

Ministry of Agriculture and Food

2023/24
Annual Service Plan Report

August 2024



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Minister's Accountability Statement



The Ministry of Agriculture and Food 2023/24 Annual Service Plan Report compares the Ministry's actual results to the expected results identified in the 2023/24 – 2025/26 Service Plan published in 2023. I am accountable for those results as reported.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Pam Alexis". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Honourable Pam Alexis
Minister of Agriculture and Food
August 14, 2024

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Letter from the Minister

It is my pleasure to present the Ministry of Agriculture and Food's 2023/24 Annual Service Plan Report. Over the past year, our government has continued to support farmers, ranchers, producers and processors with new programs that will help them grow their businesses, increase B.C.'s food supply and mitigate any future climate impacts. We remain focussed on building strong regional food systems so we can ensure we have sustainable production that will feed us both now and into the future.

We have made significant investments that help our farmers and producers, even as they deal with more challenges such as inflationary input costs, disease, supply chain disruptions and extreme weather. Our goal is to ensure we are strengthening food security for all British Columbians and creating new and greater opportunities to grow, produce and process locally.

Food is essential for our health and well-being, but it also connects us. This is why our government continues to support the people who provide us with the delicious, local food that feeds our families and communities.

And, as we face our ever-changing climate and deal with increased drought, wildfires, floods and extreme temperatures, we will be there for the agriculture and food sector. Our government has a strong Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy in place, and we will continue to make sure B.C. farmers are prepared for and supported through any climate emergencies.

Our government will continue to support the agriculture and food sector and work together with farmers, producers, processors, Indigenous communities, other levels of government, the tech industry and post-secondary institutions, among others, so we can sustainably feed people both at home and globally.



Honourable Pam Alexis
Minister of Agriculture and Food
August 14, 2024

Purpose of the Annual Service Plan Report

This annual service plan report has been developed to meet the requirements of the Budget Transparency and Accountability Act (BTAA), which sets out the legislative framework for planning, reporting and accountability for Government organizations. Under the BTAA, the Minister is required to report on the actual results of the Ministry's performance related to the forecasted targets stated in the service plan for the reported year.

Strategic Direction

The strategic direction set by Government in 2020 and Minister Alexis's [2022 Mandate Letter](#) shaped the goals, objectives, performance measures and financial plan outlined in the [Ministry of Agriculture and Food 2023/24 – 2025/26 Service Plan](#) and the actual results reported on in this annual report.

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

The agriculture, food and beverage sector continues to face challenges due to extreme weather events – including heat, flood, fire, and drought. The Ministry has had to redirect funding from existing program to new initiatives such as Drought Extension Program (e.g. public advertising and information workshops) and staff participation in emergency management operational structures (e.g. emergency operation centres). 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. 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 responded to these threats, such as the highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza, Little Cherry Disease to limit the spread of disease and protect livestock and cherry growers.

Economic Statement

Following two years of strong recovery from the pandemic, economic growth in British Columbia moderated in 2023. After expanding by 3.9 per cent in 2022, B.C.'s real GDP increased by 1.6 per cent in 2023, the second highest growth rate among provinces (tied with Saskatchewan and Ontario) and outperforming the national average. Growth in B.C.'s real GDP was supported by service-producing industries such as real estate, rental and leasing; professional, scientific and technical services; transportation and warehousing; and healthcare. Despite steady growth in the construction and mining, quarrying and oil and gas extraction sectors, output for goods-producing industries decreased in 2023, partly due to lower manufacturing activity. While B.C.'s economy continued to expand in 2023, some sectors such as transportation and warehousing and accommodation and food services have yet to fully return to pre-pandemic levels.

B.C.'s labour market continued to grow in 2023, with employment growth of 1.6 per cent and wages and salaries increasing by 6.9 per cent. However, B.C.'s unemployment rate rose to 5.2 per cent in 2023 from 4.6 per cent in the previous year as the labour force, supported by record high immigration, grew faster than employment. High interest rates tempered consumer spending on goods in 2023 and nominal retail sales edged down 0.1 per cent. In 2023, price pressures in B.C. moderated among a broad number of goods and services but remained elevated. B.C.'s inflation rate averaged 3.9 per cent in 2023, down from 6.9 per cent in 2022. B.C. home construction activity strengthened in 2023. Housing starts totaled 50,490 units in 2023, the highest annual pace on record and up 8.1 per cent compared to the previous

year. High interest rates continued to weigh on home sales activity last year. B.C. MLS home sales decreased by 9.2 per cent in 2023, while the MLS average home sale price was 2.6 per cent lower than 2022. On the external front, B.C.'s international merchandise exports declined by 13.5 per cent in 2023, due to weaker global demand and lower commodity prices compared to 2022.

