

Ministry of Agriculture and Food

2022/23 – 2024/25 SERVICE PLAN

February 2022



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Minister's Accountability Statement



The *Ministry of Agriculture and Food 2022/23 – 2024/25 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.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lana Popham". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Honourable Lana Popham
Minister of Agriculture and Food
February 10, 2022

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Purpose of the Ministry

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food (the Ministry) is responsible for the production, marketing, processing and merchandising of agriculture and seafood products; the institution and carrying out of advisory, research, promotional, sustainability and adaptation, food safety and plant and animal health programs; projects and undertakings relating to agriculture and seafood; and the collection of information and preparation and dissemination of statistics relating to agriculture and seafood.

The Ministry is a key contributor to economic development and diversification across the Province and is a main contributor to rural economic development and province-wide job creation, particularly for small businesses. The agriculture, seafood and food and beverage sector creates economic and social benefits for Indigenous groups and other underrepresented groups, has the potential to attract provincial investment, and contributes to workforce development and skills training.

2021/2022 was a challenging year for the agriculture, seafood and food and beverage sector. Various new provincial government commitments and issues have risen from the COVID-19 pandemic and in response to environmental and climate change related emergencies. This included flooding in November 2021 which impacted 1,123 farms and was the worst financial agricultural disaster in B.C.'s history.

The legal and regulatory environment that guides the work of the Ministry includes 30 statutes which relate wholly or primarily to the Ministry. A [complete list of legislation for which the Ministry is responsible](#) for is available online.

Strategic Direction

In 2022/2023, the Government of British Columbia will continue its whole-of-government response to the COVID-19 pandemic with a focus on protecting the health, social and economic well-being of British Columbians. Building on our economic, environmental, and social strengths while looking to seize opportunities to improve outcomes for all British Columbians will be an important aspect of each ministry's work as we respond to COVID-19 and recover from devastating floods and wildfires. The policies, programs and projects developed over the course of this service plan period will align with the five foundational principles established by government in 2020: putting people first; working toward lasting and meaningful reconciliation; supporting equity and anti-racism; ensuring a better future through fighting climate change and meeting our greenhouse gas reduction targets; and supporting a strong, sustainable economy that works for everyone.

This 2022/23 service plan outlines how the Ministry of Agriculture and Food will support the government's priorities including the foundational principles listed above and selected action items identified in the [November 2020 Minister's Mandate Letter](#).

Economic Statement

B.C.'s economy has rebounded from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic that began in 2020, despite significant pandemic variant and climate-related events. A strong health response, high vaccination rates, increased infrastructure investments and supports for British Columbians struggling through the pandemic has helped the province rebound. While the recovery has broadened over the past year, it remains uneven with sectors like tourism, hospitality and live recreation events not fully recovered. The path of the ongoing economic recovery in B.C. and its trading partners remains highly uncertain. However, rebuild efforts from the November 2021 floods are expected to provide some support to economic activity in the province. The Economic Forecast Council (EFC) estimates that B.C. real GDP expanded by 5.1 per cent in 2021 and expects growth of 4.2 per cent in 2022 and 2.7 per cent in 2023. Meanwhile for Canada, the EFC projects national real GDP growth of 4.1 per cent in 2022 and 2.8 per cent in 2023, following an estimated gain of 4.7 per cent in 2021. As such, B.C.'s economic growth is expected to be broadly in line with the national average in the coming years. The pandemic has increased risks to B.C.'s economic outlook, such as the emergence of further variants of concern, inflationary supply chain disruptions, extended travel restrictions, and the continued impact of the slower recovery in some sectors of the B.C. economy. Further risks include ongoing uncertainty regarding global trade policies, and lower commodity prices.

Performance Planning

Goal 1: Strengthen provincial food systems and B.C.'s food security

Strengthening the provincial food system remains a provincial priority as it contributes to a strong, sustainable economy that works for everyone.

Objective 1.1: Improve living and working conditions for farm workers

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of having a stable and healthy workforce to ensure food security for British Columbians. The Ministry will work towards ensuring and enforcing safe, healthy and comfortable living standards (particularly for inter-provincial and international workers residing in on-farm accommodations or workcamps) and ensure improved working conditions for all agricultural workers.

Key Strategies

- Consider the development of an agriculture and seafood workforce strategy to address substandard living and working conditions for agricultural workers.
- Maintain COVID-19 specific supports including facilitating requisite quarantine periods at provincially managed accommodations hotels for Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs) and improvements to on-farm accommodations to ensure worker health and safety (supplies, equipment and inspections).

