
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Agriculture

Boost to B.C. tree fruit, funding supports new growers and sector competitiveness

VICTORIA – Apple, cherry and other tree fruit growers throughout the province will be able to update aging equipment and infrastructure while increasing their marketing and research efforts thanks to a new \$5-million Tree Fruit Competitiveness Fund announced today at the B.C. Fruit Growers’ Association annual general meeting.

“This fund will help family-run orchards and the sector as a whole with advancements that make B.C. tree fruit more competitive in the marketplace,” said Agriculture Minister Lana Popham. “The \$5-million investment reflects this government’s commitment to partner with B.C. growers to help modernize their practices, and help them share their great-tasting apples, cherries and other fruits, with more customers here at home and around the world.”

The fund will be open to tree fruit growers, producers, and processors to support three key areas of priority:

- Research: cultivar, disease and pest research.
- Marketing: export market opportunities and market development research.
- Infrastructure: sector-based infrastructure modernization such as new equipment.

“This funding is so important to the future of our industry. We need help controlling new invasive pests like the brown marmorated stinkbug, and marketing is an area where we need to invest in new varieties,” said Fred Steele, president of the BC Fruit Growers’ Association. “This funding will also help with our very successful replant program. This investment, at a time when we are challenged in the marketplace, will ensure that we continue to make progress that leads to a bright future for the tree fruit sector. The government is fulfilling its promise made during the election campaign and we sincerely thank Minister Popham for this announcement.”

Portions of the fund can also be used to address any oversubscription of the B.C. government’s Tree Fruit Replant Program over the next four years. This year, the Province provided an additional \$300,000 in funding for the replant program, to meet the demand from tree fruit growers.

The B.C. government will be engaging with the B.C. Fruit Growers’ Association and other partners to set up the fund and establish the process for awarding funding. It is anticipated the fund will be active for the next three to four years.

B.C.’s tree fruit industry is composed of approximately 800 growers managing 6,474 hectares (16,000 acres) of tree fruit in crops in the Okanagan, Similkameen and Creston Valleys. Those growers produced nearly 129,000 tonnes of fruit in 2016 worth more than \$116 million.

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