

January
2010

Commission Report

BC Vegetable Marketing Commission Monthly Newsletter

BCVMC 2010
ELECTION

AGM GUEST
SPEAKER -
THE HONOURABLE
STEVE THOMSON,
MINISTER BCMAL

NEW ENTRANT
PROGRAM RECEIVES
VMC APPROVAL

2009 ELECTION

By now commercial producers should be in receipt of information outlining the 2009 Commission election process. Included with the circulated information is a nomination form that is to be completed by candidates interested in serving as a Commission member. Nominations are to be received by the Independent Election Officer (IEO) no later than February 11.

With the close of nominations and if necessary the next step will be the distribution of ballots. Voting will be conducted in the event there is more than one nomination received for one of the 6 positions for which candidates may be nominated.

Persons listed on the register of commercial producers are able to sign a candidate's nomination form; mark and return a ballot; and accept a nomination to serve as a Commissioner.

Anyone with questions about the election process or needing election materials should contact Jack Wessel at the BC Council of Marketing Board (Telephone: 604-302-1046). Mr. Wessel is the IEO.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The annual general meeting of the BC Vegetable Marketing Commission is scheduled to be held at the Delta Town & Country Inn on Thursday, March 25. The meeting is scheduled to start at 7:00 PM.

Arrangements have been made for Hon. Steve Thomson, Minister of Agriculture & Lands, to address the AGM.

The Commission has been advised by the Minister's office that the Legislative Assembly will be sitting on March 25th making the Minister's availability subject to being able to be away from the legislature.

STORAGE CROP NEW ENTRANT PROGRAM

After consultation with the storage crop sector over an extended period of time, including storage crop agency managers, during its December 17, 2009 regular meeting the Commission approved a new entrant program for regulated storage crops.

The Commission will soon begin implementing the **Storage Crop New Entrant Program** based on its key feature; namely, VMC approval for new entrants to commence the production for marketing of regulated storage crops results from consulting with one or more of the Designated Agencies and an agency is prepared to represent one or more of the regulated crops to be produced by the new entrant. As part of its decision for granting new entrant approval the Commission will consider Provincial supply.

Annual General Meeting
BC VEGETABLE MARKETING COMMISSION
Thursday, March 25, 2010 - 7:00 P.M.
Delta Town & Country Inn

BC Vegetable
Marketing Commission

**ON-FARM FOOD
SAFETY TRAINING
OPPORTUNITY****ON-FARM FOOD SAFETY**

The Commission's 2010 – 2012 strategic plan highlights on-farm food safety as a key area for dedicating resources geared to increasing the number of British Columbia vegetable farmers, whether large or small in scale, who obtain on-farm food safety certification or start on the path of adopting good agricultural practices.

Today, major retailers are requiring vendors of food products entering their stores to demonstrate food safety, including third-party certification. This includes farmers and, in particular, growers who supply fresh vegetables. Already, many large BC farmers have met the food safety challenge. By doing so market access is assured. It appears that smaller BC retailers are beginning to follow the lead of major retailers where they too are or soon will be requiring small scale fresh vegetable farmers to demonstrate on-farm food safety or some equivalent. Not being able to do so may mean a loss of market access.

The Commission's interest is to see that all BC growers of fresh vegetable crops have attained food safety certification or an equivalent so that market access continues. With all growers practicing on-farm food safety and implementing good agriculture practices (GAP) the prevention of a food borne illness attributable to fresh vegetables will be better assured or in the event there is an outbreak its scope and affect on the entire BC vegetable sector, other producers and the crops they produce is limited to the fullest extent. The Commission's interest regarding on-farm food safety is not limited to producers of regulated crops, rather it extends to all BC producers of fresh vegetables.

For accomplishing the Commission's above-stated goal it is making use of on-farm food safety funding that is available through the Growing Forward initiative. This initiative combines federal and provincial government funds for a number of agriculture initiatives, one of which is food safety. The funding agencies are Agriculture & AgriFood Canada (AAFC) and the BC Ministry of Agriculture & Lands (BCMAL). ARDCORP, which is a subsidiary of the BC Agriculture Council (BCAC), was selected to administer food safety initiatives.

For the above-cited reasons, and as a result of having sought and received funding through ARDCORP, the Commission is convening study sessions for attendance by small scale fresh vegetable producers so that they may have the opportunity to learn more about on-farm food safety programs and practices and BCMAL's new Good Agricultural Practices Guide. As many small scale producers do not have English as their first language the up-coming Fraser Valley workshops intend to have interpretation available.

The planned training sessions will be lead by Sheri Nielson, who is well versed in on-farm food safety. She is both an on-farm food safety trainer and certifier. There is no cost for attending the training session and lunch will be provided.

Below is information about training sessions to be held on Vancouver Island:

February 17 – Victoria – Prospect Lake Community Hall – 9:00 AM

February 18 – Nanaimo – Vancouver Island University - 9:00 AM

In addition to the Vancouver Island sessions two training sessions are planned for the Fraser Valley; however, at this writing dates and locations remain tentative.

Growers with an interest to attend a training session may register by contacting Sheri Nielson (telephone: 604-736-4533 or 250-537-1883). Also, to learn more about the training sessions contact Sheri.