Opposition Standing Committee for Agriculture and Food

First Report
November 2015
November 30, 2015

To the Honourable
Legislative Assembly of the
Province of British Columbia

Honourable Members:

We have the honour to present herewith the First Report of the Opposition Standing Committee for Agriculture and Food for the Fourth Session of the 40th Parliament of British Columbia.

The First Report covers the Committee’s activities from January 2015 to October 2015.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Committee,

Lana Popham, MLA  Vicki Huntington, MLA
Chair  Vice-Chair
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Composition of the Committee

Members

Lana Popham, MLA  Chair  Saanich South
Vicki Huntington, MLA  Vice-Chair  Delta South
Robin Austin, MLA  Skeena
Raj Chouhan, MLA  Burnaby-Edmonds
Katrine Conroy, MLA  Kootenay West
Nicholas Simons, MLA  Powell-River Sunshine Coast

Committee Researchers and Assistants

Samuel Godfrey, Committee Technology Officer
Stephen Harrison, Committee Researcher
Andrew Patrick, Committee Researcher
Aldous Sperl, Committee Researcher
Terms of Reference

In January 2015, five Members of the Official Opposition and one Independent Member of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia formed an Opposition Standing Committee for Agriculture and Food to:

Examine, inquire into, and make recommendations with respect to an agriculture and food policy for British Columbia, and in particular, to:

a) Conduct public consultations across British Columbia on proposals and recommendations regarding agriculture and food policy and practice, by any means the committee considers appropriate; and
b) Prepare a report no later than November 30, 2015 on the results of those consultations.

The report will be tabled in the House as early as possible, and if the House is not in Session, as soon as it resumes sitting.
Acknowledgements

The Committee would like to express its appreciation to everyone who assisted our work. In particular, we would like to thank all the individuals and organizations who participated in the Committee’s proceedings, either in writing or by presenting at public hearings. Their contributions and participation in the Committee process formed the basis of the analysis and recommendations contained in this report.

The Committee would also like to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of staff: Samuel Godfrey for his work on social media and website design; and Stephen Harrison, Andrew Patrick, and Aldous Sperl for scheduling, administration and research assistance.
Executive Summary

Agriculture and agrifoods make up a diverse and important part of British Columbia’s economy. Agriculture alone is a major economic driver, providing employment on nearly 20,000 farms across the province, with total farm cash receipts reaching $2.9 billion in 2014.¹

The sector, however, continues to face a number of challenges. In response to growing public concern, five Members of B.C.’s Official Opposition and one Independent Member formed the Opposition Standing Committee for Agriculture and Food in January 2015. The Committee set out to hear from farmers, ranchers, industry representatives and policy experts across the province over a six-month period through four public meetings and a public submission process.

Overall, presenters felt the provincial government must do more to improve the business environment for agricultural producers in British Columbia.

The common themes the Committee heard are grouped under two headings and include:

- **Existing policy in need of improvement:**
  1. Regulatory, financial, and administrative barriers;
  2. Prohibitive barriers for new and small farm operators;
  3. Knowledge and information sharing, training, and technical assistance;
  4. Challenges preparing for climate change; and
  5. Promotion of B.C. farm products and businesses.

- **Policy in need of new direction:**
  1. Use of farmland for carbon credits and ownership by non-residents;
  2. Changes to the Agricultural Land Reserve;
  3. Urban and industrial development on farmland; and
  4. Funding for the Ministry of Agriculture.

The report concludes by summarizing Committee policy recommendations and providing guidance for future public hearings and activities.

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Introduction

Agriculture in British Columbia is a critical part of the economic and social fabric of the province. In 2014, crop and animal production, including support activities, contributed an estimated $1.2 billion to the provincial GDP, with provincial farm receipts totaling $2.9 billion. Agricultural exports worth $2.0 billion reached more than 140 world markets, and approximately 20,000 farms covered more than 2.6 million hectares of the provincial land base.²

