

Modernized Regulations Good News For BC Agriculture

ABBOTSFORD – The BC government released new regulations today that specify new permitted uses on land located within the Agriculture Land Reserve (ALR). The new regulations have received a nod of approval from the BC Agriculture Council (BCAC).

“These regulations are good news for BC agriculture. BC farmers have been calling for the modernization of the Agriculture Land Commission Act for some time. With these regulations BC farmers can explore new farm business opportunities under continued proactive oversight by the independent Agriculture Land Commission (ALC). BCAC trusts the ALC to administer these new regulations in accordance with the commission’s primary purpose, which is to keep BC farmland for farming.” Said BCAC Chair, Stan Vander Waal.

Farmers located in Zone 2 can now sell their farm and continue to live on a segment of the property via a life-long lease back agreement with the new owner. There are also new options to create on farm residences for family members. The amendments are intended to support endurance of the family farm and provide new farmers with access to experienced farm mentors. “Farm succession planning is an important component of agri-sustainability in British Columbia” said Vander Waal.

The amended regulations provide all BC farmers with more options to engage in farm based culinary tourism. Breweries and distilleries can now operate on ALR land in the same capacity as BC wineries, provided at least 50% of the farm product required to make the beer, wine or spirits is harvested on the farm or from land leased to the farm in BC. The amendments also make it possible for wineries, breweries and distilleries with lounge areas to sell single servings of alcohol based products produced by other businesses. “It will provide culinary tourists with more variety and create sales opportunities for farms located off established tour paths.” Said Vander Waal.

The new regulations do not provide additional direction for the ALC in applying the controversial new section 4.3 of the Agriculture Land Commission Act. This section requires the commission to consider non-farm factors (economic, cultural, social values; regional and community planning objectives; and “other prescribed considerations”) while exercising its power in Zone 2. “BCAC understands that there are times when additional flexibility is needed for the benefit of society, but believes that a strong ALC committed to preserving agriculture land for future generations is the best way to ensure that this flexibility does not erode the potential of our agriculture sector or the food security of our province” said Vander Waal. Responsibility now lies with the ALC to enforce the new regulations in a way which supports a thriving agriculture sector in British Columbia.

BCAC supports the Agriculture Land Reserve and a strong, independent and transparent Agriculture Land Commission. A workable land base and farmers who are willing and able to farm are essential to the growth of agriculture and food security. BCAC looks forward to continued collaboration with government and the ALC to strengthen the economic, social and environmental sustainability of agriculture in British Columbia.

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About BCAC

The BC Agriculture Council (BCAC) is the province's umbrella farm organization. We are a council of commodity groups and, through our members, represent approximately 14,000 of the 20,000 B.C. farm families who, in turn, generate 96 percent of the farm gate receipts in British Columbia. Agriculture is the third largest resource sector in the province, playing a significant and important role in the provincial economy.