

January
2007

Commission Report

BC Vegetable Marketing Commission Newsletter

IAF provides funding to help find ways to increase the profitability of the vegetable industry

FIRB directs the Commission to conduct a review of the District Policy

Market Initiatives

The Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC (IAF) has granted funding to the Vegetable Commission to assist in the examination of new marketing strategies for the vegetable industry.

The need to change the status quo is becoming clear. BC production of storage and fresh field crops as well as processing crops has declined in volumes over several years. BC Producers are facing increased competition from external supply sources while production costs are increasing. As a result net returns to producers have eroded and new ways must be found to strengthen the industry.

With the IAF funding the Commission now has the capability to lead an examination of ways to

turn these circumstances around. Can new ways can be found to differentiate our products; to understand and capitalize on emerging market segmentation; to emphasize BC's unique production and environmental attributes, and to fulfil consumers' preference for local products. The project could develop tools and policies that could reverse the industry contraction trend and strengthen producer returns. Producers and other sectors of the industry would have the opportunity to make suggestions and review ideas as the project progresses.

Decisions have not been completed on the project but some discussions are underway with the George Morris Centre.

Regional Meetings – District Policy

The series of regional producer meetings to discuss the District policy is underway. The Commission is conducting the review in response to a directive from the Farm Industry Review Board (FIRB). The first meeting was held on January 24th in Kelowna and was well attended. Interior producers appear satisfied with the current policy and see merit in maintaining District boundaries.

The next meetings are scheduled for Nanaimo on January 31st and in Delta on Feb 7th.

Parties resolve issues before the Hearings

Former Cloverdale Lettuce Co-op building returns to the vegetable industry

Commission expands information services – more to come

BCVMC AGM to be held March 21 2007

FIRB Appeals Resolved

Both appeals registered with Farm Industry Review Board (FIRB) in December 2006 involving the greenhouse industry were withdrawn prior to the scheduled Hearing dates. The parties were able to work out arrangements between themselves and avoid the formal Hearings. One

appeal originally dealt with the transfer of Millenium Pacific Greenhouse Partnership between agencies while the second addressed the Commission's decision to grant an agency designation to Village Farms Canada LP.

New Wholesaler Licensed

Thomas Fresh, part of Martin's Produce Sales with headquarters in Saskatoon, will shortly open its doors for business in BC as a fruit and vegetable wholesaler. Using the site of the former Cloverdale Lettuce Co-op, Thomas Fresh intends to market potatoes, onions and other BC crops as well as US, offshore and other Canadian production. BC storage crops will be sourced from the Lower Mainland Vegetable Distributors Inc.

Martin's operates two other warehouses, in Calgary and in Saskatoon, marketing under its own brand ("Thomas Fresh"), store brands and other distributors' brands.

Market Information Services

The Commission now publishes confidential market information on its website for the use of designated agencies. Third quarter 2006 retail sales data for BC and for Canada for greenhouse vegetable crops and for potatoes and carrots is now available.

This is part of the expansion of the Commission's market services and will be further expanded shortly to include Market Reports. This portion of the website is protected and can only be accessed with a registered user name and password.

Reminders

Producers are reminded of the March 15th deadline to apply to transfer storage crop Delivery Allocation (DA). Applications received after that date are not normally considered for the forthcoming season.

The Commission's 2007 Annual General Meeting will be held in the evening of Wednesday March 21st at the Delta Town and Country Inn. The meeting will receive operations, legal, and financial reports as well as comments from the Chair.