Last year, B.C. farmers led the nation in sales of blueberries, raspberries, sweet cherries, apricots, and cranberries,³ and 15 of B.C.’s crops ranked second in national sales in 2013, including grapes, peaches, pears, nectarines, lettuce, spinach, mushrooms, and greenhouse-grown peppers, tomatoes, and cucumbers.⁴ Animal agriculture is also a significant economic driver, with livestock receipts totaling more than $1.4 billion in 2013, and dairy products, chicken, beef, and eggs consistently making up roughly half the value of B.C.’s top ten commodity receipts.⁵ Sales of B.C. food products reached $12.3 billion in 2014.⁶

Despite its importance to the provincial economy, the industry faces a number of challenges. Many producers grapple with high land prices, urban encroachment on farmland, and the threat of climate change. Though a significant percentage of B.C.’s farmers are small operators, large farms contribute a considerable portion of the sector’s economic value: 6.4 per cent of all farms in 2011 generated 74.5 per cent of provincial gross farm receipts. Statistics Canada reports that net farm income in B.C. has been consistently negative, and B.C. is the only province in Canada where total net income has been negative for the past five years. Over half of B.C. farm operators had an off-farm job or business in 2010, and the sector’s aging workforce remains the oldest in Canada.⁷

Committee Activity and Public Consultations

In spring of 2014, the provincial government made legislative changes that affected the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), with limited consultation with B.C.’s agriculture and food systems community or the public. Five Members of the Official Opposition and one Independent Member formed the Opposition Standing Committee for Agriculture and Food in January 2015 to investigate the state of agriculture and food in B.C. and make recommendations for improvement.

Members of the Committee conducted public hearings in four locations across the province and issued a call for written submissions in September 2015. Prior to each public meeting, the Committee issued press releases

³ B.C. Ministry of Agriculture, Sector Snapshots: B.C. Agriculture—2014, October 2015
⁵ Ibid.
and promoted events on social media and with local stakeholders. Information gathered throughout the consultation process informed the Committee’s final recommendations and was supplemented by additional research.

Public consultations were held in April, May, June, and September 2015 to consider oral and written submissions from all interested persons, businesses, organizations, and local governments. Consultations were open to anyone who wished to express their views or provide recommendations for any aspect of the Committee’s mandate. 58 individuals representing over 40 businesses and organizations presented at four public meetings and through online submissions.

A list of all presenters is included in Appendix A. Written submissions can be found on the Committee’s website at beagcom.ca/p/past-meetings.html

The Committee visited communities on Vancouver Island, the Lower Mainland, Central Interior, and the Fraser Valley to convene public hearings. These included:

- Williams Lake, April 8, Thompson Rivers University
- Courtenay, May 15, North Island College
- Chilliwack, June 15, University of the Fraser Valley
- Vancouver, September 22, Fairmont Waterfront Hotel
Committee Findings and Summary of Submissions

A number of common themes emerged from presentations throughout the public consultation process. These themes were categorized under two headings: *Existing policy needs improvement* and *Policy in need of new direction*.

**Existing policy in need of improvement**

1. Regulatory, financial, and administrative barriers

The Committee heard from presenters who outlined multiple hurdles faced by farm operators at a regulatory, financial and administrative level.

Presenters told the Committee that farmers in rural and remote areas struggle with higher costs for importing materials and equipment. These costs can be particularly challenging for island-based operators dependent on ferry access. Presenters emphasized that rising ferry fees have negatively affected farmers on Vancouver Island by increasing input costs and decreasing sales off-Island. The Committee heard reports that transportation costs to the Island can increase feed prices for livestock by an extra 20 per cent, and that livestock transportation policy for BC Ferries has resulted in longer wait times.

Meat producers expressed concern about the lack of regional meat processing facilities in the province, and noted that ranchers often find it cheaper to send animals to Alberta for processing. The B.C. Cattlemen’s Association has proposed a regional beef processing facility in Prince George as a means of addressing this problem. The Committee heard that both the provincial government and regional bodies could offer technical support and funding assistance to further develop the business case and commercialization strategy for regional processing facilities. Other presenters highlighted the need for increased regional capacity across the province.

