

Ministry of Agriculture and Food

2024/25 – 2026/27 Service Plan

February 2024



For more information on the Ministry of Agriculture and Food contact:

PO BOX 9120

STN PROV GOVT

VICTORIA, BC

V8W 9B4

1-888-221-7141

Or visit our website at

<https://www.gov.bc.ca/agri>

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Minister's Accountability Statement



The Ministry of Ministry of Agriculture and Food 2024/25 – 2026/27 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 "Pam Alexis".

Honourable Pam Alexis
Minister of Agriculture and Food
February 9, 2024

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Strategic Direction

In 2024/25, the Government of British Columbia will remain focused on providing the services and infrastructure that people depend on to build a good life. Government will continue delivering results that matter to British Columbians including helping people with costs, attainable and affordable housing, strengthened health care, safer communities, and a secure, clean and fair economy. Government will continue working collaboratively with Indigenous Peoples as it implements the Action Plan for the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act and delivers initiatives that advance reconciliation in ways that make a difference in communities throughout the province.

This 2024/25 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 [December 2022 Minister's Mandate Letter](#).

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 implementation and carrying out of advisory, research, promotional, sustainability and adaptation, food safety and plant and animal health programs; and the collection of information and preparation and dissemination of statistics relating to agriculture and seafood, supporting the province's food security and developing a resilient food system and economy. 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.

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.

Operating Environment

Food is a huge part of B.C.'s economy, between those who grow and produce it, and those who get it to grocery stores; tens of thousands work in the agriculture sector to put food on British Columbians' plates.

The agriculture, food and beverage sector continues to face challenges due to extreme weather events – including heat, flood, fire, and drought. These climate-related disruptions highlight the importance of B.C.'s food supply chain.

Building a resilient food system and increasing food security is of key importance to the Ministry. The Ministry continues to respond to these climate-related disruptions and evolving needs of the industry by taking meaningful actions to improve the resilience of B.C.'s food supply through new and enhanced programs, as well as scaling up agritech and innovation efforts, and leading preparedness and response activities for anticipated emergency events.

Plant and animal health and welfare are also affected by a growing number of threats ranging from climate-related phenomena to infectious disease. The Ministry will need to allocate resources to respond these threats, such as the highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza, to limit the spread of disease and protect livestock.

Economic Statement

B.C.'s economy posted modest growth last year as interest rate increases weighed on the economy, and employment continued to expand, supported by immigration. Inflation in the province continued to ease and the Bank of Canada has not raised its policy interest rate since July 2023. The impact of higher rates on borrowing costs and elevated household debt led to lower consumer spending and reduced home sales. Lumber, natural gas and coal prices declined in 2023, reducing the value of the province's goods exports. Meanwhile, there was a record number of housing starts in the province in 2023. There is uncertainty over the transmission of high interest rates to the residential construction sector and the duration of slower growth for the rest of the economy in B.C. and among our trading partners. The Economic Forecast Council (EFC) estimates that B.C. real GDP expanded by 0.9 per cent in 2023 and expects growth of 0.5 per cent in 2024 and 2.1 per cent in 2025. Meanwhile for Canada, the EFC estimates growth of 1.1 per cent in 2023 and projects national real GDP growth of 0.5 per cent in 2024 and 1.9 per cent in 2025. As such, B.C.'s economic growth is expected to be broadly in line with the national average in the coming years. The risks to B.C.'s economic outlook continue to center around interest rates and inflation, including the risk of price increases stemming from geopolitical conflicts, the potential for interest rates remaining higher for longer, and uncertainty around the depth and timing of the impact on housing markets. Further risks include ongoing uncertainty regarding global trade policies, lower commodity prices, climate change impacts and the volatility of immigration levels.

Performance Planning

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

Strengthening provincial food security through a sustainable agriculture and food sector and responsible land use remains a provincial priority as it contributes to a strong, sustainable economy that works for everyone.

Objective 1.1: Ensure the provincial food system has the capacity to increase the availability of B.C. foods

Enhancing the Grow BC, Feed BC and Buy BC suite of programs will drive economic and job growth across the sector, increase the safety and availability of local food, and build the sustainability and reliability of the provincial food system. Integrated programs targeting industry renewal and competitiveness, sustainability, and capacity will address gaps in food supply resilience.

