

Home-grown health  
The benefits of local  
produce

Farming energy  
Agricultural innovation  
supplements the grid

Panel of experts  
Discussing the future  
of BC farming

**MEDIA  
PLANET**

March 2012

# BC AGRICULTURE

PHOTOS: VIJ'S INSPIRED INDIAN CUISINE, BC GREENHOUSE GROWERS



**3**  
TIPS

## SECURING OUR FOOD'S FUTURE

How Vikram Vij's passion for local produce is vital to his internationally successful cuisine



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## CHALLENGES

What's the easiest (and most delicious) way to support BC's economy? **Show your love for all things local by picking home-grown produce.**

# Celebrate BC's agrifoods diversity

**F**ifty years ago, our wintertime produce choices were limited and consisted primarily of root vegetables like potatoes, turnips and squash. Fruit choices included apples, oranges and bananas—and that was about it. This was because, in those days, the cost to ship fresh produce to BC from other countries was extremely prohibitive and winter-grown local fruits and vegetables were almost non-existent.

Thanks to the ingenuity and hard work of BC farm families, times have changed. Now, the diversity of fresh BC-grown agrifoods and food products is almost overwhelming. Even in the colder seasons, we can buy a multitude of locally-grown produce including fresh peppers, leaf lettuce, herbs and on-the-vine tomatoes. State-of-the-art greenhouses, cold storage and processing facilities enable us to buy locally-grown apples, pears and berries in many forms—from fresh to frozen to dried, or incorporated into other food products such as cereals.

## A bounty in our backyard

Did you know that we are Canada's

most diverse agricultural province? British Columbia produces more than 200 farm commodities and more than 100 species of fish, shellfish and marine plants. In 2010, the food and beverage processing industry was the largest among BC's manufacturing industries, generating more than \$7.2 billion in shipments and employing 14 percent of the province's manufacturing workforce.

## Planning for a future of produce

As part of the BC Jobs Plan, we are working with industry to create an "Agrifoods Strategy", which will focus on our existing strengths to build a modern, innovative industry that can feed our growing demand for local food as well as compete in the global marketplace. Later this month I'll be releasing our Agrifoods Strategy with a list of goals and actions to increase competitiveness and expand domestic sales as well as exports to the growing Asian market.

In BC, we have access to some of the healthiest, natural ingredients available. For example, our blueberries are considered to be one of the world's superfruits because they contain a high content of

”

“As part of the BC Jobs Plan, we are working with industry to create an 'Agrifoods Strategy.'”



**Don McRae**  
Minister of Agriculture, British Columbia

antioxidants which helps reduce the risk of cancer and other age-related diseases.

## Sample for yourself

To get a better idea of the stunning array of foods grown locally and to see where these foods come from, I encourage you to get out there and experience agriculture for yourself.

You'll find a diverse mix of farms, markets, gardens and even wineries within an hour's drive of Metro Vancouver. Once the weather gets warmer, make a day of it and drive out to the Fraser Valley. Take a farm tour, savour a meal at a local restaurant, enjoy an agricultural fair; or take your family back to our BC roots by visiting the original Hudson's Bay Farm in Langley.

The history of British Columbia is intrinsically tied to our rich and diverse natural resources. As a component of those natural resources, agriculture continues to play a key role in our future. So this year, make it a goal to get out there and enjoy the immense variety of foods grown and produced in this province. Make healthy, great-tasting choices for your family by supporting BC's farm families.

TIP

1

GET INVOLVED  
IN YOUR  
COMMUNITY;  
VISIT A LOCAL  
FARM WITH THE  
FAMILY



## WE RECOMMEND



**Home grown health**  
What are the nutritional benefits of buying local fruits and veggies?

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**The economic impact** p.6  
How local farming business affects the province.

# MEDIA PLANET

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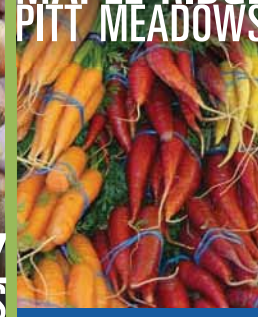
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# B.C. FARMERS AND RANCHERS: GROWING LEADERSHIP

There is more to farming and ranching than meets the eye. Through programs delivered by the British Columbia Agricultural Research & Development Corporation (ARDCorp), B.C. farmers not only provide a bountiful smorgasbord of agri-food products, but they also put extra care and value into the nutritious, safe, and wholesome food we have come to expect.

Farmers work hard behind-the-scenes to ensure the local sustainability and global viability of B.C. agriculture through programs that address environmental stewardship, labour market and skills development, food safety, herd and flock management, and renewable agri-energy.