The Cariboo Cattlemen’s Association suggested water storage dam inspections not be the sole responsibility of ranchers. The B.C. Cattlemen’s Association noted that dam inspections can cost ranchers tens of thousands of dollars. They have pointed to a number of provincial benefits of water storage dams, including benefits for fisheries through water control, as well as recreational opportunities.8

The Committee heard from beekeepers who expressed frustration with the lack of official inspectors available in regions like North Vancouver Island. Inspections ensure beekeeping operations comply with existing laws, inform government authorities on developing trends in the industry, and educate beekeepers on best practices for treating diseases and parasites. As of November 2015, the provincial government lists nine apiary inspectors in B.C., in addition to the Provincial Apiculturist.9

Beekeepers also expressed concern that property assessment rules to obtain farm status do not adequately accommodate apiculture. The Committee heard that uncultivated land, forest and pastures are often

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dismissed as not providing legitimate wild forage for bees. Instead, assessments often focus on cultivated land or the small area of land that houses hives.\textsuperscript{10} The B.C. Honey Producers Association recommends including moneys generated from pollination services as part of farm classification income.\textsuperscript{11} Participants also expressed a need for a provincial plan protecting bees from pesticides.

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that the provincial government:

\begin{center}
\textbf{Recommendations}
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1.1.1 \textbf{Recommendation}: Work with BC Ferries and local stakeholders on both priority loading for livestock and options to reduce transportation costs for the agrifoods industry.

1.1.2 \textbf{Recommendation}: Work with the B.C. Cattlemen’s Association, meat producers and regional bodies to develop processing capacity across the province.

1.1.3 \textbf{Recommendation}: Review and modify water storage dam requirements and governance in consultation with stakeholders.

1.1.4 \textbf{Recommendation}: Work with BC Assessment to make it easier for beekeepers to obtain farm classification where they have demonstrated their reliance on uncultivated land.

1.1.5 \textbf{Recommendation}: Increase the number of apiary inspectors in B.C., and fill future vacancies as they occur.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
2. Prohibitive barriers for new and small farm operators

New Farmers

A wide range of participants expressed concerns about the lack of new entrants into the agricultural industry to replace an aging workforce. In 2011, over half of all farm operators in B.C. were 55 years or older, and only 5 per cent were younger than 35. British Columbia had the highest average age of farm operators in Canada at 55.7 years, an increase from the 2006 average of 53.6 years. Nationally, in 2011 the average age was 54 years.

The Committee heard from B.C. dairy farmers and other sectors that are facing problems with succession planning, as children raised on farms look elsewhere for work. Many participants expressed concern that new farmers face daunting challenges to create a successful start-up operation. Starting a farming business in B.C. often means years of slim economic margins, and many farmers supplement farm income with secondary jobs.

In 2010, 52.6 per cent of British Columbian farm operators had an off-farm job or business, well above the national figure of 46.9 per cent. One quarter of farm operators under the age of 35, and 27 per cent of operators between the ages of 35 to 54, averaged more than 40 hours of work off the farm per week in 2010.

The Committee heard that start-up costs for new entrants are high and that they need support to develop skills to succeed in the industry. New farmers often have significant student loans and other debts to pay, and they may come from non-farming backgrounds that often do not provide the knowledge, skills, or experience necessary for success in agriculture.

The Committee heard about a lack of funding and support from the provincial government for extension services for agriculture, which are programs designed to link applied research to adoption by end-users. Extension programming translates applied research into knowledge transfer materials and education programming tailored to the needs of individuals and businesses. Extension services are delivered in shorter, focused, diverse formats rather than extended training programs, and most often are university-based, constituting a partnership between government, academia and the private sector.

The Committee heard that obtaining bank loans can be difficult for new and prospective farmers due to a perceived high risk for lenders. Presenters suggested that the provincial government encourage low-interest and interest-free loans to new farmers to assist in the start-up phase of their business.

Presenters also expressed concerns about the prohibitive cost of farmland, and noted that legislation for land renting is overly restrictive. Some presenters suggested the province could support a land-linking program that would match new farmers without capital with landowners interested in leasing property.

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12 Statistic Canada, Highlights and Analysis, November 2015.
14 Statistics Canada, Over a quarter of gross farm receipts from greenhouse and nursery production in British Columbia, February 2015.
16 Ibid.
Small Farm Operators

A significant proportion of farm operators in British Columbia are small-scale farmers who face serious challenges to remain economically viable. Nearly 65 per cent of all farms in B.C. were smaller than 70 acres in 2006, and 27 per cent were smaller than 10 acres.17 The majority of B.C. farms depend on off-farm income to supplement farm revenue, and according to Statistics Canada, net farm income has been negative for the past five years.18 In 2010, 6.4 per cent of farms in the province generated 74.5 per cent of gross farm receipts.19

Presentations to the Committee often emphasized that provincial policy could be more supportive of small farmers, citing limited investment opportunities that are driven in part by a lack of applicable small business tax credits. Other barriers include the high cost of land, a lack of capital and poor access to credit.20 Presenters also spoke about challenges related to geographical isolation, a lack of market access, and knowledge transfer.