Key Strategies

- Expand Grow BC by focusing on industry competitiveness, capacity building, sustainability with targeted programs to increase participation of underrepresented groups such as Indigenous Peoples, new entrants, and youth.
- Increase the awareness of the Buy BC brand with B.C. citizens and the availability and promotion of Buy BC licensed products at grocery stores across B.C.
- Enhance Feed BC by building demand for local foods in more B.C. public institutions through partnerships with key sectors such as health, post-secondary, and corrections, facilitating value chain innovation to connect demand to supply, and supporting the readiness and connection to opportunities of B.C. businesses to supply more locally grown and processed food.
- Integrate Feed BC into the Province's School Meals Framework to increase local food use and opportunities within B.C.'s K-12 school system.

Discussion

The Ministry has an integrated suite of programs and strategies to support this objective's implementation. Programs are delivered through various methods including agreements and partnerships with other government bodies, industry associations, expert program delivery agents, local governments, education institutions, and public health. Under Grow BC, this includes supports for industry renewal and regional extension. Under Buy BC, this involves evaluations and audits to support the refinement and further targeting of Buy BC programming to meet industry needs. Under Feed BC, the forecast forward reflects anticipated growth supported by two Ministry mandates to expand Feed BC and to integrate Feed BC into K-12 schools in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Child Care's mandate to ensure students are fed for learning.

Objective 1.2: Working with Indigenous people on agricultural economic development and food security

Working in cooperation and collaboration with Indigenous Peoples to support meaningful reconciliation and Indigenous self-determination is a priority for the Ministry. This includes understanding the historic and systemic barriers to Indigenous participation in the sector, their agriculture economic development and food security interests, and developing distinction-based approaches¹ that enable capacity building, improve social, cultural and economic well-being, and lead to the equitable participation for Indigenous peoples in the sector.

Key Strategies

- Work with the B.C. Indigenous Advisory Council on Agriculture and Food and other Indigenous partners, as a part of the action laid out in the Declaration Act Action Plan, to identify opportunities to strengthen Indigenous food systems and increase Indigenous participation in the agriculture and food sector.
- Address barriers to participation and consider the needs of Indigenous Peoples to strengthen relationships and better integrate Indigenous priorities, perspectives and food system needs into programming.
- Work with government partners to improve our collective understanding of Indigenous Peoples' perspectives and interests on food security and food sovereignty to guide planning and action in B.C.

Discussion

Supporting Indigenous communities to meet their food security, food sovereignty and economic development goals is a vital part of strengthening community food security in B.C. Forming the B.C. Indigenous Advisory Council on Agriculture and Food was a crucial step towards strengthening the equitable participation of Indigenous Peoples in B.C.'s agriculture and food sector. The Council is the first of its kind in Canada and guided by a three-year [Strategic Plan](#). A new Strategic Plan is currently under development.

The Ministry also has an Indigenous Agriculture and Food team who support First Nations and Métis communities and entrepreneurs in the development and growth of their agriculture and food businesses, and other programs that support Indigenous governments, communities, organizations and individuals develop farm businesses and support food security.

Objective 1.3: Expand the data available on the Agricultural Land Reserve

Ensuring the Ministry has data and information on Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) usage is critical for making land use decisions, informing an array of Ministry and government priorities

¹ A distinction-based approach means that the Province's work with [First Nations](#), [Métis](#), and Inuit people will be conducted in a manner that acknowledges the specific rights, interests, priorities and concerns of each, while respecting and acknowledging these distinct Peoples with unique cultures, histories, rights, laws, and governments.

and supporting partnerships with farmers, industry and government in developing long-term planning and food security in the province.

Key Strategies

- Accelerate the pace of ALUI to establish a full and updated provincial baseline.
- Invest in research and development into new technologies to ensure a more sustainable ALUI program and enable more frequent ALUI updates.
- Develop an online portal to ensure that all ALUI data is readily accessible with tools available to facilitate data informed decisions on the land base.

Discussion

To make informed decisions, the province needs to know how the ALR is being used and have data that is current and available province wide. This includes information on the types and amount of farming that is occurring, as well as the volume of value-added and processing activities underway. ALUI’s collect consistent, credible, and comprehensive data about land use and land cover on agricultural lands across the province.

