



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Budget 2018 Offers Fertile Soil to Grow B.C. Organic Agriculture

Vernon, B.C. (February 20, 2018) – Grow BC, Feed BC, Buy BC, initiatives to strengthen B.C.’s agrifood and seafood sector and expand the domestic market for B.C. food and beverage products, are the focus of *Budget 2018* for the B.C. Agriculture sector. To support this initiative, Finance Minister Carole James unveiled a budget Tuesday, which sees funding for the B.C. Agrifood Sector increasing by \$29 million over three years.

Aimed at encouraging consumption of B.C. products and building resiliency in the sector, the increased agriculture budget will go towards initiatives such as assisting beginning farmers, supporting the tree fruit and nut industry, revitalizing the Agriculture Land reserve (ALR), and enhancing a Buy BC strategy. Revitalization of the ALR is included as a priority in the 2018 budget. Under the 30 point housing strategy the government will be “moving to close property tax loopholes on the ALR”, as part of a strategy to ensure that ALR land is used for farming.

“COABC is very pleased to see the Provincial government supporting organic agriculture,” says Jen Gamble, Executive Director of Operations for the Certified Organic Associations of BC (COABC). “In addition, we are excited to see that the budget emphasizes new entrant support and revitalization of the Agriculture Land reserve”.

Overall, *Budget 2018* indicates a positive direction and increased support for agriculture in B.C. The base budget for the Ministry of Agriculture will increase by 11.1% in the coming year. In 2018, the Organic Product Labelling Regulation will come into effect and the organic sector has been grateful for the Ministry support which includes the addition of a full time Organic Industry Specialist position.

About COABC

The Certified Organic Associations of British Columbia (COABC) is an umbrella association representing organic certifying agencies in BC. The organization aims to provide consumer confidence in the organic product certification, assist producers to increase market share, and support regional development of organic food production, processing and marketing. COABC strives to ensure high quality organic products are produced in sufficient quantity and in a manner that nurtures healthy soil, biological diversity and ecological harmony.

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