ARDCorp supports B.C. farmers' leadership and commitment in providing the best of B.C. agriculture, through programs such as:

## Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) Program:

The EFP Program provides a free and confidential farm assessment to all B.C. farmers. A completed EFP empowers farmers to address environmental risks and improve farm vitality. It empowers British Columbians with the confidence that B.C.-grown food comes from an environmentally-responsible farm. For more information, please visit: [www.bcefp.ca](http://www.bcefp.ca).

## Food Safety Systems Implementation (Producer) Program:

The Food Safety Systems Implementation (Producer) Program assists B.C. farmers to establish an On-Farm Food Safety (OFFS) program. These efforts strengthen existing food safety, surveillance, and information systems by improving food safety identification and response capabilities. For more information, please visit: [www.ardcorp.ca](http://www.ardcorp.ca).

## Enterprise Infrastructure Traceability Program:

Traceability, or product tracing, is the ability to follow the movement of a food product through specified stages of production, processing, and distribution. From critical points along the supply chain to "full-chain" traceability, the Enterprise Infrastructure Traceability Program helps dedicated B.C. farmers and food processors stay on top of their operations. For more information, please visit: [www.ardcorp.ca](http://www.ardcorp.ca).



## NEWS

# The benefits of home-grown

**Question:** Is there a nutritional advantage to foods grown close to home?

**Answer:** The shorter the time between peak ripeness and appearance on your dinner plate, the greater the nutritional value of your food.

Many health experts today tout the value of eating like our grandparents did—healthy food grown in season and picked when ripened by Mother Nature.

It's natural that BC-grown fruits and veggies are your best bet in ensuring that the food products you buy and consume are chock full of health-promoting nutrients.

"The nutritional quality of food relates to the time it spends ripening on the plant," says Vancouver dietitian and nutritionist Jennifer Hill. "If food is grown close to home



PHOTO: BC GREENHOUSE GROWERS

it can be consumed soon after it's picked."

## Making up for distance

Food that comes from farther away is usually harvested before its peak says Hill, so it never gets a chance to reach its full nutritional potential.

In BC, much of the locally-grown food available in the largest population area of Greater Vancouver comes from relatively short distances. And with the growth in

greenhouse growing in the province, the local season is getting longer.

"We are putting seed in during December and we're not out of the greenhouse until November," says Linda Delli Santi, executive director of the BC Greenhouse Growers' Association.

"We have products available for the market for nine months of the year and most of our greenhouse members are within 20 minutes of Vancouver."

## The perfect environment

Greenhouse-grown veggies have time to reach peak ripeness, she says. "Everything is freshly picked. Farmers use integrated pest management systems and methods that give the plants everything they need to be happy."

That's because greenhouse agriculture involves close monitoring of the individual plants and their nutrient status on a daily and weekly basis, adding what's needed through a drip irrigation system. The tender loving care extends to regular pruning which answers a question consumers often have about why greenhouse vegetables "always look so perfect and uniform," says Delli Santi. "Only the best survive."

Currently BC greenhouse growers are producing numerous varieties of peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce and eggplants.

DIANA MCLAREN

editorial@mediaplanet.com

## FRESH TIPS



**Jennifer Hill**  
Registered  
Dietitian

There's so much interesting produce in season in BC right now. Each week, pick something you've never tried, or try one of your usual vegetables in a new, interesting recipe. In spring, look out for asparagus, morels, rhubarb and fiddleheads.

Engage the whole family in local eating with trips to the farmers market or local farms and U-Picks in the growing season, by signing up for a CSA box, or by growing your own veggie patch. Get the kids involved with meal planning and preparation.

JENNIFER HILL

editorial@mediaplanet.com

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INSPIRATION

TIP  
**2**  
BUYING LOCALLY PRODUCED SEASONAL FOOD MEANS FRESHNESS AND QUALITY FOR YOUR FAMILY'S HEALTH

**Question:** What inspired one of Vancouver's most successful culinary leaders to champion BC agriculture?  
**Answer:** A rural Indian upbringing and love for all things local spurred Vikram Vij to create what is now an internationally-renowned cuisine that is a cult favourite.

# An eastern twist on western taste

HOW I MADE IT

**There's a saying that if you cook with love and passion, it will find its way into the food.**

It's a notion Vikram Vij agrees with and it's served him well as he's built his culinary empire in Vancouver—and become one of BC's most influential promoters of locally-grown cuisine.

"I took my inspiration from the small village market in India where the tomato that was picked that day was sold that night."

ket, Rangoli, where his line of frozen Indian entrees can be purchased.

