

1ST ANNUAL Islands Agriculture Show



February 3-4, 2012 Cowichan Exhibition Park Duncan, BC

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Islands Agriculture Show reflects unique aspects of region's farm sector

Two day conference and trade show runs Feb 3-4 in Cowichan

COWICHAN VALLEY – Farmers on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands have always faced a unique set of challenges and opportunities due to the region's distinct geographic separation from the rest of British Columbia. That's why organizers of the upcoming Islands' Agriculture Show (IAS) aim to address the needs of the region's farm community from a uniquely island perspective.

"Agriculture has traditionally been seen as a small economic sector on Vancouver Island," says Kathy Lachman of Economic Development Cowichan, one of the lead organizations behind the IAS. "We believe farmers here have the potential to play a pivotal role in Vancouver Island's food self sufficiency, as well as provide products to the Canadian and global marketplace, and this show will be one of the steps forward in this direction."

The first annual IAS takes place Friday, February 3 and Saturday, February 4 at the Cowichan Exhibition Park in Duncan. Co-presented by Top Shelf Feeds and Farm Credit Canada, the event features a tradeshow and a full slate of conference sessions split over two days. "The event will really showcase all that Vancouver Island has to offer by raising the profile of Islands' agriculture on the provincial and federal stage and building pride in the sector for consumers and farmers," Lachman explains.

While the tradeshow opens at 8:30 a.m. on both days, the inaugural show officially kicks off on Friday at 9 a.m. with an opening address by BC Minister of Agriculture Don McRae. As MLA for the Comox Valley, McRae is well suited to speak to the unique attributes of the Islands' agriculture sector.

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Appropriately, the conference program reflects both the scale and diversity of farm operations on the Island with a total of 16 topics falling under four general themes: farm business management, production, small farm development, and government/industry programs.

“I would like to think our program has something for both the large and small farmer, new and experienced, as well as different commodities,” notes Jill Hatfield, regional agrologist with the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and a member of the program planning committee.

The speaker program runs from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. With two concurrent sessions occurring throughout both days, producers can customize a program to suit their needs.

Complementing the conference program will be a tradeshow with more than 60 booths. Tradeshow coordinator Shari Paterson notes the response to the tradeshow has been very positive and promises an excellent mix of exhibitors.

“Every exhibitor that I have spoken with personally is very excited that we are able to bring this type of show to Vancouver Island,” Paterson says. “It will be a win-win situation for the Island farmers and the industry.”

Daily admission to the IAS is only \$5 at the door. Pre-registration cost for the conference program is \$45 per day, or \$80 for both days. Pre-registrations and full payment must be received by January 27. Parking at the Cowichan Exhibition Grounds is free.

For registration information and further details, go to [www.iashow.ca].