

The Holm Stretch – ensure farmers get their share of Treaty benefits.

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We interrupt this column to bring you a special announcement.

The B.C. Vegetable Marketing Commission's strong bid to secure agriculture's share of Columbia Treaty down stream benefits to undertake leveling the playing field, competitiveness enhancing initiatives for all B.C. farmers is in the home stretch.

The best way to ensure an appropriate response by government is to deliver an appropriate response by farmers.

All the work has been done. No more money needs to be put in. We just all need to be there at the finish line to cheer whatever team delivers the baton.

It's now time for all commodity groups to get on board with this initiative.

We're talking new money. To undertake new initiatives. And we're talking access by all members of B.C.'s farm community.

What sort of projects might be funded under a Competitiveness Trust?

Below are some examples of projects — some on-farm and some industry level — which could *potentially* be eligible for full or partial funding under the Competitiveness Fund. Some would be individual initiatives. Others would be developed in partnership with other commodity groups, private sector interests, other participants in the marketing chain, University research facilities, and/or enterprise centres. *All* would be industry-led.

1. Irrigation Costs — Pay-down of farm irrigation costs to a level equivalent to that paid by Washington State Columbia Basin Project farmers (approx. \$10 per acre foot).
2. Funding of ALDA-type on-farm projects which improve the capability of farmland — e.g. laser leveling, tile drains, irrigation water, bringing organic material from areas of surplus to areas of deficiency (e.g. Abbotsford to Delta and/or Okanagan), etc.
3. Financial assistance to encourage producers to fully subscribe to integrated pest management programs and for advertising and promotion of B.C.'s extensive use of such programs.
4. Financial assistance for purchase of equipment designed to improve product quality and/or reduce farm costs - e.g. field cooling equipment for leafy vegetables.
5. Financial assistance for crop transitional funding which will increase the competitiveness of farm operations.
6. Industry-lead research and development into new varieties, grading, packaging, etc.
7. Industry-lead research aimed at assessing and/or restructuring and/or streamlining production-distribution-marketing procedures to enhance farm/sectoral competitiveness.
8. Industry-lead market development initiatives.

9. Incentives to encourage/assist young farmers to get started in farming — e.g. purchasing the family farm — or to add/change over to other crops to enhance farm competitiveness.
10. Ongoing support for industry-led education extension programs (e.g. fieldmen) to provide farmers with timely and accurate advice throughout the growing season.
11. Support for agricultural courses/workshops during off-season times throughout the province to provide information on crop varieties, machinery, computers, fertilizers, chemicals, power, water rights, managing risk etc.
12. A comprehensive review of how the Agricultural Land Reserve can be strengthened to preserve not only high capability B.C. farmland but also the competitiveness and economic robustness of B.C.'s highly capable farm managers and to ensure the "safe passage" of these important resources across generations.
13. Financial support for amalgamation of farm parcels to reduce farmland fragmentation where such actions can be shown to increase farm competitiveness/reduce farm costs.
14. Financial support for measures designed to protect ALR land from conversion to residential or hobby farm use (e.g. where there is not already a residence on a land parcel, purchase of residential rights over time in exchange for registration of an agricultural covenant).
15. Research into alternatives to current crop insurance programs which would facilitate sectoral competitiveness through more efficient risk management. For example, a study of the appropriateness of SDRM and/or disaster level income assurance (50% loss over an average of the preceding 3 years) for all commodities, all perils using the American Disaster Level Crop Insurance Program as a possible model.
16. Assistance to enable B.C.'s Registered Seed Potato Producers to retain research facilities (either providing financial assistance to existing facilities or development of new partnerships to establish a private laboratory).
17. Research into ways to lower packaging costs and increase use of post-consumer materials.
18. Partial rebate of interest rates paid by growers who borrow money to increase the competitiveness of their farm operations.
19. Financial assistance to strengthen buffer zones and facilitate farm zoning and bylaws for those farmers and farm communities operating in close proximity to urban development (urban shadow effect).
20. Research into infrastructure options which will increase the competitiveness of B.C.'s farm communities.
21. Research which will ensure the continued ability of farm organizations to adapt and evolve to serve both the collective interests of the farming community and the dynamic challenges of the marketplace (competitive winds 'neath a cooperative umbrella).
22. Financial support for costs incurred by B.C.'s farmers to defend themselves in trade disputes with the Americans, particularly when such actions are against crops produced with downstream irrigation benefits under the Columbia Treaty. (During the past ten years, Canada has conducted no less than three separate investigations

into allegations of dumping by U.S. potato producers. In each case, B.C. potato producers had to foot the bill for a team of lawyers to appear before the Canadian Import Trade Tribunal to give evidence before these investigations, the results of which confirmed dumping causing material injury in every case.)

23. Financial support to remove and/or reduce any cultural or linguistic barriers which could stand to impede the competitiveness of B.C. farmers.

Do you feel securing a fund of new money to undertake competitiveness-enhancing initiatives such as those outlined above is important to the future of farming in B.C.?

If so, call your local commodity chair today and let him/her know you support this initiative. That you want to become a part of it. And then ask them to call or fax me. We don't have that much time to fool around on this one.

Next month, back to the year 1999 and the TIME-O-RAMA READER-RIDE's DOOR TWO.