

Tales from the Trenches

Five Years in Ag Ec Dev

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Brief Bio

- Coordinator hired in December 2010 to launch the Beyond the Market program
- Five years with the project
- Community educator
- Small business coach
- Entrepreneur
- Prince George City Councillor
- Credit Union Director
- BA in Economics and International Studies

Key Resources

- [Beyondthemarket.ca](https://beyondthemarket.ca)
- [Jillenumconsulting.com](https://jillenumconsulting.com)
- Beef in BC report and virtual presentation – broad economic analysis and a business guide for cattle operators
- A-Z Guide for New Northern Farmers – a beginners guide to farming in our region
- Branching out: A Strategic Growth Plan for Williams Lake Area Fruit and Vegetable Producers (found on Cariboo Growers website)
- BC Farmland Lease Workbook

Lessons Learned

1. Rural communities require real people
2. There are many kinds of new farmers
3. Agriculture is a unique industry
4. Use buckshot, not silver bullets
5. Focus more on financial security, less on food security
6. Demand the province do more

Rural communities require real people

- 55% of farmers in Northern BC use a computer, 32% have hi speed internet
- Average attendance at a community workshop: 10
- Average attendance in similar webinars: 0
- Make hard copies, always
- Train local experts to teach
- Never build a business plan without a vested entrepreneur
- Offer 1-to-1 programming. Not everything can be done as a group

The are many kinds of new farmers

- Next Generation Farmer – strong working knowledge through family or employment, sometimes lack management skills. Often a desire to redefine inherited operations.
- Elder Transition Farmer – old farmer, new business. Often exceptional knowledgeable but very cynical
- Greenhorns – minimal working knowledge, sometimes bring unique knowledge from other careers
- Future farmer – no experience, no assets, lots of dreams. Low success rate
- Rural retirement dream farmer – Like a greenhorns but with more money and career/life experience, less motivation
- New Canadian – recent immigrants, many with ag experience in home country or with strong network ties to ethnic consumer in Canada. Less common in BC interior

Agriculture is a unique industry

- In 2015, total sales across entire industry in BC were \$13 billion and represented 2.1% of GDP with 57,000 resident workers
- In 2015, total sales of just primary production in BC were \$3.1 billion and represented 0.6% of GDP with 21,000 resident workers
- Exceptional year-to-year growth rate, outpacing all other resource industries
- BC's 5th largest export industry, next to forestry, minerals, energy and machinery
- Characterised by 1000's of operators all across the province (20,000 farms in 2011)
- BC Ministry of Ag budget in 2017/2018: \$82 million
- BC Ministry of Forests budget 2017/2018: \$671 million

Northern BC: more than you imagined

- 4,000 farms, 21% of BC total
- Roughly 2% of population are farmers
- 10% of gross provincial sales
- 1000 employee FTEs
- 70% of ALR lands
- 90% of bison in BC
- 71% of alfalfa acreage in BC
- 62% of hay acreage in BC
- 45% of cattle in BC
- 40% of horses in BC
- 30% of sheep in BC
- 20% of dairy animals in BC
- 2% of vegetable acreage

Kootenay: Stats in 2011

Use buckshot, not silver bullets

- Story of the community root cellar
- Story of the mobile abattoir
- Story of the processing hub
- Story of the community kitchen

Focus on financial security

- Story of the free farmer
- Story of the 100 mile diet
- Why you should eliminate all barriers to participation

Demand that the Province do more

- Five years of successful programming in a rural and vast region
- Cobbled together on a shoestring budget with mainly regional district funds
- Multiple requests across the province for similar programming
- Spring 2015: Beyond the Market drafts a provincial proposal for community-based agriculture extension services
- In brief: A \$330,000 project, to be administered independently in six regions, providing similar services as Beyond the Market

Demand that the Province do more

- August 2015: Presentation to the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training
- September 2015: Presentation to the Standing Opposition Committee for Agriculture
- October 2015: Submission to the Provincial Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services
- October 2015: Submission of 23 letters of support to Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training
- December 2015: Submission of request for formal response
- January 2015: Continued requests for meetings and formal responses
- March 2016: A meeting with Ministers Bond and Morris to re-present the original request made in August 2015
- April 2016: Request to NCLGA to adopt a resolution supporting community based extension program – denied
- June 2016: Request to UBCM to adopt a resolution supporting community based extension program – denied
- September 2016: UBCM resolution endorsed. Ministry of Ag announces \$250,000 for a gardening program