Some presenters suggested the provincial government support small farmers and new entrants by providing more resource supports for co-ops. Registering as a co-op can be an expensive and time-consuming process, but it can also minimize processing, marketing, and distribution costs for small farmers.

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that the provincial government:

Recommendations

1.2.1 Recommendation: Work with the federal government and lenders to increase opportunities for new farmers to obtain low-interest or interest-free loans under the Canadian Agricultural Loans Act program or through other initiatives.

1.2.2 Recommendation: Review and modify provincial small business tax credits to ensure farm operators are eligible, and advertise those credits to new and existing farm operators.

1.2.3 Recommendation: Work with B.C. dairy farmers and other stakeholders to improve succession planning services available in B.C., and review B.C. Farm Business Advisory Services’ funding model.

1.2.4 Recommendation: Work with organizations and post-secondary institutions such as Community Futures Development Corporation of Fraser Fort George and Kwantlen Polytechnic University’s Institute for Sustainable Food Systems to support and develop community-based extension services throughout the province.

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3. Knowledge and information sharing, training, and technical assistance

Many presenters, including the B.C. Agriculture Council, expressed support for Committee hearings as an opportunity to provide feedback on public policy, and called on the province to re-establish a Select Standing Committee on Agriculture.\(^{21}\)

Presenters expressed a need for a more agriculture-friendly curriculum in post-secondary institutions, including more support for apprenticeship training programs. Many felt more support and coordination was needed across university and college agricultural programs, and that government could provide better resources to help support industry training and education. These suggestions were supported by recommendations from organizations such as the B.C. Agriculture and Food Climate Initiative.\(^{22}\)

Some presenters were concerned that the provincial government’s *BC Jobs Plan* does not address the shortage of skilled labour for meat producers and processors.

Presenters felt government could do more to ensure regional weather, climate, and water data, as well as information tools, are available to farm operators for planning purposes.

Support was expressed for an increase in practical, applied research at experimental farms in collaboration with universities, so local farmers can more readily adapt to climate change and shifting market conditions. Presenters also expressed frustration with a lack of follow-through on recommendations found in government reports on agriculture.

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that the provincial government:

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**Recommendations**

1.3.1 **Recommendation:** Amend Standing Order 68 (1) to include a Select Standing Committee on Agriculture. Provide the Committee with broad terms of reference agreed on by government and opposition Members of the Legislative Assembly.

1.3.2 **Recommendation:** Work with post-secondary institutions to strengthen applied research and education programming for agriculture and food systems.

1.3.3 **Recommendation:** Prepare a strategy to address gaps in the domestic labour market for meat producers and processors and highlight that strategy in future updates to the *BC Jobs Plan*.

1.3.4 **Recommendation:** Improve the availability of regional weather, climate, and water data, as well as information tools, to food producers.

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\(^{21}\) Stan Vander Waal, Chair, B.C. Agriculture Council. *Opposition Standing Committee for Agriculture and Food public hearing, Chilliwack, June 2015.*

Recommendations Continued

1.3.5 **Recommendation:** Publish a status update on recommendations from Ministry of Agriculture reports for the last five years, including ministry-supported reports such as the Climate Action Initiative’s *Provincial Report.*
4. Challenges preparing for climate change

Agricultural producers face significant risks and opportunities from a changing climate. Average annual temperatures in B.C. have increased 1.2 °C over the past century, while average precipitation across the province increased 22 per cent over this same time period (ranging from 10 to 50 per cent by region). Extreme weather events affecting crop production are more frequent and are expected to increase over the coming decades.\(^{(23)}\) Average annual temperature in the province is expected to increase 2.7 °C by the 2080s.\(^{(24)}\)