Report on Performance: Goals, Objectives, and Results

The following goals, objectives and performance measures have been restated from the 2023/24 – 2025/26 service plan. For forward-looking planning information, including current targets for 2024/25 – 2026/27, please see the latest service plan on the [BC Budget website](#).

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

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 results

- Grow BC supported participation of new entrants to the sector with 84 business and growth planning projects through the New Entrant Farm Business Accelerator Program.
- Integrated Feed BC into the Province's 60 school districts through Feeding Futures.
- Provided opportunities through Feed BC for 354 B.C. food businesses to increase their market readiness, develop business connections, and initiate new value chains with B.C. public institutions' food services.
- Increased awareness of the Buy BC brand to consumers through a B.C.- wide advertising campaign highlighting the people behind B.C.'s agriculture, food and fish sector.
- Through the \$20M Food Affordability and Innovation Fund, 26 projects were funded to support food system partnerships that expand food storage, distribution, and independent grocery retail capacity across the province and address supply chain bottlenecks.

Summary of progress made in 2023/24

A key focus of 2023/24 was bringing Feed BC to Kindergarten to Grade 12 schools in the foundational year of Feeding Futures, a new provincial investment to create and expand school food programs in British Columbia. As capacity of school districts builds to track B.C. food purchases in 2024/25, progress will be reflected in forthcoming Service Plan reports. Feed

BC was also expanded to BC Corrections in partnership with the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, and all ten correctional centres are now actively working to track and source more B.C. food.

The Ministry funded the development of updated business plans for the majority of the 13 food hubs as well as planning for the long-term B.C. Food Hub Network. These hubs provide access to shared-use commercial processing facilities and support services to over 110 small to medium-sized food and beverage processing companies.

The Ministry also supported the implementation of the Agriculture and Food Workforce Development Program in partnership with, and with \$15M in funding, from the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (SDPR). This included the launch of the Workforce Analysis and Planning Program, to support industry understanding of issues and development of domestic workforce development strategies, and the Summer Student Farm Worker Bursary, to support youth engagement and work experience in the sector.

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 important 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 approaches that enable capacity building, improve social, cultural and economic well-being, and lead to the equitable participation for Indigenous peoples in the sector.

Key results

- \$30M over three years was invested in an Indigenous Food Security and Sovereignty Fund to be delivered by New Relationship Trust. The fund provides dedicated funds and an Indigenous-led, distinctions-based approach for supporting a range of Indigenous food security and food sovereignty projects. Sixty-six projects were approved in 2023/24 totalling over \$9.62M.
- Worked in partnership with Investment Agriculture Foundation to launch the Indigenous Food Systems and Agriculture Skills and Training program (ISAT), a \$2.3M stream of the Agriculture Workforce Development Initiative made available by the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction. Thirteen Indigenous-led Projects were approved from the 2023 intake worth \$984,323.
- Together with Indigenous chefs, Indigenous foods educators, and government partners, Feed BC developed a process guide for Cooking In Two Worlds and piloted a Learning Journey and knowledge sharing webinars across public institutions and other government partners to improve readiness for institutions to incorporate Indigenous foods.

- Supported Stwecem'c Xget'tem First Nation and Canim Lake First Nation in the operational transitions of three ranch operations included in incremental agreements of the Northern Secwepemc te Qelmuw treaty process.

Summary of progress made in 2023/24

The Ministry continued its work with the B.C. Indigenous Advisory Council on Agriculture and Food (IACAF) to guide its approach to reconciliation and understanding of the importance of Indigenous food systems and systemic barriers to Indigenous food security and participation in the agriculture and food sector. IACAF's influence was notable in program design and funding delivery and increasing the Ministry's understanding of Indigenous food systems and their intersection with agriculture.

