

Farmers and Food Processors Secure Vote of Confidence from B.C. Consumers

Victoria, B.C. – March 17, 2009 B.C. farmers and food processors continue to win the confidence of B.C. consumers. That's the underlying message of a newly released study of public attitudes towards agriculture, food, and agri-food production in B.C.

The study was conducted by Ipsos Reid Public Affairs of Vancouver. It was commissioned by the Investment Agriculture Foundation of B.C. (IAF), with input from the B.C. Agriculture Council (BCAC) and the B.C. Food Processors' Association (BCFPA). The results were made public today at the annual general meeting of the B.C. Agriculture Council.

Among the study's specific findings:

- Most British Columbians (85%) are confident that food products processed in B.C. are safe.
- Slightly more than three-quarters of British Columbians (77%) agree that B.C. food processors operate in an environmentally responsible manner.
- Nearly two-thirds of British Columbians (64%) agree that they find it easy to find a wide variety of food products processed here in B.C.
- Three-quarters of British Columbians (76%) trust BC food processors to act in the best interests of consumers.

According to BCFPA board chair Robin Smith, the public's vote of confidence in the province's food processing sector is well deserved. "Our processors work diligently to ensure the consumer of high quality and safe food. Today's consumer demands more than ever before and we have the plants, technology and people to meet that demand. It is heart-warming to see that the dedication from industry is recognized by the consumers."

That sentiment is echoed by the provincial Minister of Agriculture and Lands, the Honourable Ron Cantelon.

On a related note, the IAF survey suggests most British Columbians (almost 80%) believe farmers make good neighbours. Additionally:

- Most British Columbians (86%) believe BC farmers take good care of their animals.
- Three-quarters of British Columbians (76%) agree that farmers take good care of the environment.
- Almost four in five British Columbians (78%) believe that a benefit of agriculture is protecting green space near cities.

Among the study's more sobering findings: three-quarters of British Columbians rate themselves as knowing "not very much" or "little" about farming in B.C.

The lack of public awareness, says IAF board chair Stuart Wilson, represents a huge opportunity. "B.C.'s agriculture and agri-food industries are key parts of the province's economic infrastructure," says Wilson. "The more British Columbians know about agricultural producers and processors and their related organizations, the more informed choices they can make about the food they put on their tables."

The Investment Agriculture Foundation of B.C. is a not-for-profit organization that manages and distributes federal and provincial funds in support of innovative projects to benefit the agriculture and agri-food industries in B.C. To learn more about the IAF and the funding programs it administers, please visit www.iafbc.com.

For more information about the Ipsos Reid Poll of Public Opinions Toward Agriculture, Food and Agri-Food Production in B.C., or to obtain a copy of the full poll results, please contact:

Bohdan Zajcew
Public Affairs
Investment Agriculture Foundation of B.C.
(604) 908-0920
bohdan@iafbc.ca