Presenters at Committee hearings were concerned about the lack of resources and support for climate change adaptation. The ability to adapt to changing climatic conditions depends primarily on stable and sufficient financial, human, physical, and institutional resources for the agriculture and agrifoods industry.\(^{(25)}\) Large portions of the agricultural sector in B.C. are limited by low farm revenues and negative net farm income, which makes investments in adaptive measures, equipment, or technologies difficult.\(^{(26)}\)

Many presenters felt the province is poorly positioned to deal with issues of food security and climate change. More than half of B.C.’s food is imported from outside the province, with the majority of fruits and vegetables coming from California.\(^{(27)}\) Presenters frequently pointed to the recent drought conditions across Western Canada, and in regions like California, as a potentially serious threat to the overall sustainability of B.C.’s food system, especially in light of climatic shifts already underway.

Water management issues were again a common concern. Many individuals felt there was a lack of sufficient government attention placed on issues related to water planning and infrastructure. Others suggested the provincial government could improve access to regional information tools relevant to farm planning (e.g., data on weather, water, climate, etc.).

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that the provincial government:

**Recommendations**

1.4.1 Recommendation: Analyze and publicly disclose the long-term implications of all future Ministry of Agriculture legislative and policy changes, and Cabinet-ordered ALR exclusions, in the context of climate change.

1.4.2 Recommendation: Report annually on B.C.’s long-term food security, including the implications of climate change and trends in farm use, imports and exports, and ALR exclusions.


\(^{(26)}\) Ibid.

\(^{(27)}\) Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions and BC Agriculture and Food Climate Action Initiative. *Strengthening BC’s Agriculture Sector in the Face of Climate Change*, May 2013. See also Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions. *Climate Change and Food Security in British Columbia*, November 2011.
5. Promotion of B.C. farm products and businesses

The Committee heard from many presenters who thought the provincial government could increase its public education efforts to promote and grow the market for locally-grown food.

Participants emphasized that farmers’ markets and other local, alternate market channels help increase food security, preserve farmland, and strengthen community connections within the province, while at the same time offering important financial opportunities for many smaller, local producers who have limited ability to sell into conventional supply chains. The number of farmers’ markets in B.C. grew to 159 locations between 2006 and 2012, an increase of over 60 per cent. Research shows that more people are spending more money at B.C. farmers’ markets, with total direct sales increasing by an estimated 150 per cent between 2006 and 2012, injecting more than $170 million into local economies.

Presenters suggested the provincial government increase support for farm-to-school programs, which can inspire the next generation of farmers and increase knowledge of, and access to, B.C.’s local food system. Some participants expressed dissatisfaction with existing regulations that discourage sampling at farmers’ markets, while others objected to government regulations that restrict meat and eggs from being offered in farm-to-home delivery schemes.

Participants were also concerned that the province lacks a vision to grow the agritourism industry. Examples of agritourism activities include farm tours, tastings, farm retail sales, bed and breakfasts, educational activities, and special events. The Committee heard that B.C. has significant growth opportunities in this sector, but that the sector lacks government policy support.

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that the provincial government:

**Recommendations**

1.5.1 **Recommendation:** Increase funding for the “Buy Local” program and review the existing application criteria.

1.5.2 **Recommendation:** Direct the Ministry of Education to better incorporate agriculture, including hands-on learning, in the existing curriculum.

1.5.3 **Recommendation:** Increase support for farm-to-school programs.

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30 Ibid.
Policy in need of new direction

1. Use of farmland for carbon credits and ownership by non-residents

A Committee hearing in Williams Lake revealed the extent of a controversial practice where a United Kingdom-based company purchased productive farmland and used it to plant trees to offset their carbon emissions. Many farmers and local and regional government officials voiced serious concerns with this practice, especially in the Cariboo and Bulkley-Nechako regions. The B.C. Cattlemen’s Association expressed concerns about the carbon offset practice and struck its own committee to examine it in more detail.

The Committee heard that British Columbia is the only western province without restrictions on non-resident ownership of farmland. The B.C. Agriculture Council writes, “By continuing to allow unrestricted foreign control of our primary food production base, we are limiting the already limited food security of British Columbia.”\(^{31}\) Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Manitoba limit non-resident ownership of farmland to between 10 and 40 acres.\(^{32}\)

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that the provincial government:

### Recommendations

2.1.1 **Recommendation:** Amend the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* to require owners of ALR land to submit an application for approval to the ALC if they intend to operate a tree planting program for carbon sequestration.

