

# Ministry of Agriculture

## 2012/13 – 2014/15 SERVICE PLAN

February 2012



For more information on the British Columbia  
Ministry of Agriculture  
see Ministry Contact Information on Page 23 or contact:

**Ministry of Agriculture**  
PO BOX 9120  
STN PROV GOVT  
VICTORIA, B.C.  
V8W 9B4

or visit our website at  
[www.gov.bc.ca/agri/](http://www.gov.bc.ca/agri/)

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## Message from the Minister and Accountability Statement



The following pages outline the Province's supporting role in the growth of British Columbia's internationally respected agrifoods sector and the more than 61,000 British Columbians it employs. This plan also focuses on ensuring B.C. families and communities continue to have the health and economic benefits locally grown and produced foods provide.

Agrifoods is identified in *Canada Starts Here: The B.C. Jobs Plan* as a key sector the Province will provide support to in order to boost domestic, cross-border and global export opportunities. B.C. exported \$2.5 billion worth of food to more than 135 countries in 2010, which is 2.5 billion new dollars to British Columbians working in our seafood, farming and ranching communities.

The Province's efforts to help British Columbia's producers access the Chinese market are paying off. Premier Christy Clark built on record-setting 2010 sales of B.C. seafood and agrifoods products to China by leading the Province's largest ever trade mission to Asia in the fall of last year. We continue to work with the federal government and the government of China to expand market access for B.C. producers and are optimistic B.C. beef and cherries will be available to Chinese consumers this fiscal year, and that 2012, just like each of the two years before it, will set a record for exports of B.C. food to China.

The Ministry is also in the final stages of drafting an agrifoods strategy as part of the *B.C. Jobs Plan* to help producers capitalize on B.C.'s strong reputation for providing great-tasting and trusted nutrition, at home and abroad. We will expand our domestic markets so that more B.C. products are found at farmers markets and grocery stores, through a greater presence in the ever-growing web-based market place.

A big portion of our achievement to date has been our success in working with producers and the agrifoods industry and we will strive to build on that. By working together British Columbia has emerged as a trend setter in product innovation and niche market development. B.C. producers are also recognized for their leadership in providing quality animal health and welfare, product security and traceability.

B.C. Farmers and ranchers have more tools to protect their way of life as a result of the legislation and increased funding we provided to assist the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) to evolve into a more sustainable organization. The legislation strengthens the ALC by giving it greater ability to focus on preserving farmland through increased enforcement. In doing so we have provided a clear message about the importance of agriculture in British Columbia.

Our strong partnership with the federal government also continues to benefit B.C. farmers and ranchers. As the initial \$533-million Growing Forward program reaches the end of its five-year term in 2013, the Province is already negotiating with the federal government to ensure the next agreement provides B.C. producers with the support they require. We are working hard so that B.C. farmers and ranchers continue to have income stability and insurance against losses, as well access to programs that reward innovation, renewable energy, food safety and new technology, in an effort to help producers improve their competitiveness and profitability.

I continue to look forward to hearing from industry and British Columbians who are passionate about farming and have ideas to share. I thank all of you for the role you played in the development of our animal health policy, the work undertaken by the Sled Dog Task Force and the minister's bylaw standard through the public consultation and engagement process. I invite and encourage you to do the same as we continue to development of our new policies and bylaw standards to meet the evolving needs of B.C.'s incredibly diverse agrifoods industry.

The *Ministry of Agriculture 2012/13 – 2014/15 Service Plan* was prepared under my direction in accordance with the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act*. I am accountable for the basis on which the plan has been prepared.



Honourable Don McRae  
Minister of Agriculture  
February 21, 2012

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*Early Morning in Fraser Valley fields*

## Purpose of the Ministry

The Ministry of Agriculture supports B.C.'s priorities for jobs and the economy, families and open government by stabilizing and expanding agrifoods production and incomes, promoting environmental stewardship, and safeguarding animal, plant and human health. The benefits of a stable and growing agrifoods sector in B.C. include steady jobs and revenue for farm families, healthy and secure local food supply, and diversified rural communities.

