West Coast Region Agriculture Drought Pre-Season Townhall

June 10, 2025

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BRITISH COLUMBIA
Ministry of Agriculture and Food

Agenda

1. Introductions
2. 2024 Drought Season Debrief
3. Pre-Season Drought Outlook for 2025
4. AF Funding programs and support
5. Drought Extension Projects
6. Q & A Session

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Drought Debrief and Pre-Season Outlook - WLRS

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Learn more and apply for supports:
gov.bc.ca/AgDrought

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How AF Supports the Agriculture Sector

- Communications
- Engagement and one-on-one support
- Guides and events (factsheets, workshops, field demonstrations)
- Online tools
- Funding and financial assistance programs

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Agricultural Water Resource Consultant – Foster Richardson

- Promoting best practices for water conservation and efficient irrigation techniques.
- Providing on-farm field days and workshops for farmers and agricultural professionals.
- Collaborating with local agricultural agencies and organizations to promote sustainable water usage.
- Support producers with access to funding and resources.

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Voluntary Coordinated Irrigation Scheduling

- Started in 2020 following 2019 curtailment
- 20 irrigation license holders in Koksilah watershed who were subject to protection orders
- Split into two groups based on location and volumes
- Scheduling starts at 200l/s
- Four days on, four days off
- Implemented in 2020, 2021, & 2023 to delay protection orders

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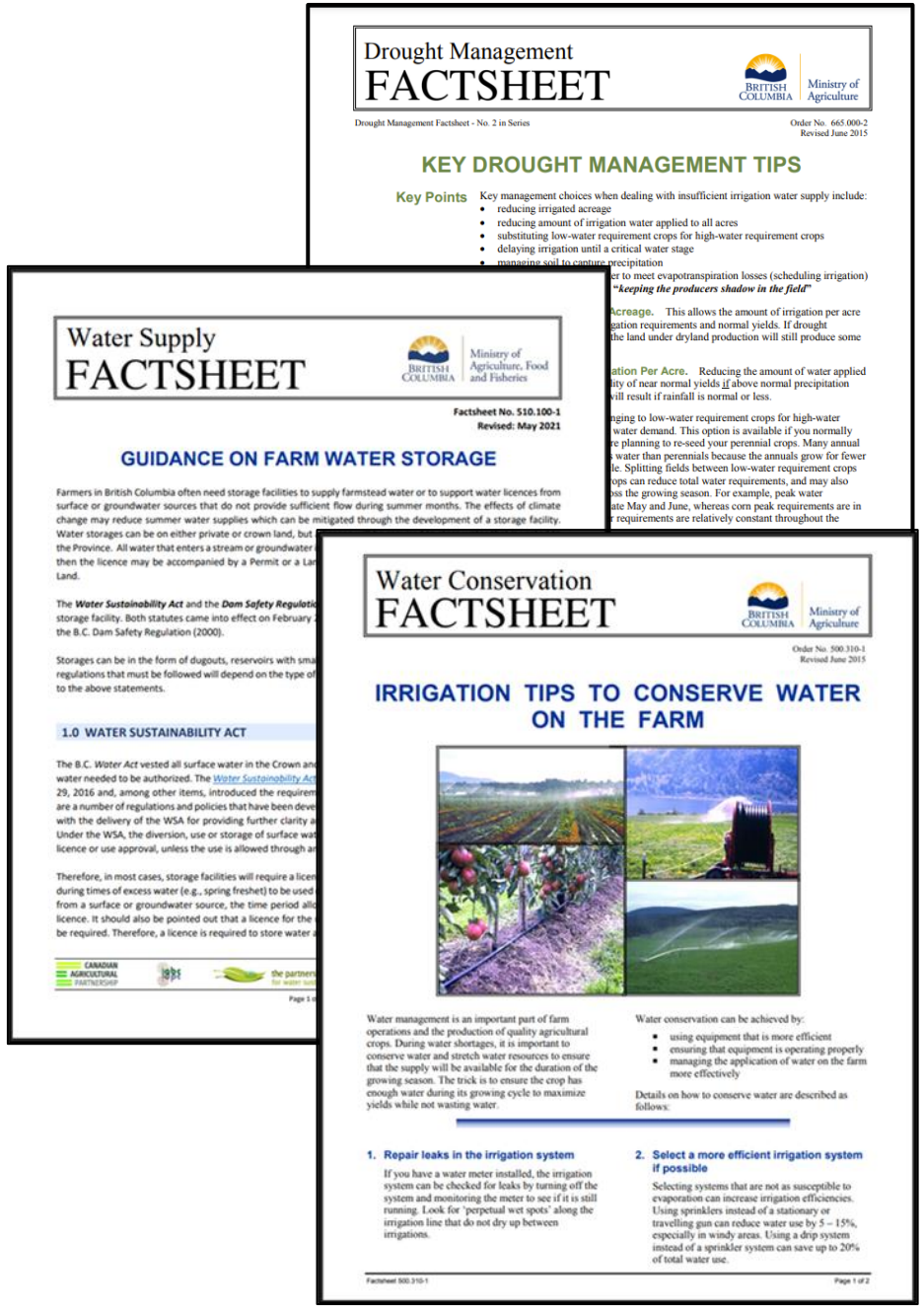
Preparing for Drought