Maintaining a province-wide Agricultural Land Use Inventory (ALUI) was a recommendation from the “Revitalizing the ALR and the Agricultural Land Commission” Final Committee Report to support policy and program development and the ALR. The Ministry developed a five-year ALUI Program strategy to update all agricultural regions in the province with an ALUI baseline by March 31, 2028, completed to current ALUI standards.

There are many decision-makers involved in the ALR, including local governments, the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC), and numerous provincial government ministries. Having access to data to definitively demonstrate what is occurring on the ALR (and how things are changing), will result in better decisions, policies, and regulations. ALUI has the potential to be a powerful tool, but the information must be current, comprehensive, and accessible. The Ministry has developed a strategy to deliver a fully updated provincial baseline and the tools and methodologies in place to ensure this information remains up to date and accessible.

Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2022/23 Actuals	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target
1a Number of government or other Feed BC partner facilities that have committed towards a minimum 30 percent of B.C. food expenditures within total annual food expenditures	191	201	211	219	227
1b Number of Buy BC logo licensed products	4,000	4,500	5,000	5,500	6,500

Data source: Ministry of Agriculture and Food

Discussion

1a Feed BC partner facilities: Increasing the number of government or other Feed BC partner facilities that have committed to and are tracking towards a minimum 30 percent B.C. food 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.

1b Buy BC logo licensed products: Increasing the number of Buy BC logo licensed products that are grown, harvested, raised, or processed in B.C., along with undertaking Buy BC activities focused on online engagement, promotional campaigns, retail and industry partnerships, drives increased consumer awareness of the Buy BC brand and expands local food purchasing.

Goal 2: Support the B.C. agriculture and food sector to mitigate and adapt to a changing climate and an emerging low-carbon economy

Globally, climate change threatens food security. Food producers are adapting or preparing for both an increasing frequency and severity of climate-related events and longer-term impacts of climate change. The scale and scope of this challenge requires support from government to help facilitate the sector's continued efforts to become ready for climate-related events, contribute to emission reduction solutions, and ensure that British Columbia's long-term food security can be protected.

Objective 2.1: Improve emergency preparedness and climate resilience

In recent years, British Columbians have experienced the full spectrum of climate-related events (e.g., extreme heat, drought, wildfires, floods), and few sectors have been hit as hard as agriculture. Climate science tells us that this trend is only going to intensify over the coming decades as we face increasingly frequent and damaging climate-related events. In addition to these events, climate driven emergence of pests and pathogens in animals and plants will also increase.

The Province of B.C. has adopted the United Nations Sendai Framework, which outlines five key priorities that are guiding the Ministry's evolving approach to climate related events and the associated risk as listed in the key strategies below.

Key Strategies

- *Understanding risk:* Continued investment in science and monitoring capacities to understand climate changes in B.C.'s weather and the impacts of these changes on the availability of agricultural water, drought and flood risks, ocean acidification and hypoxia, invasive species, diseases, pests, and other climate stressors.

- *Strengthening governance:* Increasing resourcing to the Emergency Management Unit within the Ministry to provide expertise and support coordination for preparedness, mitigation, and response efforts involving the agriculture sector.
- *Investing in mitigation for resilience:* Launch of a cost-shared Extreme Weather Preparedness Program to provide cost-shared supports for agricultural producers to protect their operations from extreme weather events.
- *Enhancing preparedness:* In coordination with the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness and other agencies, development of an Emergency Preparedness Strategy for Food Security. The Ministry will also support industry efforts to improve response capacity for plant and animal health risks, including but not limited to Avian Influenza.
- *Capacity building for resilience:* Establish outreach and education programs for local authorities, First Nations, and industry organizations to support agriculture sector resiliency in the face of rapidly changing climate-related risk profiles.

Discussion

In the wake of increasingly significant drought, wildfire, flooding, and other emergency events over the last several years, the Ministry has been scaling up its capacity to address emerging emergency incidents and strengthening the overall climate readiness of the food and agricultural sector. Work towards this objective is being supported by newly established roles and organizational units within the Ministry, including the establishment of the new Emergency Management Branch with additional staff and the expansion of regional extension services supporting producers in adapting to climate change.

Objective 2.2: Increase uptake of regenerative practices and other on-farm and food processing innovations that support sustainability and reduce emissions.