Discussion

Cross-ministry work is needed prior to establishing a performance measure for this objective.

Objective 1.2: Ensure the provincial food system has the capacity to increase the availability of B.C. foods

In the *Budget 2021*, enhancing Grow BC, Feed BC and Buy BC programming was approved for \$3.4 million. This will drive economic recovery, grow jobs across the sector and beyond, increase the safety and availability of local food, and build the sustainability and reliability of the provincial food system. Integrated programs targeting improvement will be delivered via various methods including agreements and partnerships with other government bodies, industry associations, expert program delivery agents, local governments, education institutions, and public health. Some programs will be administered fully by Ministry staff.

Key Strategies

- Expand the Grow BC, Feed BC, Buy BC programming.
- Increase awareness of the Buy BC brand and the variety and availability of B.C. food and beverages with B.C. citizens, retailers, restaurants, and distributors.
- Expand economic development opportunities and support business growth through capacity building, market readiness, and targeted programs for under presented groups such as Indigenous Peoples, new entrants, and youth.

- Foster growth and innovation in the processing sector through improved industry access to facilities, equipment, technology, technical services and supports through the B.C. Food Hub Network.
- Build demand in B.C. public institutions and other facilities for more B.C. grown and locally processed food.

| Performance Measure(s) | 2020/2021 Baseline | 2021/22 Forecast | 2022/23 Target | 2023/24 Target | 2024/25 Target |
|---|--------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1.2a Number of government or other Feed BC partner facilities that have committed to a minimum 30% B.C. food expenditures within total annual food expenditures | 103 | 112 | 195 | 205 | 215 |
| 1.2b Number of Buy BC logo licensed products | 809 | 1,500 | 2,300 | 3,200 | 4,200 |

Data source: Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

Linking Performance Measure to Objective

Increasing the number of government or other Feed BC partner facilities that have committed to a minimum 30% B.C. food expenditure within their total annual food expenditures provides new market opportunities for B.C. producers and processors and supports increased provincial food supply and food system resilience. Increasing the number of Buy BC logo licensed products that are grown, harvested, raised, or processed in B.C., and along with Buy BC promotional activities, drives increased consumer awareness of the Buy BC brand and local food purchasing.

By supporting local food actions and addressing barriers that public sector institutions (e.g. hospitals, residential care facilities, public post-secondary institutions, and other government supported facilities) have experienced in getting B.C. food products into their institutions, the ministry advances the availability of B.C. food products for British Columbians and supports local communities, jobs and economic development throughout the province.

Goal 2: Position B.C. as a leader in regenerative agriculture practices and agritech

Drawing on the recommendations of the Food Security Task Force, the ministry is taking steps to make B.C. a leader in the emerging agritech sector and drive transformation and modernization in the agriculture and food sector. By bringing together natural systems of production through regenerative agriculture and supporting agritech, the Ministry aims to help increase farm profitability and employment opportunities, strengthen the provincial food system, improve environmental sustainability and reduce green house gas emissions. This shared goal with the Ministry of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation is reflected in the Ministry's mandate letter to support regenerative agriculture and agritech.

Objective 2.1: Support the development of the agritech sector and promote regenerative agriculture practices

Take steps to support regenerative agriculture practices and the emerging agritech sector that is applying innovation and technology to agriculture, seafood and food production. Regenerative agriculture includes conservation practices that promote healthy soils (including carbon sequestration) and water cycling, while enhancing biodiversity and ecosystem health. Development of the agritech sector will support the creation of high-tech jobs, introduce new farm technologies, reduce reliance on manual labour and increase the productivity and profitability of farming businesses.

Key Strategies

- Stimulate growth and development of new technologies that will enhance agriculture and food processing sectors.
- Support the adoption of regenerative agriculture practices and agritech.
- Develop partnerships with private industry, academic, non-government organizations, and other levels of government to explore new ways to support increases in food production and processing through regenerative agriculture and agritech.
- Support agritech businesses to expand and grow, while ensuring British Columbians' world-class sustainability, quality and safety standards continue.

| Performance Measure(s) | 2019/2020 Baseline | 2021/22 Forecast | 2022/23 Target | 2023/24 Target | 2024/25 Target |
|--|-----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 2.1a Number of B.C.-based agritech company growth opportunities supported through Ministry programming | 33 | 40 | 42 | 45 | 45 |
| 2.1b Number of Beneficial Management Practice projects completed by farmers, supporting regenerative agriculture practices and technologies ¹ | 225 | 250 | 260 | 270 | 270 |

Data source: B.C. Agricultural Research and Development Corporation

¹ The baseline is the two-year average (2018/19 to 2019/20) associated with the baseline funding of the program.