2.1.2 **Recommendation:** Hire additional full-time compliance and enforcement officers for each Agricultural Land Commission panel region.

2.1.3 **Recommendation:** Create and maintain an inventory of non-resident acquisitions of ALR land. Analyze the impacts of these acquisitions on B.C. agriculture and solicit feedback from stakeholders through public consultations.

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2. Changes to the Agricultural Land Reserve

B.C.’s unique geography means it relies on a small proportion of land to produce its food. Less than 3 per cent of total land area in the province is used for farming, a fact which led to the development of the Agricultural Land Reserve, a zoning policy that has been instrumental in protecting B.C. farmland.33

Many presenters voiced their disapproval of recent changes to the ALR, which increased avenues for removing land from the ALR in ‘Zone 2’. Zone 2 represents 90 per cent of ALR lands and includes land in the Interior, Kootenays and the North.

Many participants at Committee hearings expressed concerns with the lack of consultation involved in bringing this legislation into effect. Presenters were disappointed that the changes imply Zone 2 land is less valuable for B.C.’s food security, despite the fact Zone 2 has more Class 1 to 4 farmland than Zone 1.34 Many were concerned that changes to Zone 2 did not properly consider future shifts in climatic conditions in the province, as global warming intensifies over the coming decades.

Presenters expressed concern that changes to the Agricultural Land Commission would increase pressures to remove lands from the ALR, reduce the ability for science to inform land-use decisions, and increase threats to sensitive ecosystems and species-at-risk.35

Presenters commented that the price of ALR land in the Lower Mainland can be prohibitive due to the pressures of industrial and residential development and speculation.

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that the provincial government:

**Recommendations**

2.2.1 Recommendation: Restore the ALR to one zone with reduced exclusion criteria.

2.2.2 Recommendation: Explore policy options to issue long-term leases at favourable rates for provincially-owned ALR land to individuals committed to farm use.

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3. Urban and industrial development on farmland

Farmers expressed concern that the high cost of land and low economic returns in the agriculture sector threaten the industry’s long-term sustainability. The value per acre of farmland in B.C. has been more than twice the Canadian average for the past four years, and values are considerably higher for farms close to urban areas.36 The proportion of B.C. farmland that is rented or leased has steadily increased relative to farmland that is owned over the past two decades.37

The Committee heard concerns that the maximum size of residency on ALR land is too high and encourages speculation, which elevates prices and puts land out of reach for new farmers.

Presenters suggested the provincial government could support farmland trusts that purchase regionally significant properties, and hold them in trust with venture capital to allow young farmers entry into the industry.38

Many submissions also focused on the destruction of farmland in the Peace River Valley due to the creation of the Site C dam.

The Committee recommends to the Legislative Assembly that the provincial government:

Recommendation

2.3.1 Recommendation: Fund a provincial farmland trust to purchase and preserve B.C. farmland to support young farmers who wish to enter the industry.
4. Funding for the Ministry of Agriculture

The Committee heard from presenters who suggested the Ministry of Agriculture and the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) were underfunded, and proposed increased investments in the Ministry and the ALC to build lost institutional capacity.

Recommendation

2.4.1 Recommendation: Review provincial agriculture budgets across Canada and ensure adequate funding is provided to B.C.’s Ministry of Agriculture.
Conclusion

Over six months, the Committee heard from British Columbians about problems facing agricultural producers and the larger food system in this province. In response, the Committee has made a number of recommendations to the provincial government that would address some of these concerns. The Committee may convene additional public hearings in communities across B.C., and produce follow-up reports. Potential areas of inquiry may include farm worker health and safety, northern agriculture and fruit and vegetable operations.
Summary of Recommendations

### Regulatory, financial, and administrative barriers

1.1.1 **Recommendation:** Work with BC Ferries and local stakeholders on both priority loading for livestock and on options to reduce transportation costs for the agrifoods industry.

1.1.2 **Recommendation:** Work with the B.C. Cattlemen’s Association, meat producers and regional bodies to develop processing capacity across the province.