The Ministry began working in partnership with First Nations Health Authority in 2023 to initiate the creation of a new Indigenous Food Security and Food Systems Table to bring together a cross-agency table with Indigenous partners to support relationship development, information sharing and a coordinated approach to Indigenous food security and food systems projects and initiatives.

Lastly, the Ministry began working with Indigenous facilitators and Preparing Our Home – a community-based resilience planning program enabling Indigenous youth leadership in emergency preparedness, for the early engagement regarding the development of the Emergency Preparedness for Food Security Strategy.

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 and supporting partnerships with farmers, industry and government in developing long-term planning and food security in the province. Maintaining a province-wide Agricultural Land Use Inventory 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.

Key results

- In 2023, Agricultural Land Use Inventory (ALUI) pre-field digitizing and field data was collected for Squamish Lillooet Regional District, Regional District of Fraser Fort George, Fraser Valley Regional District, Regional District of Central Okanagan and the Koksilah watershed
- In 2024, imagery and pre field digitizing was completed for the Nicola Watershed and Columbia Shuswap Regional District.

- Metro Vancouver data was quality controlled, and quality assured then uploaded to the map data sharing site for consumption and presented to the Minister.
- A procurement process was completed to select a contractor to deliver the ALUI for the next five years, with Partnership for Water Sustainability BC as the successful bidder.

Summary of progress made in 2023/24

During 2023 and 2024 pre-field digitizing and field data was collected from the Squamish Lillooet Regional District, Regional District of Fraser Fort George, Fraser Valley Regional District, Regional District of Central Okanagan. The Koksilah watershed Imagery and pre field digitizing was completed for the Nicola Watershed and Columbia Shuswap Regional District. Metro Vancouver data collected in 2021 was finalized and entered into the Ministry's hub site for consumption. An agreement was signed for the Partnership for Water Sustainability BC to complete an ALUI for the entire province by 2028.

Performance measure(s) and related discussion

Performance Measure	2021/22 Baseline	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Target	2023/24 Actual
1a Number of government or other Feed BC partner facilities that have committed to working towards a minimum 30 percent B.C. food expenditures within total annual food expenditures ¹	190	190	205	199
1b Number of Buy BC logo licensed products ²	3,167	3,945	4,500	7,928

Data source: Ministry of Agriculture and Food

¹ PM 1a targets for 2024/25 and 2025/26 were stated in the 2023/24 service plan as 215 and 225 respectively.

² PM 1b targets for 2024/25 and 2025/26 were stated in the 2023/24 service plan as 5,000 and 5,500 respectively.

In 2023/24, 189 Feed BC partner facilities in healthcare (169) and post-secondary (20) remained committed to Feed BC target of 30 percent B.C. food expenditure within their total annual food expenditures. The number of health authority facilities reduced from 171 to 169 as two sites were closed and/or amalgamated. Ten new facilities were added to the results in 2023/24 as all Provincial correctional centres began to track and report on B.C. foods expenditures for a total of 199 Feed BC partner facilities.

Since the Buy BC program was reintroduced in 2017, the Ministry has made significant progress in building a strong and recognizable brand, enabling consumers to support local businesses and their communities. In 2023/24, the Buy BC program significantly exceeded its

original target of 4,500 licensed products, reaching a total of 7,928. This notable increase in licensed products can be attributed to the Ministry's strategic efforts, including the Buy BC advertising campaign to raise program awareness and initiatives to encourage businesses to participate in the program.

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

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, 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: (1) understanding risk; (2) strengthening risk governance to manage risk; (3) investing in mitigation for resilience and; (4) enhancing preparedness for effective response; (5) capacity building for resilience and to "Build Back Better" in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Key results

- The \$20M Food Security Emergency Planning and Preparedness Fund has committed \$12.5M in 2023/24 e for 24 emergency planning and preparedness projects for local authorities, First Nations, agriculture industry associations, and allied trades.
- The \$5M Farmed Animal Disease Fund has committed \$4.5M for planning and preparedness for animal disease events including High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza and African Swine Fever.
- The Agriculture Water Infrastructure Program was launched in June 2023, with an initial \$20M fund, and the program is funding 108 projects ranging from water storage, such as agricultural dams and dugouts, to improved water-supply systems for irrigation and livestock. The 108 projects represented an investment by the Province of \$16.6M. An additional \$83M of funding was announced in February 2024.
- The Extreme Weather Preparedness Program distributed over \$1.6M to agriculture producers in 2023/24 to help them innovate and prepare for floods, wildfires, and extreme heat events.