The Ministry:

- Delivers programs to stabilize farm incomes against circumstances beyond farmers' control;
- Works to balance urban / agriculture interests;
- Supports a regulatory system and practices that promote environmentally sustainable systems, food safety and socially responsible production practices;
- Monitors and manages, in partnership with the Ministry of Health and the Federal government, the risk of diseases and other pests that threaten B.C.'s plant and animal production systems;
- Provides guidance and funding to the sector to increase innovation, competitiveness and profitability to meet consumer demands;
- Supports the agriculture industry's contribution to the green economy;
- Works with other ministries, federal partners and other governments, stakeholders and industry to ensure sustainable marine fisheries; and
- Supports the growth and development of the seafood sector.

The Ministry relies on inter-agency partnerships such as those with the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) and the B.C. Farm Industry Review Board (FIRB). The ALC is an administrative tribunal that oversees the Agricultural Land Reserve, a provincial land use zone that recognizes agriculture as a priority use. The ALC operates independently but is funded through the Ministry. The FIRB is a statutory appeal body with additional responsibilities for the general supervision of commodity boards and commissions in addition to administering the *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act*.

The Ministry also partners with other provincial ministries, various levels of government, First Nations, industry, government committees and non-government organizations in terms of funding, collaboration and service delivery. The mandates of these agencies connect in key areas such as climate change, innovation, resource management coordination, food safety and quality, support for local food, commitments to First Nations, animal and plant health, pest management, environmental issues and promotion of B.C. agriculture products.

Management and regulation of agriculture is a shared jurisdictional interest of both the federal and provincial government. The Ministry and the industry receive considerable financial support from federal cost-shared programs.

The legal and regulatory environment that guides the work of the Ministry includes 31 statutes which relate wholly or primarily to the Ministry and a further 73 regulations relating to the Ministry. A complete list of legislation for which the Ministry is responsible is available at: [www.leg.bc.ca/procs/allacts/agric.htm](http://www.leg.bc.ca/procs/allacts/agric.htm).

# Strategic Context

The Ministry of Agriculture works to promote an innovative, adaptive and globally competitive agrifoods sector that is valued by all British Columbians. The following section provides a summary of the external factors and trends that influence the Ministry's performance.

## **Global economic outlook**

The Economic Forecast Council estimates that British Columbia's real GDP grew by 2.2 per cent in 2011 and projects that the rate of real GDP growth will remain at 2.2 per cent in 2012, before increasing to 2.5 per cent in 2013. Risks to British Columbia's economic outlook include a return to recession in the US; the European sovereign debt crisis threatening the stability of global financial markets; slower than anticipated economic growth in Asia dampening demand for BC exports; and a weakening of the US dollar disrupting the financial markets and raising the cost of BC exports abroad.

Over the past several years, B.C.'s agriculture industry has faced significant challenges affecting overall competitiveness and profitability. A stronger Canadian dollar and the rising costs of energy and other inputs have all placed downward pressure on farm income. B.C.'s agriculture and seafood industries also compete in international markets where competitors with similar or lower cost structures enjoy greater economies of scale and create downward pressure on food commodity prices.

Despite these challenges, B.C.'s agriculture industry continues to show steady overall revenue growth. British Columbia's agrifoods sector is an important contributor to the provincial economy, generating close to \$10.5 billion in total revenues a year and providing more than 61,000 jobs.

## **Capitalizing on our reputation for safety and quality**

By 2030, Canada will be one of only a handful of countries exporting more food than it imports. That means growing opportunities for B.C. As Canada's pacific gateway, B.C. has the potential to leverage our agrifoods sector to deliver significant economic returns. B.C.'s advantage lies in its product diversification and its enviable reputation as a leader in the production of high quality and safe agrifoods products.

## **Growing focus on health and buying local**

B.C. enjoys a relatively strong domestic market, driven by the largest population among the western provinces and higher than average food expenditures per household. Awareness is growing regarding the benefits of supporting locally produced food which is leading to changes in eating habits and consumer preferences. There are now over 125 farmers markets across the province, representing an increase of over 100 per cent since 2000. Buying local not only reduces the distance food travels from farm to plate, it also supports family farms and the future of agriculture. The trend towards buying local represents a tremendous opportunity for the sector.