1.1.3 **Recommendation:** Review and modify water storage dam requirements and governance in consultation with stakeholders.

1.1.4 **Recommendation:** Work with BC Assessment to make it easier for beekeepers to obtain farm classification where they have demonstrated their reliance on uncultivated land.

1.1.5 **Recommendation:** Increase the number of apiary inspectors in B.C., and fill future vacancies as they occur.

### Prohibitive barriers for new and small farm operators

1.2.1 **Recommendation:** Work with the federal government and lenders to increase opportunities for new farmers to obtain low-interest or interest-free loans under the *Canadian Agricultural Loans Act* program or through other initiatives.

1.2.2 **Recommendation:** Review and modify provincial small business tax credits to ensure farm operators are eligible, and advertise those credits to new and existing farm operators.

1.2.3 **Recommendation:** Work with B.C. dairy farmers and other stakeholders to improve succession planning services available in B.C., and review B.C. Farm Business Advisory Services’ funding model.

1.2.4 **Recommendation:** Work with organizations and post-secondary institutions such as Community Futures Development Corporation of Fraser Fort George and Kwantlen Polytechnic University’s Institute for Sustainable Food Systems to support and develop community-based extension services throughout the province.

### Knowledge and information sharing, training, and technical assistance

1.3.1 **Recommendation:** Amend Standing Order 68 (1) to include a Select Standing Committee on Agriculture. Provide the Committee with broad terms of reference agreed on by government and opposition Members of the Legislative Assembly.

1.3.2 **Recommendation:** Work with post-secondary institutions to strengthen applied research and education programming for agriculture and food systems.

1.3.3 **Recommendation:** Prepare a strategy to address gaps in the domestic labour market for meat producers and processors and highlight that strategy in future updates to the *BC Jobs Plan*. 
Knowledge and information sharing, training, and technical assistance (continued)

1.3.4 **Recommendation**: Improve the availability of regional weather, climate, and water data, as well as information tools, to food producers.

1.3.5 **Recommendation**: Publish a status update on recommendations from Ministry of Agriculture reports for the last five years, including ministry-supported reports such as the Climate Action Initiative’s *Provincial Report*.

**Challenges preparing for climate change**

1.4.1 **Recommendation**: Analyze and publicly disclose the long-term implications of all future Ministry of Agriculture legislative and policy changes, and Cabinet-ordered ALR exclusions, in the context of climate change.

1.4.2 **Recommendation**: Report annually on B.C.’s long-term food security, including the implications of climate change and trends in farm use, imports and exports, and ALR exclusions.

**Promotion of B.C. farm products and businesses**

1.5.1 **Recommendation**: Increase funding for the “Buy Local” program and review the existing application criteria.

1.5.2 **Recommendation**: Direct the Ministry of Education to better incorporate agriculture, including hands-on learning, in the existing curriculum.

1.5.3 **Recommendation**: Increase support for farm-to-school programs.

**Use of farmland for carbon credits and ownership by non-residents**

2.1.1 **Recommendation**: Amend the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* to require owners of ALR land to submit an application for approval to the ALC if they intend to operate a tree planting program for carbon sequestration.

2.1.2 **Recommendation**: Hire additional full-time compliance and enforcement officers for each Agricultural Land Commission panel region.

2.1.3 **Recommendation**: Create and maintain an inventory of non-resident acquisitions of ALR land. Analyze the impacts of these acquisitions on B.C. agriculture and solicit feedback from stakeholders through public consultations.

**Changes to the Agricultural Land Reserve**

2.2.1 **Recommendation**: Restore the ALR to one zone with reduced exclusion criteria.

2.2.2 **Recommendation**: Explore policy options to issue long-term leases at favourable rates for provincially-owned ALR land to individuals committed to farm use.

**Urban and industrial development on farmland**

2.3.1 **Recommendation**: Fund a provincial farmland trust to purchase and preserve B.C. farmland to support young farmers who wish to enter the industry.
Funding for the Ministry of Agriculture

2.4.1 **Recommendation:** Review provincial agriculture budgets across Canada and ensure adequate funding is provided to B.C.’s Ministry of Agriculture.
# Appendix A: List of Presenters, Public Hearings

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<td>Baird, Ian</td>
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<td>(Ph.D)</td>
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