Summary of progress made in 2023/24

The Ministry continued to strengthen its emergency management capacity and capabilities through the growth and development of the recently established Emergency Management Branch, volunteer recruitment for the Ministry's Emergency Management Team, and ongoing work to define emergency management roles and responsibilities of Ministry business areas and subject matter experts.

The Ministry dedicated significant response efforts to support response and recovery to drought and wildfire in 2023 and moved immediately into preparing for drought in 2024. Preparedness actions in 2024 were the most extensive in the ministry's history, with over 40 drought preparedness workshops for producers and 12 regional emergency management workshops for local government staff.

On other hazards and long-range issues, there was a focus on early engagement to shape the direction of emergency management and climate resilience over coming years. The ministry's new regional extension project engaged with farmers across the province on priorities for extension and knowledge transfer projects that address regional needs. These projects will be moving forward in 2024/25 and a large share will advance regional climate resilience for agriculture. The Ministry also began early engagement on emergency preparedness for food security, including commissioning an analysis of food supply-chain vulnerabilities, and began early planning for updates to the ministry's emergency plans as required under the Emergency and Disaster Management Act (2023).

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 results

- In May 2023, the Minister's Advisory Group on Regenerative Agriculture and Agritech released the British Columbia (B.C.) Sustainable Agriculture Strategic Framework Report that includes 10 recommendations for government.
- The Beneficial Management Practices Program provided \$4M to agricultural producers to complete 302 projects supporting the adoption of regenerative practices, under program categories of Soil Carbon, Energy & Fuel Efficiency, Riparian & Grazing, Biodiversity, and Nutrient & Waste Management.

- The Regional Extension Program was launched in April 2023, with the Ministry conducting 18 regional engagements sessions to develop producer-centric, regionally specific environment & climate extension support. In 2023/24, the program provided \$1M to 16 projects for on-farm demonstration, workshop, or field day events.
- The Knowledge and Technology Transfer Program provided \$185,000 to 41 agricultural organizations to develop demonstration projects that showcase the benefits and feasibility of adopting sustainable practices and technologies in different regions and commodities in B.C.
- The \$3M B.C. On-Farm Technology Adoption Program, delivered by Innovate BC, supported 54 farms to purchase new agritech solutions, including precision agriculture tools, monitoring systems, robotic and automated equipment, and data analytics platforms.

Summary of progress made in 2023/24

The Minister’s Advisory Group on Regenerative Agriculture provided an opportunity for government to build consensus towards a shared vision for sustainable agriculture in B.C. with thought leaders representing different perspectives from across the sector. Their report emphasized the importance of farmers and ranchers defining what is needed to support sustainable production, and the Ministry has made this lens explicit in 2023/24 program design, including the regional extension committees, engagement workshops and the Knowledge and Technology Transfer Program’s focus on capacity building within Farmers’ Institutes and industry associations.

The report’s recommendations also recognized the importance of soil health. To support soil health, the Ministry led the launch of a provincial Soil Health Technical Working Group in April 2023 and developed a Soil Health Assessment Protocol to be piloted in 2024 as part of the Regional Extension Program. The protocol will provide a shared basis for measuring soil health and the impacts of regenerative practices.

Performance measure(s) and related discussion

Performance Measure	2021/22 Baseline	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Target	2023/24 Actual
2a Number of beneficial management practice projects completed by farmers which support regenerative agriculture practices and technologies ¹	200	488 ²	550	302

Data source: Ministry of Agriculture and Food

¹ PM 2a targets for 2024/25 and 2025/26 were stated in the 2023/24 service plan as 700 and 850 respectively.

² “The 2022/23 ASPR had a typo that indicated 525 projects being completed in 2022/23. That number included all projects, not only the 488 projects that directly supported regenerative agriculture.”

The actual number of projects completed in 2023/24 fell short of the 2023/24 target for the Beneficial Management Practices program, although the number of applications received (500) and approved (387) was closer to the target. These results show that the demand for program funding was high, as indicated by the number of applications received. It should also be noted

that approved projects that were not completed were extended into 2024/25 (i.e., slated to be completed in 2024/25).