Key Factsheets, Guides and Videos

Visit the Drought in Agriculture webpage:

- Quick Guide to Drought Resources
- Key Drought Management Tips
- Guidance On Farm Water Storage
- Irrigation Decisions with Limited Water
- B.C. Irrigation Management Guide
- Irrigation Tips to Conserve Water on the Farm
- Irrigation Water Saving Tips
- And more, including commodity specific information on drought preparedness, response and recovery

gov.bc.ca/AgDrought



Drought Management
FACTSHEET
BRITISH COLUMBIA | Ministry of Agriculture

Drought Management Factsheet - No. 2 in Series
Order No. 665.000-2
Revised June 2015

KEY DROUGHT MANAGEMENT TIPS

Key Points Key management choices when dealing with insufficient irrigation water supply include:
- reducing irrigated acreage
- reducing amount of irrigation water applied to all acres
- substituting low-water requirement crops for high-water requirement crops
- delaying irrigation until a critical water stage
- managing soil to capture precipitation

Water Supply
FACTSHEET
BRITISH COLUMBIA | Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries

Factsheet No. 510.100-1
Revised: May 2021

GUIDANCE ON FARM WATER STORAGE

Farmers in British Columbia often need storage facilities to supply farmstead water or to support water licences from surface or groundwater sources that do not provide sufficient flow during summer months. The effects of climate change may reduce summer water supplies which can be mitigated through the development of a storage facility.

Water Conservation
FACTSHEET
BRITISH COLUMBIA | Ministry of Agriculture

Order No. 500.310-1
Revised June 2015

IRRIGATION TIPS TO CONSERVE WATER ON THE FARM

Water management is an important part of farm operations and the production of quality agricultural crops. During water shortages, it is important to conserve water and stretch water resources to ensure that the supply will be available for the duration of the growing season. The trick is to ensure the crop has enough water during its growing cycle to maximize yields while not wasting water.

Water conservation can be achieved by:
- using equipment that is more efficient
- ensuring that equipment is operating properly
- managing the application of water on the farm more effectively

Details on how to conserve water are described as follows:

1. Repair leaks in the irrigation system
2. Select a more efficient irrigation system if possible

Online tools

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BC Agriculture Water Calculator

BC Irrigation Water Use Calculator

- **Estimating water needs (e.g., for water licence applications)**
- **Dugout Calculator *NEW***

- **Determining actual water use (e.g., for reporting or record keeping)**

Agricultural Irrigation SCHEDULING CALCULATOR

- **Scheduling irrigation using weather data and forecasts**

BC AGRI WEATHER

- **Weather station data relevant to agricultural producers and decision-support tools**

Water Infrastructure Funding Update

Beneficial Management Practices (BMP) Program

- Requires an **Environmental Farm Plan (EFP)**
- Eligible activities:
  - **On-farm** infrastructure (irrigation systems, water storage facilities, rainwater harvesting systems)
  - Irrigation system management/scheduling (e.g., soil moisture meters, weather stations)
  - Engineering or technical design work or technical feasibility study (water and riparian)
- Fully subscribed for 2025

Subscribe to the Investment Agriculture Foundation (IAF) newsletter for updates – visit www.iafbc.ca

Agriculture Water Infrastructure Program

- Open to a wide range of applicants (communities, First Nations, organizations)
- Eligible activities:
  - Agricultural water supply assessments, engineering studies, or plans
  - New or improved water storage systems and dams
  - Off-farm conveyance and water supply systems to farms (e.g., pipelines)
- Four streams:
  - Stream 1: Large-scale producer projects (>400K)
  - Stream 2: Community projects
  - Stream 3: Assessments, Engineering Studies, Plans
  - Stream 4: Strategic Projects (community only)

Water Infrastructure Funding Update

Stream 3 – Assessments, Engineering Studies or Plans – New Activity!

