

BC's Food Security Task Force + Agritech at SFU

Engagement Summary

On July 11, 2019, the Government of British Columbia announced the Food Security Task Force (Task Force) – a commitment identified in the 2019 Speech from the Throne. The Task Force has a mandate to provide recommendations on how to:

- Apply agri-technologies (“agritech”) to *enhance sector productivity, economic competitiveness and sustainability*, reduce waste and tailor productivity to market demands;
- *Grow the emerging agritech sector in B.C. as a standalone economic sector* that can produce technologies that will be in demand globally; and
- *Support the objectives of CleanBC* through the adoption of technologies and practices that will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase access to fresh, healthy food and stimulate local economic activity.

British Columbians were invited to share their views on the ways in which B.C. can harness new technologies and innovations to efficiently produce more food, jobs and prosperity, while reducing waste. An online survey was created, and responses were summarized for consideration by the Task Force in the development of their final report.

One of the recommendations of the task force was to create an agriculture and agritech institute as a collaborative entity across post-secondary institutions to drive excellence in priority areas and deepen the knowledge base and talent pool for the agriculture innovation agenda.

This agriculture/agritech institute should be multi-institutional such that it draws on expertise from B.C. post-secondary institutions (universities and colleges) and prioritizes training, cutting-edge research and development, acts as a policy think tank, and links to national and international academic networks, all in support of the provincial agriculture agenda. The institute should be a place for these institutions to collaborate on addressing some of the leading agritech challenges in the province. It should be part of a network of agri specific centres of excellence and should foster multi-institutional collaboration across provincial and national borders.

SFU proposes to launch a new Agricultural Technology program that is framed around the demands of the fourth Agricultural revolution and that harnesses the power of science, technology and data to ensure that food production increases in value and is more sustainable, thus underpinning long-term food security. Central to this program is the role of science in driving new innovations in the agricultural sector.