"We prepare everything from scratch, including our Indian spices which we roast and grind ourselves. And we feature as much BC seafood, meat and vegetables as we can."

**Only the best**

The quality and freshness of using local ingredients match Vij's high standards and, he's proud to say, are a big contributor to the community both economically and socially.

"It was hard when we first started in the mid-90's," Vij says. "People would say, why should they pay more, but then once they tasted the food they knew it was something special. Not just something generic or mass-produced."

Vij says when he's cooking for his two daughters at home, they often ask, "why do I fuss so much about food? And I tell them food is life. If you can feed yourself on a shoestring, you'll never starve."

Not content to be just be a leader in promoting BC products in his own

A love of food is in fact what drove Vij into the hospitality and culinary industries, studying in Austria after growing up in his native India.

"As a young kid, my grandfather had a huge influence on me," Vij recalls with laughter. "He would say to me, 'I love to drink and you love to eat, so you can open up a restaurant some day and I will be your bartender.'"

**Bringing an eastern taste to the West**

While Vij's grandfather didn't live to be bartender at Vij's restaurant in downtown Vancouver, his grandson's love of good food and wine has translated into a restaurant where the lineups never quit. Vij has expanded into a café and mar-



PHOTO: VIJ'S INSPIRED INDIAN CUISINE

enterprises, Vij is past president of the Chef's Table Society of British Columbia and was instrumental in organizing the Canadian Chef's Congress on Vancouver Island.

"It's not about what food is called. It's about the love and care and passion you put into the food."

DIANA MCLAREN

editorial@mediaplanet.com

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## NEWS



## DON'T MISS!

## Local farm power

■ One cow's daily manure can light two 100-watt bulbs for 24 hours. With over 70,000 cows in BC, just imagine what we can do!

■ The average on-farm anaerobic digester reduces greenhouse gas emissions by 1,500 tonnes a year. This is equivalent to taking 300 cars off BC's roads.

■ Total energy potential of organic waste material in the Fraser Valley could displace over 100 million litres of diesel and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 335,000 tonnes per year.

■ BC is home to several on-farm renewable energy systems, including anaerobic digesters, micro-hydro, solar-thermal, geo-exchange and biomass boilers.

■ Given appropriate government support, BC's agricultural sector has the potential to produce over 100 MW of renewable electricity. This is enough to power over 100,000 B.C. homes.

**MATT DICKSON, MRM.**

Renewable Agri-Energy Program Manager,  
BC Agricultural Research and  
Development Corporation  
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TIP

3

DO YOUR  
RESEARCH TO  
FIND YOUR  
CLOSEST  
FARMERS  
MARKET

**A NATURAL LEADER**  
With almost perfect weather  
conditions, BC is perfectly  
positioned for a successful  
agricultural industry.

PHOTO: SMART GROWTH BC/CAGBC

## CREATING ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

**Food grown and processed in BC not only makes for healthy and nutritious meals, it contributes billions annually to the provincial economy and employs tens of thousands of British Columbians.**

Competing with cheap imported food has kept the BC agricultural industry on its toes, changing when needed and innovating as a fact of life.

"Markets like pork in BC have shrunk," says Garnet Etsell, chairperson of the BC Agriculture Coun-

cil. "But blueberries are a huge economic generator now for us."

In all, BC growers contribute \$2.6 billion to the provincial economy with food processors adding another \$6.9 billion. In terms of jobs, "food processing is one of the largest employers in the manufacturing sector with more than 30,000 jobs from factory floor to CEO's," says Nico Human, CEO of the BC Food Processors Association.

### A natural leader

BC is perfectly positioned as an agricultural leader. "We have some of the best natural resources in the

world," Etsell says, "and we produce 250 different food commodities. Water scarcity and population growth worldwide mean BC has great potential for the future."

Human adds that in his industry, stringent Canadian safety and regulation standards can be a competitive advantage, especially for export.

Growers and processors alike point to the public's focus on healthy food options and toward that end, new products are coming on market such as Omega-3 enriched foods and vegan products.

One farmer who's enjoying suc-

cess is Rob Martens, whose Chilliwack egg farm, Twin Willows, has shown steady growth in size and production since his start in 2007. He says that he finds terrific support from his membership in industry organizations such as the Fraser Valley Egg Producers, BC Egg Marketing Board and the BC Agriculture Council.

"I love farming," Martens says. "It's my passion and I'm proud to be a BC egg producer."

**DIANA MCLAREN**

editorial@mediaplanet.com

The Fraser Valley Regional District is ranked **#1** in agricultural production in BC generating over **35%** of total Provincial gross farm receipts. Each year, agriculture brings in more than **\$2.5 billion** to our Region.