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

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 results

- Through the \$20M Food Processing Growth Fund, 41 projects were funded to increase productivity and processing capacity across the province.
- A Provincial-led Minister Mission to the U.S. Pacific Northwest took ten B.C. food and beverage companies to learn about accessing market opportunities and establishing a grass-roots network in the region.
- A Market Readiness Strategy developed to help guide Ministry efforts in supporting B.C. companies become market-ready and diversify into various market channels.
- Provided the opportunity for 85 food and beverage companies with training and direct connections to the institutional food service market through business-to-business events.
- Supported 87 food and beverage companies to improve their business and operational planning expertise.

Summary of progress made in 2023/24

The Provincial-led Minister Mission to the Pacific Northwest U.S. market was a big step towards helping to build the sector's capacity in expanding sector competitiveness into priority international markets. The cohort of selected companies were invited to participate in a three-day mission that included travel to the region for local retailer site-visits, training activities on market access considerations, and early-stage networking opportunities to enter the market. The U.S. market, as our top export market, is considered a key-stone opportunity for B.C. companies seeking to start their export journey due to the regional location, established trade policy and regulation environment, and similar consumer demand trends to domestic markets.

The Ministry is also focused identifying key sectors that are of high-value in domestic and international market opportunities and have significant impact to regional economies. In an effort to help the B.C. apple industry leverage their competitive advantages in local markets, the Ministry supported the initiation of a Marketing Plan for the sector that includes tangible actions to build-upon market intelligence research findings. This Plan is a direct recommendation out of the Tree Fruit Stabilization report, [The Path Forward: A Blueprint for the B.C.'s Tree Fruit Industry](#).

Developing a Market Readiness Strategy was a response to industry's request to help the sector increase their competitiveness and create access in multiple market channels (domestic, international, and institutional). While the Ministry is already leading and partnering on programs and services that support this ask, the Ministry will continue to identify gaps and work with industry to improve a company along the business growth continuum.

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 results

- In partnership with the Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development, and Innovation, 50 B.C. companies were supported to attend eight different international tradeshows.
- The B.C. Agriculture and Food Export Program offered over \$1M in cost-shared funding to support industry-led international market development activities.
- 135 B.C. companies were featured in the Produce B.C. Agrifood and Seafood Export-Ready Business Catalogue to support promotion in international markets.

Summary of progress made in 2023/24

The Ministry continues to focus on increasing and diversifying B.C. agriculture, food and beverage export sales through our long-standing relationship and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development, and Innovation (JEDI). Working to ensure that our programs and supports meet the needs of companies looking to enter into international sales, as well as diversifying their products and the markets that they sell to. Our coordinated approach with JEDI to support B.C. businesses participate and promote their products at large international tradeshows and business to business matchmaking events continues to be successful and bring opportunity to expand export sales.

The Ministry also prioritizes offering cost-shared funding via the B.C. Agriculture and Food Export Program to enable B.C. farmers, food, and beverage processors to pursue international market development activities that support the sector in developing and diversifying export

markets. The Program works in tandem with our service support offered in partnership with JEDI by helping B.C. companies prepare for international markets.

The B.C. Agrifood and Seafood Export-Ready Business Catalogue continues to be a resource for B.C. farmers and food and beverage processors to promote their products internationally and support the ability of B.C. Trade and Investment Representatives and Canadian Trade Commissioners to help connect international food buyers with B.C. exporters.

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. Plant and animal health and welfare are negatively affected by a growing number of threats ranging from infectious disease to climate-related phenomena (e.g., extreme heat, flood, etc.), to public discontent with animal welfare and food safety standards. For these reasons, 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 results

- Facilitated market access by demonstrating adherence to international animal and plant health regulations and standards and by providing timely and reliable information and guidance to farmers and producers to enable them to meet and exceed animal and plant health standards, thereby enhancing market competitiveness.
- Led provincial response, including laboratory testing and development of response plans, to effectively manage outbreaks and mitigate emerging threats to animal and plant health, including Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) and Chronic wasting disease (CWD), Whirling disease, etc.
- Developed and implemented genomics-based surveillance, investigation, and control programs to act as early sentinels, swiftly detecting and addressing emerging issues with precision.
- Addressed animal health and welfare through working to enhance access to veterinary services for livestock producers and rural communities.