## **Increasing Innovation**

In the agrifoods sector, innovation is key to industry profitability and competitiveness. Innovation is also a driver for the creation of highly skilled and sustainable jobs. The diversity of the agriculture, fisheries and food sectors provides many opportunities for innovation, value added processing and marketing. The sector is increasingly responding to demand for products with desirable attributes, such as health benefits, smaller environmental footprints or ethical production methods. The development of functional foods, such as the use of enriched feeds to produce more nutritious dairy products, is just one example of the opportunities presented by innovation. Continued industry willingness to diversify into higher value products and new niche markets, supported by government actions to improve market access, are strengths of the B.C. industry.

## **Urban / Agriculture Interactions**

A large portion of B.C.'s most productive farmland is in close proximity to urban development. This can lead to tensions over odor, noise and dust, competing demands for existing water resources, and pressures from other sectors to use agricultural lands. Recognizing how these issues affect the overall viability of the agriculture sector, the Ministry supports the Agricultural Land Reserve and the work of the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) to assist farm families and enhance the sector's overall sustainability.

In November 2011, the Ministry announced a series of measures to strengthen the ALC. A priority for the ALC in the coming year will be implementing improvements in the areas of governance, information systems, compliance and enforcement. Along with increased funding, these changes will ensure the ALC continues to be a proactive organization dedicated to preserving farmland and expanding opportunities for producers.

## **Resource Management Coordination**

This Ministry is working collaboratively with the ministries of Energy and Mines; Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation; Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations; Environment; and Jobs, Tourism and Innovation to promote integrated and timely delivery of services to clients in all regions across British Columbia. This collaboration enhances the competitiveness of natural resource enterprises and reinforces sustainable environmental management, which promotes the creation of family supporting jobs. Collaboration and alignment of government resources advance economic development and community resiliency. Improving the efficiency of service delivery will also help address the budget realities and demographic challenges facing the Province.

Through coordinated multi-ministry enforcement, the number of provincial government officials authorized to investigate and respond to Agricultural Land Reserve violations has been increased by approximately 30. Further improvements to the ALC have expanded compliance and enforcement by allowing qualified officials from other government agencies and levels of government to conduct compliance and enforcement activities.

# Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Performance Measures

The Ministry's service plan is organized around three long-term goals:

- Agriculture and food sectors contribute positively to the economic diversity and well-being of the Province;
- World-leading environmental stewardship practices in the agriculture and food sectors; and
- Community and social well-being is enhanced by agriculture and food sector practices.

The Ministry is committed to supporting government's key priorities for jobs and the economy, families and open government. With the release of *Canada Starts Here – The BC Jobs Plan* and the commitment to develop an Agrifoods Strategy, the Ministry will work with industry to develop a strategy to leverage opportunities and accelerate growth in the agrifoods sector. The Agrifoods Strategy is expected to be completed by March 31, 2012. The Ministry also committed as part of the *BC Jobs Plan* to commission a special report to identify opportunities for growth and innovation in the greenhouse industry.

## **Goal 1: Agriculture and food sectors contribute positively to the economic diversity and well-being of the Province**

### **Objective 1.1: A sustainable agriculture and food sector.**

The Ministry supports sector profitability and self-reliance through programs and services that provide farmers with tools to adapt and sustain their businesses in the face of environmental and market risk.

### **Strategies**

- Promote, deliver and improve national business risk management programs and services.
- Provide strategic business development leadership and build business management awareness, market intelligence, and capacity within the agriculture and food sector.



- Continue to implement and monitor the recommendations of the Ranching Task Force to improve the competitive environment of B.C.'s ranching sector.

**Performance Measure 1: Ratio of administration costs to premiums for Production Insurance.**

Performance Measure	2011/12 Forecast	2012/13 Target	2013/14 Target	2014/15 Target
Ratio of administration costs to premiums for Production Insurance <sup>1</sup>	20:80	20:80	20:80	20:80

Data Source: Ministry of Agriculture.

