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## **Investment Agriculture Foundation Holds Annual General Meeting & Project Showcase**

**May 1, 2015 – Victoria, B.C.** The B.C. Investment Agriculture Foundation (IAF) held its Annual General Meeting in Abbotsford to present its contributions for 2014 to the British Columbia agriculture and agri-food industry.

IAF chair Ken Bates highlighted the growing opportunities available to industry through funding programs like the B.C. Government's Buy Local Program, the B.C. Agrifoods Export Program, and the Canada-B.C. Agri-Innovation Program. Bates also thanked Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture for their ongoing support.

"The agri-food industry clearly understands the impact that IAF and the programs that we deliver have had," said Bates, noting that many clients have reported significant sales increases since receiving funding.

Executive Director Peter Donkers provided an overview of project impacts across B.C.'s crop, livestock and pan-agricultural sectors, also crediting the Innovation, Export and Buy Local programs for increasing opportunities for industry and helping B.C. companies like Pacific Rim Shellfish, Ethical Bean Coffee, BCfresh, Bremner Foods and Vitalus Nutrition to become more competitive on both domestic and international levels.

"The investments made through these programs mean that more B.C. producers and processors are accessing new markets, developing new products, and implementing innovative practices and technologies that will set new industry standards," Donkers explained, adding that funding for commercialization and adoption projects is still available through the Innovation program.

On the financial side, treasurer Jim Tingle's report revealed IAF approved more than 200 projects during 2014, with contributions totalling more than \$8 million toward new and continuing projects and initiatives.

Following the AGM, new directors Dennis Lapierre (Okanagan-Shuswap/community agriculture) and Don Low (Kootenays/tree fruits and grapes) were welcomed onto the IAF board, while a fond farewell was bid to departing directors Robert Dawson and treasurer Jim Tingle.

Continuing IAF directors are chair Ken Bates (Lower Mainland/field vegetables, berries and mushrooms), Walter Fritsche (Peace/grains, oilseeds and forage), Arzeena Hamir (Vancouver

Island/emerging sectors), Dale Krahn (Fraser Valley/poultry), Ed Salle (Thompson-Okanagan/cattle), and Kalpna Solanki (Lower Mainland/post farm gate).

Directors re-appointed for a further two-year term are Len Bouwman (Fraser Valley/dairy), Jack DeWit (Fraser Valley/other livestock), vice chair Bar Hayre (Fraser Valley/farm supply), Alistair Johnston (Fraser Valley/post farm gate), and secretary Bert Miles (North Okanagan/greenhouse, floriculture and nursery).

The *2015 Showcase of B.C. Projects* topped off the day, featuring an exhibit of more than 40 projects by IAF clients that are inspiring new ideas and approaches in B.C. agriculture, and offering a forum to explore partnership and funding opportunities.

“The opportunity to showcase projects that are important to our industry and supported by IAF is a pleasure,” says Geraldine Auston, Director of Communications for the BC Cranberry Marketing Commission. “The ability to network with others in agriculture is very valuable as we have many overlapping interests and challenges, and a venue such as this allows us to come together and exchange ideas.”

Keynote speaker, Tamara Barnett, Vice President of Strategic Insights with the Hartman Group, shared her unique insights into shifting consumer trends and offered marketing strategies to B.C. producers and processors looking to enter the U.S. market.

Also joining Tamara were IAF director and Director of Operations for the Vanderpol Food Group, Alistair Johnston, and IAF funding recipient and CEO of DeeBee’s SpecialTea Foods, Dionne Laslo-Baker, who provided their perspectives and guidance as domestic and international agri-food entrepreneurs.

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The Investment Agriculture Foundation is an industry-led not-for-profit organization that works with the agrifood industry to strategically invest federal and provincial funds toward projects that have the potential to transform ideas into solutions.

Funding for the B.C. Agrifoods Export Program and the Canada-B.C. Agri-Innovation Program is provided by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture under *Growing Forward 2*, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative.

Funding for the B.C. Government’s Buy Local Program is provided by the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture.

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