Summary of progress made in 2023/24

The Animal Health Centre, Plant Health Laboratory and the Office of the Chief Veterinarian implemented many programs and new tests in 2023/2024 to support both diagnostic services, diseases investigation, monitoring and surveillance in the Province. Amongst the some of the new tests developed include Chronic Waste Disease (which was detected for the first time in BC in February 2024); Milk testing for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in cattle; Little Cherry Disease Virus PCR, etc.

The Ministry provided an extensive suite of services for producers in B.C., including apiary, dairy, poultry and smallholder extension and outreach. In addition, the Ministry launched the Veterinary and Veterinary Technician Student Program, supporting 21 student participants in 17 BC food-animal veterinary practices for summer 2024.

The Ministry led the development of the provincial [One Health Framework](#), in collaboration with other agencies (BC Centre for Disease Control and the BC Ministries of, Environment and Climate Change Strategy, and Water, Lands and Resource Stewardship). Completion of the framework was a key step towards formalizing recognition of the innate interconnectedness of animal, human and environmental health, and building governance and capacity for developing and implementing health interventions, policies, and programs that promote collaborative and inclusive, systems-based approaches to address contemporary health and environmental challenges.

Performance measure(s) and related discussion

Performance Measure	2021/22 Baseline	2022/23 Actual	2023/24 Target	2023/24 Actual
3a Number of B.C. agriculture and food businesses accessing Ministry business and market development programs ¹	471	625	705	705

Data source: Ministry of Agriculture and Food

¹ PM 1a targets for 2024/25 and 2025/26 were stated in the 2023/24 service plan as 715 and 725 respectively.

In 2023/24, the Ministry met its target of number of B.C. businesses accessing business and market development programs, and increased participation by 11% from the previous fiscal year (2022/23). These programs span across the business growth continuum from early-stage, small, medium, and large-scale business needs and include programs that focus on multiple channels (domestic, international, and institutional), as well as diversity of business ownership.

Financial Report

Financial Summary

	Estimated (\$000)	Other Authoriz- ations ¹ (\$000)	Total Estimated (\$000)	Actual (\$000)	Variance (\$000)
Operating Expenses					
Science, Policy and Inspection	17,465	239	17,704	21,352	3,648
Agriculture Resources	67,388	101,075	168,463	162,782	(5,681)
BC Farm Industry Review Board	1,427	70	1,497	1,928	431
Executive and Support Services	6,966	854	7,820	9,422	1,602
Agricultural Land Commission	5,315	98	5,413	5,413	0
Production Insurance Special Account (Net)	13,200	45,026	58,226	58,226	0
Sub-total	111,761	147,361	259,122	259,122	0
Adjustment of Prior Year Accrual ²	0	0	0	(243)	(243)
Total	111,761	147,361	259,122	258,879	(243)
Ministry Capital Expenditures					
Executive and Support Services	875	2,375	3,250	3,250	0
Total	875	2,375	3,250	3,250	0

¹ "Other Authorizations" include Supplementary Estimates, Statutory Appropriations and Contingencies. Amounts in this column are not related to the "estimated amount" under sections 5(1) and 6(1) of the *Balanced Budget and Ministerial Accountability Act* for ministerial accountability for operating expenses under the Act.

² The Adjustment of Prior Year Accrual of \$0.243M is a reversal of accruals in the previous year.

Appendix A: Public Sector Organizations

As of March 31, 2024, the Minister of Agriculture and Food is responsible and accountable for the following organizations:

[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.

[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](#)

Appendix B: Progress on Mandate Letter Priorities

The following is a summary of progress made on priorities as stated in Minister Alexis’s 2022 Mandate Letter.