<sup>1</sup> Administration cost includes both fixed and variable costs.

**Discussion**

This measure indicates the efficiency of delivering the Production Insurance program through government by comparing administration cost to the private sector. In the private sector, administration costs are included as part of premium revenue and generally range between 25 per cent and 30 per cent of total premium revenue. Production Insurance in Canada is delivered by provincial administrations. A ratio of 20:80 means there is adequate administration expenditures to determine coverage, adjust losses, set premiums and maintain the integrity of the insurance plan, while ensuring dollars are available as needed for producers. Inadequate administrative structures and practices can result in higher claim losses and therefore increase premiums. Production Insurance methodologies in B.C. for coverage determination and premium rates are certified by an independent licensed actuary.

**Objective 1.2: Strategic growth and development of the agriculture and food sector.**

The Ministry promotes growth in the agriculture and food sector through programs that foster innovation, competitiveness and improve market access.

**Strategies**

- Expand domestic and international markets for B.C. agrifoods products.
- Undertake initiatives to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of B.C.'s seafood products in domestic and international markets.
- Assist producers and processors to capitalize on new market share opportunities.
- Support innovative product and process development, commercialization and adoption.
- Enable production and use of renewable energy and development of biorefineries.

**Performance Measure 2: Annual revenue growth in agriculture, food and beverage sectors.**

Performance Measure	Baseline <sup>2</sup> (2009 3 year moving average)	2011/12 Forecast	2012/13 Target	2013/14 Target	2014/15 Target
Annual revenue growth in agriculture, food and beverage sectors <sup>1</sup>	Crops \$1.135 Billion	\$1.168B 2.9% Growth in farm cash receipts	1% Growth in farm cash receipts	1% Growth in farm cash receipts	1% Growth in farm cash receipts
	Livestock \$1.242 Billion	\$1.261B 1.5% Growth in farm cash receipts	2% Growth in farm cash receipts	2% Growth in farm cash receipts	2% Growth in farm cash receipts
	Seafood \$744.5 Million	\$830M 6.4% Growth in landed value	Maintain landed value	1% Growth in landed value	1% Growth in landed value
	Food and Beverage Manufacturing \$6.794 Billion	\$6.960B 2.5% Growth in value of shipments for food and beverage	3% Growth in value of shipments for food and beverage	3% Growth in value of shipments for food and beverage	3% Growth in value of shipments for food and beverage

Data Source: Statistics Canada.

<sup>1</sup>Revenue growth is calculated using the three year moving average.

<sup>2</sup>Baseline changed from 2009 Actual, as published in the May 2011 Revised Service Plan, to the three year moving average to be consistent.

**Discussion:**

This measure reflects the growth in annual revenues by the agrifoods sector by monitoring growth in the value of farm cash receipts for crops and livestock, the landed value of seafood, and estimated value of shipments from B.C. food and beverage processors. Revenue growth is an indicator of the contribution of B.C.'s agrifoods industries to the provincial economy. Targets are based on the average annual rate of change in revenues.

Last year’s service plan included a performance measure that tracked the growth of agriculture, aquaculture and food sector GDP as a percentage of provincial primary sector GDP. This measure is not a strong indicator of the competitiveness and profitability of the agrifoods sector and for this reason has been removed from the *2012/13-2014/15 Service Plan*.

## **Goal 2: World-leading environmental stewardship practices in the agriculture and food sectors.**

### **Objective 2.1: Effective management of environmental risks in agriculture and food sectors.**

The Ministry supports the agriculture and food sectors to proactively address environmental risks and the impacts of climate change.

#### **Strategies**

- Provide programs and activities to identify and address critical agricultural environmental issues and adoption of best management practices.
- Support local governments, as well as the agriculture and food sectors to prepare for and recover from environmental disasters.