Regenerative agriculture practices offer producers the chance to play an active role to reduce threats to food production posed by climate change. These practices protect and regenerate soil, water, and air quality, improve biodiversity and protect sensitive habitats, and increase the productivity and profitability of farms. Farmers are also adopting technological innovations such as biodigesters to convert manure into renewable natural gas or the use of precision agriculture agritech solutions to reduce nitrogen fertilizer emissions, as part of the low carbon economy. Together, regenerative agriculture practices and agritech are addressing the need to proactively respond to climate change through practical mitigation and adaptation tactics.

Key Strategies

- Increase available cost-share funding for beneficial management practices through CleanBC.
- Expand research and innovation on beneficial management practices with an emphasis on regenerative practices and sequestration of carbon in the soil.

- Stimulate growth and development of innovation and new technologies that will enhance soil, water and greenhouse agricultural production and food processing sectors.
- Through the B.C. Centre for Agritech and Innovation, support agritech businesses to expand, grow, and meet the progressive needs of primary agricultural production and food processors while ensuring British Columbians’ world-class sustainability, quality and safety standards continue.

Discussion

Farmers receive cost-share funding from the Ministry for completing beneficial management practice 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.

Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2022/23 Actuals	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target
2a Number of beneficial management practice projects completed by farmers which support regenerative agriculture practices and technologies	488	550	700	850	1,000

Data source: Ministry of Agriculture and Food

Discussion

2a Beneficial management practices: Beneficial management practices are tracked by the delivery of beneficial management practice projects through various funding programs. These projects are implemented and adopted by individual farmers and producers. These practices contribute to regenerative agriculture production, indicating a shift in on-farm production to include more regenerative agriculture practices. Cumulative growth in the volume of beneficial management practice projects implemented over time indicates the prevalence of adoption, ongoing use, and rate of transition to beneficial management practices.

Goal 3: Support the agriculture, food and beverage sector in growing and diversifying domestic and international markets.

The Ministry is working to support the sector to expand and diversify domestic and international markets through the delivery of a suite of market development programs and services. By helping to increase sales and diversify markets, the Ministry supports the sector’s ability to contribute to sustainable and resilient economic growth for the province.

Objective 3.1: Increase the capacity of the B.C. agriculture, food and beverage sector to expand domestic and international competitiveness.

Leveraging B.C.'s agriculture, food and beverage sector's competitive advantages, addressing barriers to growth and building capacity to capitalize on market opportunities will enable business and job growth.

Key Strategies

- Deliver trade diversification seminars for the agriculture, food and beverage sector to assist them in understanding market requirements, opportunities and challenges specific to key international markets.
- Provide market research services and cost-shared funding to industry associations to support their ability to conduct market research and establish market development and diversification plans.
- Support the development of a coordinated long-term market development strategy and short-term sales and marketing plan for BC's apple industry, in alignment with the goals and objectives of [The Path Forward: A Blueprint for B.C.'s Tree Fruit Industry](#).
- Increase B.C. processing innovation, productivity and competitiveness through improved industry access to facilities, equipment, technology, training, technical services and other supports.

Discussion

The sector's competitiveness is dependent upon a wide range of factors that drive economic productivity, market development and ultimately growth. As a sector primarily comprised of small to medium-size businesses, the first step to improving competitiveness is increasing capacity and awareness of opportunities, informing actions through market research and planning, and preparing companies to meet market requirements. Targeted export readiness activities support the sector to identify and pursue market development opportunities both abroad and domestically.

Expanding market opportunities will require additional actions to address barriers to growth. As food and beverage manufacturing account for 60 percent of B.C.'s total agriculture, food, and seafood industry GDP, there is a strong focus on expanding opportunities for this part of the sector by increasing value-add activities on B.C. grown products, facilitating and enabling food processing innovation, and investments to improve productivity and profitability.

Objective 3.2: Increase and diversify B.C. agriculture, food and beverage export sales.

B.C.'s broad array of products and strong international reputation for high food safety standards positions the sector to expand export opportunities. Increasing and diversifying export sales increases the long-term resiliency of the sector by reducing market risk and contributes to economic growth and job creation across the province.

Key Strategies

- Support a coordinated government presence in collaboration with the Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development, and Innovation to support industry participation and promotion at large international tradeshows and business to business matchmaking events with support from provincial and federal trade representatives.

Provide cost-shared funding to farmers, food and beverage processors, and industry associations to support industry-led international market development activities that support the sector in developing and diversifying export markets.