Linking Performance Measure to Objective

Through the Beneficial Management Practices (BMP) program, farmers may receive cost-share funding from the Ministry after they complete on-farm conservation projects, many of which promote regenerative agriculture practices and technologies. An increased number of such projects indicate the Ministry's success at supporting the development of the agritech sector and promoting regenerative agriculture practices.

Discussion

Through the BMP, the Ministry is tracking adoption of regenerative agriculture practices and technologies or services that promote regenerative agriculture practices (build soil health, conserve water and implement biodiversity and ecological principles into farming). Through current funding opportunities for agritech companies, the Ministry is tracking new opportunities to grow the agritech sector. With the Ministry's strategy for implementing the mandate commitments for the Regenerative Agriculture Network in early stages, measures will be updated as the new targets are confirmed in 2022.

Goal 3: Support sustainable aquaculture sectors

This goal addresses the Ministry's role in revitalizing the seafood sector as part of the government's broader goals on economic recovery, rural and coastal community growth, and food security.

Objective 3.1: Support safe, sustainable increase of B.C. seafood processing capacity

To support increasing B.C.'s seafood economies, the Ministry will explore economic programs for safe, sustainable development using a dedicated funding package to support processing infrastructure and other cost-shared programs.

Key Strategies

- Supporting shellfish and seaweed businesses to expand and operate in a sustainable way to produce safe wholesome seafood products.
- Connecting seafood more deeply through existing provincial programs (e.g. Buy BC and the Food Hub Network) to enhance domestic and international marketing.

Discussion

As the Ministry's work on implementing new mandate commitments proceeds, this objective will be updated.

Financial Summary

| Core Business Area | 2021/22 Restated Estimates ¹ | 2022/23 Estimates | 2023/24 Plan | 2024/25 Plan |
|--|---|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Operating Expenses (\$000) | | | | |
| Science, Policy, and Inspection | 16,146 | 19,086 | 20,086 | 20,086 |
| Agriculture Resources | 56,463 | 61,433 | 61,433 | 61,433 |
| BC Farm Industry Review Board | 1,378 | 1,378 | 1,378 | 1,378 |
| Executive and Support Services | 6,801 | 6,923 | 6,934 | 6,934 |
| Agricultural Land Commission | 5,001 | 5,001 | 5,001 | 5,001 |
| Production Insurance Account Special Account | 13,200 | 13,200 | 13,200 | 13,200 |
| Total | 98,989 | 107,021 | 108,032 | 108,032 |
| Ministry Capital Expenditures (Consolidated Revenue Fund) (\$000) | | | | |
| Executive and Support Services | 755 | 1,229 | 777 | 777 |
| Total | 755 | 1,229 | 777 | 777 |

¹ For comparative purposes, amounts shown for 2021/22 have been restated to be consistent with the presentation of the 2022/23 Estimates.

Appendix A: Agencies, Boards, Commissions and Tribunals

As of February 2022, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries is responsible and accountable for the following:

Agricultural Land Commission

The Provincial Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) is the independent administrative tribunal dedicated to preserving agricultural land and encouraging farming in B.C. The ALC is responsible for administering the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), a provincial land use zone where agriculture is the primary land use taking place on the limited agricultural land base.

British Columbia Farm Industry Review Board

The British Columbia Farm Industry Review Board (the Board) is an independent administrative tribunal that operates at arm's-length from government. As the regulatory tribunal responsible for the general supervision of B.C. regulated marketing boards and commissions, the Board provides oversight, policy direction and decisions to ensure orderly marketing and to protect the public interest. In its adjudicative capacities, the Board provides a less formal system than the court for resolving disputes in a timely and cost-effective way.

The Marketing Boards and Commissions include:

[BC Broiler Hatching Egg Commission](#)

[BC Chicken Marketing Board](#)

[BC Cranberry Marketing Commission](#)

[BC Egg Marketing Board](#)

[BC Hog Marketing Commission](#)

[BC Milk Marketing Board](#)

[BC Turkey Marketing Board](#)

[BC Vegetable Marketing Commission](#)