*Rainbow over Sumas Prairie, Fraser Valley, B. C.*

### **Performance Measure 4: Number of Beneficial Management Practices projects funded by the Growing Forward Agreement.**

Performance Measure	2011/12 Forecast	2012/13 Target	2013/14 Target	2014/15 Target
Number of Beneficial Management Practices projects funded by Growing Forward incentive program <sup>1</sup>	200	200	n/a <sup>2</sup>	n/a. <sup>2</sup>

**Data Source:** ARDCorp reports and agreements.

1. Canada-British Columbia Growing Forward Agreement (2008-2013), including the Continuity Year Agreement 2008/2009. Access to the Beneficial Management Practices program is via the voluntary and confidential Environmental Farm Plan. Producers must have a valid Environmental Farm Plan to access the program.
2. No target is available as there is no agreement in place past March 31, 2013. A new Growing Forward Agreement is being negotiated.

## **Discussion**

This measure provides an indication of the response of farmers to environmental risks on their farms. The measure counts the number of farms initiating funded beneficial management practices targeted at specific agri-environmental risks. Program funding is budgeted on a declining level within the *Growing Forward* agreement. Caps, cost-shares and types of eligible projects are reviewed and adjusted annually. Since the start of the agreement, 543 projects have been funded and completed. Of these, 212 projects were completed in 2009/10 and 331 projects were completed in 2010/11. Another 200 projects are expected to be completed by the end of the 2011/12 fiscal year.

The projects funded by the *Growing Forward* incentive program link to the adoption of beneficial management practices identified in approved environmental farm plans. These projects focus on minimizing the farm impact on water quality, water quantity, and climate change.

## **Objective 2.2: Sustainable agriculture management practices that assist successful adaptation to climate change.**

The Ministry supports the efforts of industry to develop innovative products, tools and processes to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change.

## **Strategies**

- Promote opportunities for carbon sequestration and encourage improved environmental practice initiatives in agriculture.
- Support the province's climate change goals by identifying, researching and developing market opportunities for the agriculture and food sector.
- Support improvements in the efficiency of water and energy use by the agriculture and food sector.

**Performance Measure 5: Cumulative tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub><sup>e</sup>) emissions reduced or averted from actions supported by Ministry programs.**

Performance Measure	2008/09 Baseline <sup>2</sup>	2011/12 Forecast	2012/13 Target	2013/14 Target	2014/15 Target
Cumulative tonnes of CO <sub>2</sub> <sup>e</sup> emissions reduced or averted from actions supported by Ministry programs <sup>1</sup>	19,000	25,000	34,000	45,000	50,000

Data Source: Ministry of Agriculture; Pacific Carbon Trust.

<sup>1</sup> Includes the number of offset tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent emissions retired through the Pacific Carbon Trust each year in emissions reduction projects which can be classified as coming from the agricultural sector, (for example: energy efficiencies recognized in the greenhouse industry); Carbon offsets are measured as one metric tonne of carbon dioxide or equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub><sup>e</sup>).

<sup>2</sup> Based on 2008 calendar year.

**Discussion**

This measure indicates the success of the Ministry in encouraging agriculture related businesses to implement innovations or practices which reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Pacific Carbon Trust is a provincial Crown Corporation with a mandate to deliver B.C. based greenhouse gas offsets to help clients meet their carbon reduction goals and to support growth of this industry in B.C.

**Goal 3: Community and social well-being is enhanced by agriculture and food sector practices.**

**Objective 3.1: Promote a positive urban/agriculture relationship to facilitate sustainable growth for farms while enhancing the overall quality of life for British Columbians.**

Agriculture activity depends on good relations with local government and community members. With only 1.5 per cent of British Columbians living on farms, it has become increasingly important for local government to keep in touch with farm and ranch communities to help facilitate support for the agriculture sector. While preservation of agricultural land in British Columbia is overseen by the Agricultural Land Commission, the Ministry aims to support the ALC by promoting a positive urban/agriculture environment to ensure farmers can continue to farm in farming areas.

## Strategies

- Promote a positive regulatory climate with local government to support the sector across British Columbia.
- Build a greater understanding of agriculture’s contribution to communities through proactive communication strategies.
- Support the Agricultural Land Commission to fulfill its mandate to preserve agricultural land for future generations of farm and ranch families.
- Support local food initiatives to build awareness of agriculture and promote B.C. products domestically.
- Establish standards to guide local government bylaw development in farming areas.