Continuous improvements to the B.C. Agrifood and Seafood Export-Ready Business Catalogue to support the ability of B.C. Trade and Investment Representatives and Canadian Trade Commissioners to help connect international food buyers with B.C. exporters.

Discussion

Increasing and diversifying export sales includes maintaining competitiveness in existing markets and supporting trade diversification activities. Coordinating a strong industry presence and facilitating connections to foreign buyers at key international tradeshows and events and showcasing B.C. food and beverage products through in-market promotional activities, ensures that B.C. exporters can develop and maintain strong trading relationships and drive consumer demand and sales of B.C. exports.

Objective 3.3: Support market access through a high standard of animal and plant health programming and diagnostic services.

Plant and animal health and welfare are key factors in increasing the production of a wide range of agricultural products for domestic consumption, for improving public perceptions of and confidence in those products, and for maintaining international trade. Strategies that enhance and protect plant and animal health and welfare in the province are critical to growing and diversifying domestic and export markets.

Key Strategies

- Provide diagnostic, surveillance, investigation, and response programming for priority diseases affecting plant and animal health, as well as food safety, such as avian influenza, African Swine Fever, and *Salmonella spp.*
- Build genomics capacity for animal and plant health, as well as food safety, in the context of a BC One Health Strategy (a cross-disciplinary approach to optimize the health of people, animals, plants and their shared environments; recognizes the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants, and the wider environment (including ecosystems) are closely linked and inter-dependent)
- Enhance extension services to help producers meet plant and animal health and animal welfare requirements for expanded market access.
- Collaborate with stakeholder organizations to develop new and improved policy and programming for the welfare of production animals.

Discussion

Assurance in animal and plant health and food safety are pre-requisites to grow markets. For example, robust programs for foreign animal diseases, such as avian influenza and African Swine Fever, and other diseases with significant animal and public health impacts, reduce market interruptions and preserve livelihoods. Development and implementation of new technologies such as genomics, to detect and understand, predict and prevent health threats is necessary to meet customer expectations. Supporting plant and animal producers to meet increasing health and welfare requirements of international, national and regional customers is particularly critical for the diversification of B.C.'s agricultural sector.

Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2022/23 Actuals	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target
3a Number of B.C. agriculture and food businesses accessing Ministry business and market programs	625	699	814	867	917

Data source: Ministry of Agriculture and Food

Discussion

In 2022, B.C. exported a record \$6.18 billion, an increase of 20.6 percent, in agriculture, seafood, and processed food and beverage products to 142 different international markets. The top five export markets were the U.S (\$4.8 billion), China (\$400 million), Japan (\$246 million), South Korea (\$140 million), and Hong Kong (\$63 million).² Coordinated activities, in partnership with federal and provincial trade representatives, will support B.C. agriculture, seafood, and processed food and beverage businesses to connect to and capitalize on export opportunities.

3a Number of agriculture and food businesses accessing business and market development programs: The number of B.C. agriculture and food businesses that access business and market development programs demonstrate the growth of the sector's capacity to successfully expand and diversify markets. Increasing the number of businesses that access business and market development programs supports market growth and diversification by ensuring businesses are competitive and reducing market risk. This enhances the long-term sustainability of the B.C. agriculture and food sector and promotes economic growth.

² Data source: StatsCan: [Canadian International Merchandise Trade Web Application \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/2639014/00001-eng.htm)

Financial Summary

	2023/24 Restated Estimates¹	2024/25 Estimates	2025/26 Plan	2026/27 Plan
Operating Expenses				
Science, Policy and Inspection	17,465	18,064	18,064	18,064
Agriculture Resources	67,388	68,425	68,425	68,425
BC Farm Industry Review Board	1,427	1,457	1,457	1,457
Executive and Support Services	6,966	7,058	7,058	7,058
Agricultural Land Commission	5,315	5,453	5,453	5,453
Production Insurance Account	13,200	29,679	29,679	29,679
Total	111,761	130,136	130,136	130,136
Capital Expenditures				
Executive and Support Services	875	853	853	853
Total	875	853	853	853

¹ For comparative purposes, amounts shown for 2023/24 have been restated to be consistent with the presentation of the 2024/25 *Estimates*.

Appendix A: Public Sector Organizations

As of February 2024, the Minister of Agriculture and Food is responsible and accountable for the following Agencies, Boards, Commissions and Tribunals:

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.

Marketing Boards and Commissions

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](#)