- Facilitation and strategic engagement for communities
  - Collaborative community planning focused on addressing agriculture water supply challenges due to historical/persistent low flows, water use conflicts, or water shortages
  - Must demonstrate community support & describe parties that will be involved

- Eligible Applicants: communities only

- Cost-Shared:
  - New activity only: 100% up to $100K (no minimum)
  - All current activities: remain as 50% up to $200K ($20K minimum)

Subscribe to the Investment Agriculture Foundation (IAF) newsletter for updates – visit www.iafbc.ca

Other Programs

Financial Assistance Programs:

- Production Insurance
  - 1-888-332-3352
- AgriStability
  - 1-877-343-2767

Access to Feed Program (BCCA)

- Matches producers to available feed supplies
- Delivered by the BC Cattlemen's Association

Regional Extension Projects

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- Dry Farming
- Warm Season Grasses
- Soil 101 Workshops
- On Farm Soil Health Demos

Field days and demonstrations - in planning

- Water storage – Port Alberni
  - June 22, 2025
- Soil workshops
  - North, Central, South
- Water management – Comox
  - Southern Irrigation
  - Summer

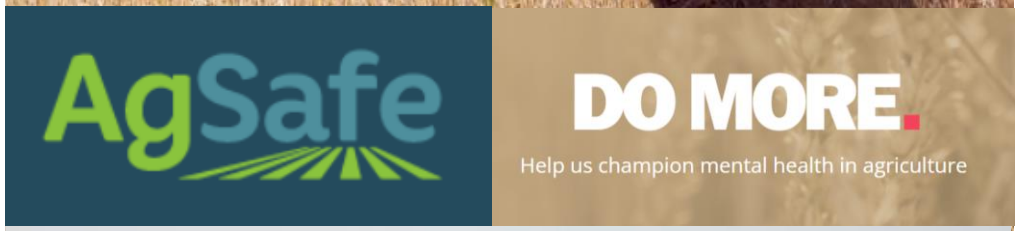
BC Crop and Livestock Reporter Program

- **What:** A weekly online & volunteer agricultural production survey.
- **When**: Yearly from April to November.
- **Who:** Anyone who is farming/ranching or is engaged in agricultural production.
- **Where:** Open to anyone reporting in B.C.
- **Why:** To obtain timely “boots on the ground” intel about crop and livestock production progress and challenges across B.C.
- **Program website:** https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/agriservice-bc/crop-and-livestock-reporter-program
  - Program info
  - Program registration link
  - Weekly reports

Other Supports

Stress Mitigation for farmers and ranchers:

- AgSafe BC – Mental Wellness Resources and wellness practitioners
- The Do More Agriculture Foundation Resources (e.g., AgTalk peer-to-peer support)



Get Connected With Us

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Visit the Drought in Agriculture website for more information on:

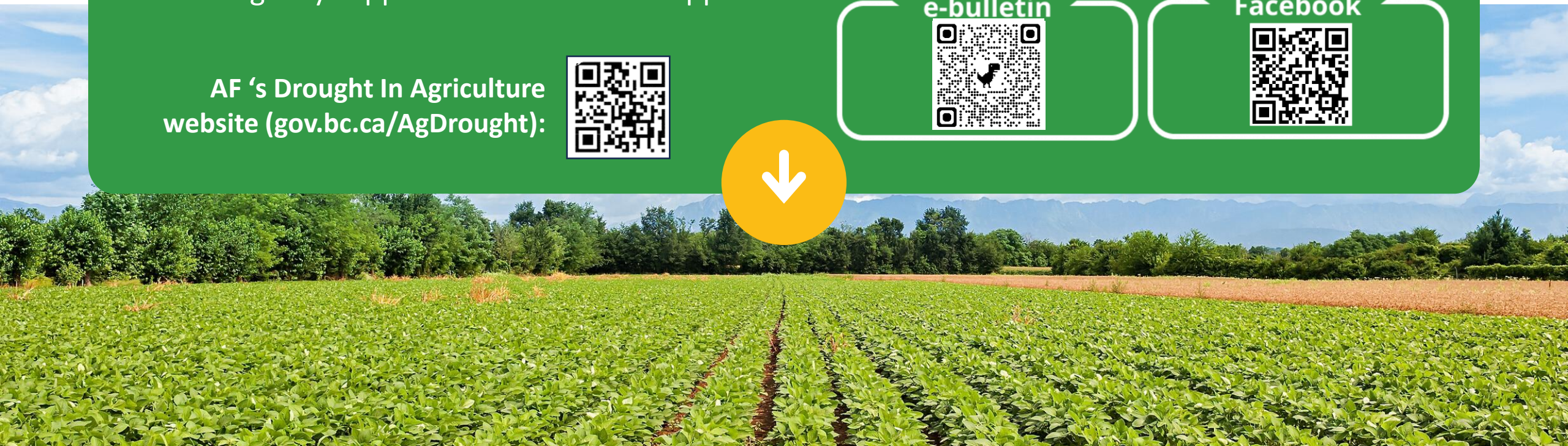
- Information and tools
- Funding programs
- Emergency supports
- Financial supports

AF 's Drought In Agriculture website (gov.bc.ca/AgDrought):

Subscribe to the AgriService BC e-bulletin and follow us on **Facebook** to hear about upcoming events, programs, and resources:

e-bulletin

Facebook



Get Connected With Us

Contact Your Regional Agrologist

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Vancouver Island Regional Agrologists

North: Thom ODell, thom.odell@gov.bc.ca, 779-225-0960
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