL BENEFIT**

ABBOTSFORD – The B.C. Agriculture Plan outlines a visionary view for the future of the agriculture industry, focused on promoting B.C. food products, making the agriculture industry a leader in reducing climate change impacts, and reconnecting British Columbians with locally grown food, Agriculture and Lands Minister Pat Bell announced today.

“The B.C. Agriculture Plan sets a new direction for the agriculture and food industry in British Columbia, to take advantage of new and existing markets and ensure that agriculture in B.C. meets the changing needs of our environment, our health and our local economies,” said Bell. “Agriculture is everyone’s business, and we need to ensure that the people who produce our food have access to the tools, people and technology they need to remain competitive.”

The B.C. Agriculture Plan: Growing a Healthy Future for B.C. Families, referenced in the recent throne speech, has five key themes that form the foundation for 23 strategies and 68 action items for sustaining the agriculture industry:

- **Producing local food in a changing world** – Promoting B.C. agriculture and food products to support B.C. producers in supplying fresh, healthy food directly to consumers; and developing a “food miles” program to create public awareness of the distance food products have been transported, and the effect on greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Meeting environmental and climate challenges** – Shifting farm practices to turn agricultural residues like plant material, animal and organic waste into renewable energy; and investing in environmental farm planning, to encourage producers to adopt more environmentally friendly ways of handling their livestock, fertilizer, farm buildings and engine emissions.
- **Building innovative and profitable family farm businesses** – Supporting the agriculture industry in addressing B.C.’s farm labour shortage; and supporting agriculture’s diverse sectors in developing sector-specific strategic plans to work towards sustained profitability.
- **Building First Nations agriculture capacity** – Establishing a program to certify First Nations food products prior to the 2010 Olympics; and delivering a “local foods for healthy eating” program for First Nations, including community gardens.
- **Bridging the urban/agriculture divide** – Increasing funding for agriculture in the classroom programs to reconnect children with the source of their food; and reviewing zoning bylaws and farm use bylaws to ensure the regulatory structure supports the sustainable growth of farming in B.C.

To implement the strategies in the B.C. Agriculture Plan:

- The ministry intends to reallocate approximately \$5.6 million a year for three years (totalling \$16.8 million) from existing funding. Funding will target the development of a promotional campaign to brand B.C. food and agri-food products; increase the support (extension services) provided to farmers across the province; and support delivery of 4-H programs to youth, and agriculture in the classroom programs.
- To support the government's objectives in reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with food purchases, the Province will seek the necessary authority to fund the development of a \$3-million "food miles" program.
- The Province anticipates that several actions in the Agriculture Plan will be supported through strategies in other ministries, including the recently announced BC Bioenergy Strategy, which will establish \$25 million in funding for a provincial Bioenergy Network for greater investment and innovation in B.C. bioenergy projects and technologies, and establish funding to advance provincial biodiesel production with up to \$10 million over three years.
- The Province's current agreement with the federal government also enables leveraging up to \$6 million in federal funds for the provincial \$4 million expenditures to support the agriculture zone wildlife program, which helps farmers who are adversely impacted by wildlife.

Val Roddick, Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture Planning and MLA for Delta South, led the committee to develop the comprehensive plan through consultation with farmers, producers, scientists, conservationists, health professionals, government officials and the general public.

"B.C.'s agriculture producers are passionate about ensuring the industry remains sustainable and competitive for many years to come," said Roddick. "We need to re-establish the essential link between agriculture and society as a whole for the millions of people in B.C. who consume food every day but don't understand the importance of local food production. After all, we all have to eat to live!"

"The plan represents input from across our diverse agriculture industry, and its strategies support our mission to represent the interests of the people who work so hard as agricultural producers," said Dick Klein Geltink, chair of the B.C. Agriculture Council. "It will serve as a roadmap for cross-industry collaboration between the government and our council, and we very much look forward to working with the Province on implementing the plan."

"The B.C. Investment Agriculture Foundation is delighted to support the vision and direction of the B.C. Agriculture Plan," said Bert Miles, IAF chair. "We are pleased to invest in industry-led strategic initiatives and projects that enable producers, processors, agri-businesses and rural communities to adapt, diversify and grow."

A full version of the British Columbia Agriculture Plan: Growing a Healthy Future for B.C. Families can be viewed or downloaded at [www.gov.bc.ca/al/](http://www.gov.bc.ca/al/).

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