

British Columbia News

Helping B.C. vegetable seed farmers harvest new opportunities

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/18159>

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Victoria - The people involved in the first stage of growing fresh and healthy B.C. vegetables are getting some help to increase the amount of local food grown in their communities.

British Columbia's seed farmers will be able to expand their businesses through a comprehensive project that includes help in growing, processing, managing and marketing their products.

The not-for-profit organization, FarmFolk CityFolk, is leading a project to increase both the production capacity and customer base of seed farmers by:

- developing a mobile seed-processing unit to help small- and mid-scale seed farmers efficiently and affordably process seed;
- expanding seed production skills training in the Lower Mainland, Okanagan, Kootenays and North through focused in-person training and webinars;
- helping new entrants and small seed businesses with “seed enterprise budgets” to plan and prepare for expenses, revenues and inventory management; and
- supporting “Seedy Saturday” events in more communities and developing shared resources that can be used throughout B.C.

British Columbia is home to 15 seed companies, including co-operatives, that sell B.C.-grown seeds, as well as many community seed initiatives including over 50 “Seedy Saturdays” and 20 seed libraries. B.C.'s post-secondary education institutions are active in seed trials and seed processing.

Quotes:

Lawrence MacAulay, federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food –

“Our government is proud to support this project, which will help agricultural producers process more seeds. Providing B.C. vegetable seed producers the tools they need to increase their production capacity and customer base will create new opportunities for them and contribute to growing the economy, while supporting well-paying, middle class jobs for Canadians.”

Lana Penham, B.C.'s Minister of Agriculture

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“Seeds may be small, but nothing is more important to agriculture than the life they contain. Seeds are the beginning of so much of our food supply and are absolutely critical to our personal health and the food security of our province. That's why I am so proud to announce new funding to help diversify and increase seed production and processing in the province, supporting 15 seed businesses and 50 Seedy Saturdays, as well as the creation of resources and tools that promote seed growing, exchanges and 20 seed libraries throughout B.C.”

Chris Thoreau, BC Seed Security Program co-ordinator, FarmFolk CityFolk –

“The mobile seed unit is a unique shared infrastructure project which arose from the seed-grower feedback that without proper equipment, it was hard to scale up production. The mobile unit will provide seed growers with several seed-cleaning tools to help them scale up production and processing capacity. If proven effective, the unit can act as a model for permanent seed-cleaning facilities at strategic sites across B.C. Further, the unit will be an effective outreach tool at agricultural events and conferences around B.C.”

Mel Sylvestre, UBC Farm Seed Hub co-ordinator and BC Eco Seed Co-op member –

“As a small-scale seed producer also growing fresh market crops, having access to a mobile seed-processing unit will help increase our production capacity. Many of the pieces of equipment needed to clean seeds efficiently are too expensive or hard to secure at our scale. The mobile seed-processing unit will allow us to grow larger quantities of seed crops without having to upgrade our current processing setup. Seed production is an emerging sector in B.C. and we still have so much to learn in order to develop the right techniques and processes adapted to our regions and scales. For that reason, I am looking forward to the educational opportunity offered through this program.”

Quick Facts:

- FarmFolk CityFolk is receiving up to \$100,000 over the next two years in funding from the governments of Canada and B.C. through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership.
- The five-year, \$3-billion Canadian Agricultural Partnership, launched on April 1, 2018, includes \$2 billion in cost-shared strategic initiatives delivered by the provinces and territories and \$1 billion for federal programs and services.

Learn More:

More Information about Seedy Saturdays and the project is available online:

<http://www.bcseeds.org/>

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