Agriculture has been, and still is, vital to the health of our Region's families, communities and economy.

As a centre for agricultural research and innovation for almost 125 years and building on the Region's entrepreneurial spirit, the future for agriculture in the FVRD is exciting.



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# PANEL OF EXPERTS



**Emily MacNair**  
Initiative  
Coordinator,  
Climate Action



**Brian Redekop**  
Market Manager,  
Agriculture &  
Agribusiness,  
Royal Bank Canada



**Dale Krahn**  
Paragon Farms Ltd,  
Representing BC  
Young Farmers  
Association (BCYF)



**Sharon Gaetz**  
Chair, Fraser Valley  
Regional District



**Question 1:**  
What does the future of farming in BC look like to you and what is the biggest challenge this industry faces?

**In the context** of climate change, the future of farming in BC is actually growing the industry so that we have more commercial food production closer to home. This is a sensible step to take when we think about other parts of the world that are already struggling to produce enough food. Climate change is creating more variability and extreme conditions which are challenging for farmers everywhere. It will also impact resources critical for agricultural production in BC, like water. Looking to the future we need to plan to have sufficient land, water and the resources and tools to support agriculture. The future of farming in BC is about supporting resilient and flexible farm businesses and embracing and enhancing the amazing diversity of our sector.

**Agriculture has always** been and will always be an essential part of the lives of British Columbians and the future of farming in BC is full of opportunity. Consumer trends are changing; people value high-quality locally grown foods and BC farmers now have the opportunity to demonstrate that they produce the highest quality agricultural products in the world in ways that are socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. The challenge facing the agricultural industry is to become exceptional promoters of their products because the future success of the industry is going to rely on their ability to provide greater awareness of their value to consumers.

**First, BC agriculture** will increasingly contribute to the growing local and international demand for food. Second, we will need to continue engaging young professionals in all aspects of farming, including primary agriculture and in the vast opportunities available in areas such as technology, environmental and resource management, government, education, strategic financial management, and communications. Food is a life essential as are the natural resources to produce it. The next generations of farmers and other professionals who support agriculture will be called upon for their experience and insight to the future of farming locally, nationally, and globally.

**Twenty-first century** agriculture carries exciting technology and innovation opportunities. As a centre for agricultural research and innovation for almost 125 years, I see this tradition in our region continuing. The FVRD's agriculture sector is well positioned to capitalize on what is our competitive advantage of a strong, diverse and entrepreneurial agricultural economy. Agriculture challenges include: clean air and water, plastics and other wastes, energy costs, labour costs and regulations/taxation. Also, this region's agricultural businesses serve the entire Lower Mainland showing the importance of protecting the viability of agriculture in the Lower Mainland as a whole, not just the FVRD.

**Question 2:**  
How can society help to ensure food safety?

**The three most** important things people can do are to learn more about BC agriculture, to buy BC products and to support the farmers in their own communities. We all take food for granted and assume things won't change but we need to appreciate that agricultural systems are vulnerable. We talk about food security and supporting local food systems but we need to turn that talk into action. I think the way to do that is to be committed, in our communities and our purchasing habits, to understanding the sector and appreciating that having economically viable farms close to home is good for all of us.

**As a society,** we need to understand the value of food sovereignty within our country; we need to continue to support our local farmers and petition our government to table progressive food and agricultural legislation. Food sovereignty is the right to define our own food and agriculture; to protect and regulate domestic agricultural production and trade in order to achieve sustainable development. In my opinion food sovereignty does not negate trade, but rather, it promotes the formulation of trade policies and practices that serve the rights of peoples and food producers to safe, healthy and economically sustainable production.

**As people become** increasingly educated about how their food is grown in Canada and abroad, they will continue to make better choices for their families. Communicating with farmers is a great way to grow awareness for all aspects of farming for which we are responsible. Digging deeper, the consumer will find that it is through collaboration with our government agencies, marketing boards, and commodity associations that the quality of Canadian food is among the highest in the world.

**Agriculture is a** \$2.5-billion-a-year industry to our region, so it's really important for the public to understand the importance of agriculture to the broader economy. By supporting local farmers and farmer's markets and by buying and eating healthier foods, people can both improve their personal health and support the farming industry. Securing clean air and water will ensure continued high quality food in the future. We also need to be educating the next generation of farmers in our region by encouraging the expansion of UFV's agricultural programs.



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# NEWS

## INSPIRATION



LOCALLY GROWN

### The right pick


 Joe Sardinha, previous president of the BC Fruit Growers' Association, has operated various tree fruit orchards for the past 30 years in Summerland, BC.

PHOTO: BC FRUIT GROWERS' ASSOCIATION



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