

Dairy, Poultry and Egg Farms Now Account for Nearly Half of All BC Agriculture Jobs

Supply-managed farm sectors support \$5.6 billion in annual economic output, concludes new PwC study

Abbotsford, B.C. (Sep. 17th, 2013) – While British Columbia’s agriculture sector shed 9,400 jobs between 2007 and 2011, the province’s dairy, poultry and egg producers, all operating under the system of supply management, have created nearly 3,000 net new jobs during the same period. As a result, 45 per cent of all agriculture employees in B.C. are now working on supply-managed farms, up from 25 per cent in 2007, according to a new study done by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC).

The PwC report revealed B.C.’s dairy, egg and poultry industry producers (BCDEPI) directly employed 11,800 people in 2011, and indirectly supported an estimated 19,900 jobs beyond the farm gate. Total BCDEPI impacts resulted in \$5.6 billion in industry output and a \$1.6 billion contribution to B.C.’s GDP. The 2011 combined employment for B.C.’s dairy egg and poultry producers exceeded employment created in the forestry, mining or oil & gas industries in B.C. during the same period.

“Farming is a tough business, one marked by uncertainties and boom-bust price cycles,” says Dave Taylor, Chair of the B.C. Dairy Association. “This study shows that B.C.’s supply managed farm sectors provide much-needed stability for the province’s agriculture and food processing industry, and all without costing the government a nickel in subsidies or bailouts.”

BCDEPI farmers operate under the system of supply management, which works with industry, government and consumer representatives to set production levels, as well as implementing rigorous food safety and environmental testing programs. Producer prices are set to cover actual costs and provide farmers with fair and stable returns while consumers are assured of locally produced, fresh and affordable food.

According to the PwC study, BCDEPI is made up of 1,100 farms across the province, employing an average of 11 people. In 2011, they collectively produced 154 million kg of chicken, 24.9 million kg of turkey, 70.4 million dozen eggs, 8.7 million dozen broiler hatching eggs and 666 million litres of milk.

“While these numbers may be staggering, it is important to remember that the vast majority of our dairy, poultry and egg producers are family-run farms that help support the economies of communities across B.C.,” says Derek Janzen, Director of the B.C. Chicken Marketing Board. “Underlying all our successes is the system of supply management that ensures farmers get the fair returns they need to continue feeding the province.”

For the past 30 years, producer prices for dairy, poultry and eggs have risen at rates below the province’s inflation rate. B.C.’s consumer price index increased an average of 3.3 per cent per year since 1980 while the producer prices received by BCDEPI farmers have increased an average of 1.9 per cent to 2.4 per cent.

BCDEPI is a partnership formed on behalf of the province’s five supply-managed agriculture sectors: B.C. Milk Producers Association, B.C. Milk Marketing Board, B.C. Egg Marketing Board, B.C. Chicken Marketing Board, B.C. Turkey Marketing Board and the B.C. Broiler Egg Hatching Commission.

Copies of the PWC Report, “Economic Impact of British Columbia’s dairy, chicken, turkey, hatching egg and table egg industries – 2011 update,” are available at <http://bcdairy.ca/milk/news/>

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