*Urban development alongside agriculture region, Comox-Strathcona .*

### Performance Measure 6: Number of agriculture area plans completed.

Performance Measure	2011/12 Forecast	2012/13 Target	2013/14 Target	2014/15 Target
Number of agriculture area plans completed	44 <sup>1</sup>	48	55	60

Data Source: Ministry of Agriculture

<sup>1</sup> Numbers are cumulative.

## Discussion

This measure provides an indication of how capacity is being built within farm communities to influence issues that affect agriculture. An agriculture area plan focuses on a community’s farm area to discover practical solutions to issues and to identify opportunities to strengthen farming. Key stakeholders prepare the plan, which includes strategies for economic development, joint marketing and processing, agri-tourism and proposals for by-law amendments to support agriculture. The agriculture area plan becomes a subset of the official community plan. At present, there are 44 completed agriculture area plans throughout B.C., with at least seven more underway.



### **Objective 3.2: Animal, plant and human health are safeguarded.**

The Ministry, in partnership with other government agencies, delivers services and initiatives to effectively manage food safety, plant, and livestock health risks contributing to positive public health and to maintaining consumer confidence.

#### **Strategies**

- Continue to work with government and industry groups to identify and implement traceability and bio-security strategies that will reduce the risk of foreign animal disease outbreaks.
- Implement and deliver comprehensive provincial level programs for animal and plant health that manage the risks of animal disease, plant pests, and invasive species, and, contribute to national programs.
- Support the health of British Columbians by increasing awareness and adoption of food safety programs and practices.
- Revise the province's animal health policy and legislation to further public health and safety and secure the sector's market potential.
- Deliver plant health management programs and services to promote healthy and viable crops and agrifoods.



*Abbotsford Agriculture Centre, Animal Health Center (CL3 Lab) in background.*

**Performance Measure 7: Per cent of routine (diagnostic) animal and plant samples completed within seven working days.**

Performance Measure	2011/12 Forecast	2012/13 Target	2013/14 Target	2014/15 Target
Per cent of routine (diagnostic) animal and plant samples completed within seven working days <sup>1</sup>	85%	85%	87%	87%

Data Source: Ministry of Agriculture

<sup>1</sup> Samples tested in-house and not referred to another laboratory. Diagnostic tests require minimum times to complete, depending on the nature of the test.

**Discussion**

The Animal Health Centre is a veterinary diagnostic laboratory located in the Abbotsford Agriculture Centre. The mandate of the Centre is to diagnose, monitor and assist in controlling and preventing animal disease in British Columbia. Although primarily concerned with food producing animals, the Centre also provides diagnostic services for companion animals, wildlife, zoo animals and marine mammals. Submissions are made to the laboratory by veterinarians, livestock producers, government agencies, humane societies, zoos, aquariums and members of the public. The Centre offers a wide range of veterinary laboratory tests on a fee basis to diagnose disease and other causes of poor production or mortality in animals. Samples from wildlife, marine mammal and SPCA investigations are also regularly submitted to the Centre for examination and diagnostic tests.

The Plant Health Diagnostic Laboratory provides plant health diagnoses and helps to fulfill the Plant Health Program’s mandate of providing programs and services to promote plant protection. The Plant Laboratory receives samples from growers of all commodities in B.C., pest management consultants, industry groups, home gardeners, and the general public. In collaboration with the plant health team and other ministry staff, the plant lab increases the capability for early detection of new insect and disease threats.

