

Ministry of Agriculture
BRIEFING NOTE FOR MINISTER POPHAM WITH INFORMATION FOR MEETING WITH
ARZEENA HAMIR

Ref: 189944

Date: March 19, 2019

Title: Local foods in schools, colleges and universities

Issue: Regional coordination of purchasing

Background:

Local food in schools is currently funded through two Ministry of Health initiatives through Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC) and Farm to School. AITC runs the BC School Fruit & Vegetable Nutritional Program (BCSFVNP) which purchased \$2.2 million in BC product in 2017-28 and operates in 95 percent of BC schools reaching approximately 520,000 students plus 40,000 teachers and support staff. Farm to school, administered by the Public Health Association of BC, operates in approximately 126 schools and manages a grant program that supports community-led projects such as school salad bars, hot lunches, school gardens, greenhouses, and field trips as well as developing Farm to School Regional Hubs in Kamloops, Vancouver, and the Capital region. Both programs are currently being evaluated by the Ministry of Health.

Five schools in the Comox Valley offer school salad bar programs where schools coordinate regional purchasing to provide local produce through the school once per week. School salad bar programs were originally eligible for funding through Farm to School BC though, for the last two years, the funding for programs have been delivered by Farm to Cafeteria Canada in partnership with the Whole Kids Foundation.

As part of Feed BC, AGRI has provided funding for a study on food aggregation initiatives; where a group of local food producers work together to aggregate their production and distribute it to a regional market. Janine de la Salle, one of the researchers working on the aggregation project, conducted interviews with operators or organizers of aggregation initiatives earlier this month and Arzeena Hamir was among those interviewed.

Discussion:

- Feed BC is a key mandate of the provincial government to increase the use of B.C. food in hospitals, post-secondary institutions and schools.
- To date, the focus of Feed BC has been on healthcare. AGRI has not yet begun to explore how Feed BC can support schools to increase the procurement of B.C. food, although we recognize the importance of this sector.
- Further development of local food in schools programming will require coordination with the Ministry of Health.
- AGRI is undertaking the food aggregation study to understand aggregation in the B.C. context and key issues, facilitators, gaps and barriers for regional food aggregation initiatives. Aggregation of product may a potential opportunity for small and medium food enterprises to gain access to larger scale markets such as universities and schools.
- A draft report for the study is expected at the end of the March. AGRI will use the findings from this study to help explore potential opportunities for government and other stakeholders to support regional food aggregation initiatives.

Suggested Response:

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Contact:

- Sarah van Heeswijk, Youth Development Team Lead, 604-556-3067
- Elietha Bocskei, Senior Policy Analyst, 778-698-9769

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