
NEWS RELEASE COMMUNIQUÉ

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Ministry of Agriculture
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Canada and B.C. invest in tree fruits

VICTORIA – Three projects by the B.C. Tree Fruits Cooperative (BCTFC) will tackle tree cankers and cherry packing efficiencies to boost net returns of growers. The BCTFC is receiving joint federal-provincial funding for a three-year study testing control methods for tree cankers, to improve fruit tree health. Funding is also being provided for installation of the latest technologies to two cherry packing lines, in Oliver and Kelowna.

All three projects will help to improve the agriculture sector, supporting both export and domestic markets:

- A \$125,000 investment to study the health of fruit trees and their production levels with different control methods for tree cankers, an ongoing and increasing challenge in the B.C. apple industry. Tree cankers can be devastating to tree fruit production, and this project will test five different blight and canker control methods, a combination of cultural, biological, and chemical options. By developing an integrated approach to managing tree cankers, tree health will improve, fruit yields will rise, and production losses will decrease.
- BCTFC's packing line in Oliver supports the domestic cherry market and through the addition of a new type of automated trickle filler, packing capacity will increase by 50 per cent. For the 2014 season, this facility will be able to process up to 5 million pounds of cherries. A \$43,500 investment is coming from the Canada-B.C. Tree Fruit Marketing and Infrastructure Innovation Initiative (TFMIII).
- Cherry packing will also see improvements through a new technology upgrade in Kelowna, thanks to an investment of just over \$500,000 from the Canada-B.C. TFMIII. The cherry export market, which is B.C.'s most valuable exported tree fruit crop, is largely supported by the BCTFC's Kelowna line, and the new technology upgrade will increase production from 2 tons per hour to 5.3 tons per hour.

Quick facts:

- B.C.'s marketed production of sweet cherries was 13,633 metric tons in 2012, with a farm gate value of \$40.4 million. This represents 99 per cent of production in Canada and over 98 per cent of the national sweet cherry crop farm gate value.

- As a net exporter and a leading province for exporting fresh cherries, B.C. is responsible for over 97 per cent of the total amount of fresh cherries exported in Canada. B.C.'s sweet cherry exports have more than tripled in the last decade going from 2,031 metric tons in 2003 to 7,337 metric tons in 2012, while the value of B.C. cherry exports has gone from \$11.3 million to \$41.7 million in the same timeframe, making sweet cherries B.C.'s most valuable exported tree fruit crop.
- Apples represent over three quarters of all B.C. tree fruit production. Nearly 92 per cent of the apple crop is sold fresh, with British Columbians consuming around 25 per cent of the apples grown in the province.
- Formerly known as the Okanagan Tree Fruits Cooperative, the BCFTC has a long standing strong reputation for packing tree fruit, and over the past year has invested in facilities upgrades in Kelowna, Oliver and Winfield.
- The Canada-B.C. TFMIII is funded by the federal AgriFlexibility program and the Province of B.C.

Quotes:

B.C. Minister of Agriculture Pat Pimm –

“This funding will help B.C. growers with sector-wide benefits including the opportunity to earn new dollars and increase jobs. We will continue to work with our tree fruit industry and food producing families in developing innovative products while increasing exports.”

Federal Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz –

“Projects like these – focused on science, innovation, and technological improvements – will help to ensure that B.C. growers can continue to produce top-quality products for domestic and international markets while creating jobs and growing our economy.”

BC Tree Fruits Cooperative chief executive officer Alan Tyabji –

“BC Tree Fruits Cooperative is thankful for the support from both the federal and provincial governments with regards to these projects. This funding not only shows the commitment both governments have to the BC tree fruit industry, but allows us to invest in state of the art technology which enables our Cooperative to compete successfully in both the domestic and export markets.”

Learn more:

Canada-B.C. TFMIII:

<http://www.bcfga.com/215/Tree+Fruit+Marketing+and+Infrastructure+Innovation+Initiative>

Canada's Economic Action Plan: <http://actionplan.gc.ca/>

B.C. Tree Fruits Cooperative: <http://www.oktreefruit.com/>

Investment Agriculture Foundation of B.C.: <http://www.iafbc.ca/index.htm>

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