# Resource Summary

Core Business Area	2011/12 Restated Estimates <sup>1</sup>	2012/13 Estimates	2013/14 Plan	2014/15 Plan
<b>Operating Expenses (\$000)</b>				
Agriculture Science and Policy	9,951	9,968	9,968	9,968
Strategic Industry Partnerships	34,629	34,629	34,629	34,629
BC Farm Industry Review Board	896	896	896	896
Executive and Support Services	6,821	6,821	6,821	6,821
<b>SubTotal</b>	<b>52,297</b>	<b>52,314</b>	<b>52,314</b>	<b>52,314</b>
Agricultural Land Commission	1,974	1,974	1,974	1,974
Production Insurance Special Account (Net)	11,500	11,500	11,500	11,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>65,771</b>	<b>65,788</b>	<b>65,788</b>	<b>65,788</b>

<b>Ministry Capital Expenditures (Consolidated Revenue Fund) (\$000)</b>				
Executive and Support Services	215	290	495	593
<b>Total</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>495</b>	<b>593</b>

Core Business Area	2011/12 Restated Estimates <sup>1</sup>	2012/13 Estimates	2013/14 Plan	2014/15 Plan
<b>Other Financing Transactions (\$000)</b>				
<i>Agriculture Credit Act - Receipts</i>	49	6	6	6
<i>Agriculture Credit Act - Disbursements</i>	0	0	0	0
<b>Net Cash Source (Requirements)</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>

<sup>1</sup> For comparative purposes, amounts shown for 2011/12 have been restated to be consistent with the presentation of the 2012/13 Estimates.

# Appendix A: Agricultural Land Commission

## Purpose of the Commission

The Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) is the provincial agency responsible for administering the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), a provincial land use zone for the primary use of agriculture. As an administrative tribunal operating at arm's-length from government, the ALC is accountable to the legislature through the Minister of Agriculture. Its operations are funded by a vote of the legislature.

In general, an administrative tribunal is a specialized government agency established under provincial legislation to implement legislative policy. Administrative tribunals engaged in an adjudicative process function in a manner more closely analogous to the courts. Procedure is less formal than before the courts and the rules of evidence do not apply, although decisions must be based only on sound evidence. The ALC is expected to exercise its role in a non-partisan manner.

The work of the ALC is carried out by provincial government appointed Commissioners. The appointed Commissioners are the board of directors of the ALC which is supported by professional staff located in Burnaby.

The purposes of the ALC as set out in the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* are:

- To preserve agricultural land;
- To encourage farming on agricultural land in collaboration with other communities of interest; and
- To encourage local governments, First Nations, the government and its agents to enable and accommodate farm use of agricultural land and uses compatible with agriculture in their plans, bylaws and policies.

The core business functions of the ALC are land use planning and policy, working with local governments and stakeholders on land use matters affecting the ALR, compliance and enforcement and land use applications.

Through its annual business plan and other strategic documents, the ALC establishes the goals, objectives and strategies it believes are necessary to achieve its mandate. Further information about the work of the ALC may be found at [www.alc.gov.bc.ca](http://www.alc.gov.bc.ca)

## **ALC Business Plan Goals, Objectives and Strategies:**

### **Goal 1: Preserve Agricultural Land and Encourage Farming**

**Objective 1: Preserve the provincial agricultural land base through comprehensive decision making**

**Strategies:**

- Consideration of agricultural capability and suitability of lands under application; and
- Consideration of the potential impacts on the land base and the agricultural use of the land base.

**Objective 2: Expand current planning functions to include proactive planning related to community planning, major projects and emerging issues.**

**Strategies:**

- Encourage local governments to engage in discussions with the ALC and planning staff early in their land use planning processes;
- Encourage local government and other land use agencies to develop agriculturally sympathetic land use planning;
- Review ALR boundaries in select areas of the province with a view to confirming the accuracy and appropriateness of the boundary;
- Become involved in major projects at the early conceptual developmental phase; and
- Research and assess emerging issues that impact the agricultural land base.

**Objective 3: Ensure a high degree of compliance with the Agricultural Land Commission Act, regulation and orders of the ALC.**

**Strategies:**

- Ensure compliance with the Act, regulations and orders of the ALC based on current resources; and
- Follow up on complaints of inappropriate use of ALR lands.