2022 Mandate Letter Priority	Status as of March 31, 2024
<p>Continue work on the recommendations of the Food Security Task Force and take steps to make B.C. a leader in agricultural innovation, resilience, and food security in the face of emerging challenges of supply chain disruption, global inflation, rising costs, and the impacts of climate change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launched a new, \$3M B.C. On-Farm Technology Adoption Program, through Innovate BC’s Integrated Marketplace Initiative, to support B.C. farms to purchase agritech solutions that enhance efficiency, productivity and profitability, and to create a stronger local market for B.C.-made agritech solutions developed through the B.C. Centre for Agritech Innovation. • Supported 47 projects through the \$20M Food Affordability and Innovation Fund to strengthen the food supply chain, including investments in innovative technologies and equipment to streamline and enhance logistics, storage, and transportation, and increase the capacity of independent grocers to supply affordable food to British Columbians, particularly in remote, rural and indigenous communities. • Promoted international cooperation and established connections between farmers, agritech manufacturers and academic leaders in B.C. and the Netherlands through a B.C.-Netherlands Agritech Action Plan session at the Pacific Agricultural Show in January 2024.
<p>Work with Indigenous Peoples on agricultural initiatives identified by them to support their interests in economic development food security, and community building across the province.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with the B.C. Indigenous Advisory Council on Agriculture and Food (IACAF) and other Indigenous partners to identify opportunities to strengthen Indigenous food systems and increase Indigenous participation

2022 Mandate Letter Priority	Status as of March 31, 2024
	<p>in the agriculture and food sector. IACAF has provided guidance to the Ministry on program, policy and strategic plan development and implementation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$30M investment in New Relationship Trust to fund projects in Indigenous communities – Indigenous Food Sovereignty Program. Year 1 and 2 of program intake were both oversubscribed, but program has demonstrated government commitment to support indigenous peoples with food security projects, and these sentiments are echoed at the First Nations Leadership Gathering. • \$1.14M Indigenous Food Systems and Agricultural Partnership Program (fully subscribed) • Dedicated Indigenous Agriculture Development Program through CAP.
<p>Work with the Minister of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness, support the resilience of B.C.'s food system through and emergency preparedness strategy for food security.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement underway with industry, indigenous partners, and local governments. • Strategy will have 4 core elements: (1) emergency food access, (2) food supply chains, (3) food production, (4) indigenous food security and sovereignty
<p>Grow our economy, reduce costs, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and increase food security for British Columbians by working with partners to increase food processing in B.C. while increasing innovation in food processing in the province, and supporting export opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BC products shipped to 142 International Markets • 2023 SCAP Agreement providing \$15M over 5 years for increasing trade and export of BC agriculture and seafood products. • \$1M Agriculture and Food Export program. • Ministry-led 2023 US Trade Mission

2022 Mandate Letter Priority	Status as of March 31, 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$20M Food Processing Growth Fund – supporting increased capacity • \$2M BC Small Food Processor Scale-Up Program • 2023 SCAP Agreement providing \$3M to food processing and value-added programs
<p>Work with industry to identify agricultural best practices that reduce carbon pollution and support their adoption across the sector so that agricultural innovation can continue to be a key part of our province’s efforts to reduce carbon pollution.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beneficial Management Program • Programs that support Greenhouse Gas efficient farm practices and carbon sequestration
<p>Ensure government has all of the information required about land use in the Agricultural Land Reserve to support partnerships with farmers, industry, and government in developing long-term planning and food security in the province.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of the 4, 612, 351 HA in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), 2, 139, 344 HA have had an ALUI survey and report; 46.38% that have been reported on up to June 3, 2024.
<p>Continue to support the Grow BC, Feed BC, and Buy BC programs to encourage greater food security, regional business growth, and Have access to local food.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to implement the New Entrant Strategy through B.C. Land Matching Program and New Farm Business Acceleration Program. • Implemented Feed BC partnerships with all 6 regional health authorities. In 2022-23, the most recent reporting period, 27.5% of the food served by health authorities was B.C. food. • Implemented formal Feed BC partnerships with 20 of BC’s 25 post-secondary institutions. Feed BC post-secondary partners reported an average of 42% of the food serviced was from BC, with 75% of partners now meeting or exceeding their target of sourcing at least 30% BC foods. • Increased availability of B.C. food through funding for 85 industry-led local marketing projects through the Buy BC Partnership Program and

2022 Mandate Letter Priority	Status as of March 31, 2024
	<p>partnerships with 323 individual retail stores across B.C</p>
<p>Support the work of the Minister of Education and Child Care to integrate Feed BC into expanded school meal programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting government’s investment of \$214M for school districts to create or expand food programs in schools, Feed BC is working in collaboration with the Minister of Education and Child Care to build on local food work already underway in B.C.’s K-12 sector and support schools to use more B.C. food based on school food needs.