**Objective 4: Propose ways to strengthen the ALC's mandate and improve operations.**

**Strategies:**

- Initiate a visioning exercise that will forecast where the ALR program should be positioned for the next several decades;
- Identify options for enhancing the program in order to strengthen its mandate and improve operations; and
- Work with the Minister responsible to bring forward proposed legislative and regulatory changes to strengthen the ALR and the mandate of the ALC.

## Appendix B: Ministry Contact Information

### **Ministry of Agriculture:**

P.O. Box 9120 STN PROV GOVT, Victoria B.C., V8W 9B4

Ph.: (250) 387-5121

### **Strategic Industry Partnerships Division:**

Ph.: (250) 356-1122, Fax (250) 356-7279

### **Agriculture Science and Policy Division:**

Ph.: (250) 356-1821, Fax (250) 356-7279

### **Ministry of Agriculture - Regional Offices:**

#### **Abbotsford**

1767 Angus Campbell Road, V3G 2M3

Ph.: (604) 556-3001

Fax: (604) 556-3030

Toll free 1-888-221-7141

Animal Health toll free 1-800-661-9903

#### **Courtenay**

2500 Cliffe Avenue, V9N 5M6

Ph.: (250) 897-7540

Fax: (250) 334-1410

#### **Cranbrook**

205 Industrial Rd. G

Cranbrook, B.C. V1C 7G5

Ph.: 250-489-8507

Fax: 250-489-8506

#### **Creston**

1243 Northwest Boulevard, V0B 1G6

Ph.: (250) 402-6429

Fax: (250) 402-6497

#### **Dawson Creek**

4th Floor, 1201 - 103rd Avenue, V1G 4J2

Ph.: (250) 784-2601

Fax: (250) 784-2299

Toll free 1-877-772-2200

**Duncan**

5785 Duncan Street, V9L 5G2

Ph.: (250) 746-1210

Fax: (250) 746-1292

**Fort St. John**

10043 - 100th Street, V1J 3Y5

Ph.: (250) 787-3240

Fax: (250) 787-3299

Toll free 1-888-822-1345

**Kamloops**

2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, 441 Columbia St., V2C 2T3

Ph.: 250-828-4506

Fax: 250-828-4154

Toll free 1-888-823-3355

**Kelowna**

Unit 200 - 1690 Powick Road, V1X 7G5

Ph.: (250) 861-7211

Fax: (250) 861-7490

Toll free 1-888-332-3352

**Oliver**

Suite 201 – 9971 350th Avenue

PO Box 857 Stn Prov Govt V0H 1T0

Ph.: (250) 498-5250 or 5251

Fax: (250) 498-4952

**Prince George**

PLAZA 400 Building

Suite 325 - 1011 Fourth Avenue, V2L 3H9

Ph.: (250) 565-7200

Fax: (250) 565-7213

Toll free 1-800-334-3011

**Vernon**

2501 – 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue, V1T 8Z1

Ph.: (250) 260-4610

Fax: (250) 260-4602

Toll free 1-877-702-5585

**Williams Lake**

300 - 640 Borland Street, V2G 4T1

Ph.: (250) 398-4500

Fax: (250) 398-4688



Toll free 1-800-474-6133

**Agricultural Land Commission**

133 - 4940 Canada Way, Burnaby B.C., V5G 4K6

Ph.: (604) 660-7000

Fax: (604) 660-7033

Email: [ALCBurnaby@Victoria1.gov.bc.ca](mailto:ALCBurnaby@Victoria1.gov.bc.ca)

Internet: [www.alc.gov.bc.ca/](http://www.alc.gov.bc.ca/)

**B.C. Farm Industry Review Board**

PO Box 9129 STN PROV GOVT, Victoria B.C., V8W 9B5

Ph.: (250) 356-8945

Fax: (250) 356-5131

Email: [firb@gov.bc.ca](mailto:firb@gov.bc.ca)

Internet: [www.firb.gov.bc.ca/](http://www.firb.gov.bc.ca/)

For more information about the *British Columbia Agriculture Plan: Growing a Healthy Future for B.C. Families*, visit the website at: [www.al.gov.bc.ca/Agriculture\\_Plan/](http://www.al.gov.bc.ca/Agriculture_Plan/)

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