

Agroforestry *Update*

March 2008

*British Columbia
Agroforestry
Industry
Development
Initiative*

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Clean Energy Plan and Carbon Tax Create Opportunities for Agroforestry in BC

The ability to integrate conservation and production practices in the same system is a fundamental advantage of agroforestry. Now with two major 'green' policy developments in BC, agroforestry practices may be well positioned to contribute to carbon reduction strategies while generating economic benefits for individuals, communities and the province as a whole. On January 31st, the BC Government unveiled the details of its bioenergy strategy that is designed to create new opportunities for rural communities, spur investment and innovation, and help the Province reach the goal of becoming electricity self-sufficient by 2016. According to the BIOCAP Canada Foundation, BC already leads the country in energy production from biomass with over 800 MW of installed biomass electricity capacity, which is enough to power 640,000 households. Pulp and paper mills in BC meet

over a third of their electricity needs through on site co-generation of electricity and steam. And, in 2007, the BC wood pellet industry produced over 900,000 tonnes of wood pellets, of which 90 % was exported for power production overseas.

Last year the BC Government announced an aggressive clean energy plan that commits the province to generating at least 90% of its total power generation from clean or renewable energy. Biomass can be considered a 'carbon neutral' energy resource because plants extract the carbon from the atmosphere during their growth that is released in combustion. As such, biomass energy systems have the potential to make a major contribution towards BC's clean energy goal.

In a press release promoting the plan, Premier Gordon Campbell noted "there is an abundance of bioenergy opportunities,

such as using biomass created out of the mountain pine beetle outbreak that can stimulate investment and economic diversification while producing clean energy."

In addition to providing greenhouse gas benefits, developing bioenergy opportunities in BC can help provide cheaper and more sustainable energy to remote communities, create local employment, stimulate the rural economy and expand emerging export markets.

A new consumer tax on carbon that was announced in the 2008 provincial budget is providing additional impetus for bioenergy adoption. Starting July 1st, subject to final approval by the legislature, the tax will apply to most fossil fuels used in BC including gasoline, diesel, natural gas, coal, propane, and heating oil. The tax will be phased in over four years to give individuals and businesses time to

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Clean Energy Plan and Carbon Tax *concluded*

adjust to higher costs for higher-carbon fuel choices. The initial tax will be \$10 per tonne of carbon emitted (this equates to 2.4 cents per litre of gasoline) increasing to \$30 per tonne by 2012. The reasoning behind the tax is that higher fossil fuel prices should spur consumers to adopt more efficient technology and conservation practices, and ultimately reducing emissions by making cleaner options for energy more economically attractive.

The use of biomass for bioenergy is most promising in replacing fossil fuels for space and water heating. These systems can be scaled for households, barns, and greenhouses up to community heating networks and large industrial projects. And as the use of biomass for clean energy expands, so too should the opportunities for agroforestry to supply raw materials. To date, most bioenergy generation in BC has utilized residuals from forest products manufacturing. With large-scale bioenergy generation plans in the works, purpose grown or dedicated harvest of forest

biomass will increase. However, the cost of transporting bulk biomass over large distances can negate the carbon and economic benefits. For example, there is tremendous interest in utilizing the dead pine left in the wake of the mountain pine beetle outbreak for bioenergy generation. However, this “low-cost” resource is spread over an area larger than New Brunswick. Thus, the costs of harvesting and moving these trees to market challenge it as a viable option. Agroforestry plantings can overcome these challenges if they are situated close to their end-use markets. Agroforestry producers should see new markets for wood ‘waste’ (e.g. from pre-commercial thinnings or prunings from buffers, shelterbelts, alley plantings or silvo-pastures) or purpose grown biomass crops integrated into their agroforestry designs. In the near-term large markets do not exist, but communities or individual enterprises looking at new or replacement heating systems now have more incentive to choose biomass derived bioenergy.

The potential for carbon credit payments is also a step closer with plans to implement a “cap and trade” system whereby large carbon emitters can opt to offset their impact by purchasing carbon credits where it is not feasible to reduce their outputs. The details of how this system will be implemented have not been developed, but it is reasonable to assume that carbon will have a market value close to its tax penalty. Clarity is needed around the eligibility of land for carbon sequestration payments, and also of particular interest to small producers, a system is needed to aggregate the carbon credits on many small-scale operations to simplify marketing and other activities.

BIOCAP Canada and the BC Government have also just released a guide on bioenergy options for BC. It is designed to assist communities, First Nations and industry in developing bioenergy opportunities. The Guide is available for download at www.biocap.ca or www.energyplan.gov.bc.ca/bioenergy/

“A new consumer tax on carbon that was announced in the 2008 Provincial budget is providing additional impetus for bioenergy adoption.”

Birch Syrup Project Wins Award of Excellence for Innovation

"I'm honoured to receive this award from the IAF – and I am inspired to see the birch sap production industry starting to receive more and more recognition."

Heloise Dixon-Warren

The Investment Agriculture Foundation (IAF) of British Columbia is pleased to announce the first recipient of the Award of Excellence for Innovation in Agriculture and Agri-food. Heloise Dixon-Warren, a registered professional forester and co-owner of Moose Meadows Farm, Quesnel, BC, received the award for her role in leading the development of the birch sap industry in BC, and for authoring "The Birch Syrup Production Manual" (the first manual on birch syrup production in Canada).

Until the recent development of the manual, support literature for the birch sap industry was geared towards the sugar maple industry. Funding from the BC Agroforestry Industry Development Initiative (a jointly funded federal and provincial government program delivered by the Federation of BC Woodlot Associations) and a partnership with the Quesnel Community and Economic Development Corporation enabled Dixon-Warren to author the manual.

"I'm honoured to receive this award from the IAF –

and I am inspired to see the birch sap production industry starting to receive more and more recognition. Working on this project has allowed me to connect with some really great people – and it's been exciting to be a part of the development of what is still really a nascent industry. The opportunities for the birch syrup industry and communities involved with it are vast, and I think there's a bright future for it in BC – and for that matter throughout Canada!" commented Dixon-Warren.

The IAF Award of Excellence for Innovation in Agriculture and Agri-food recognizes an individual, organization or business that has made a unique and important contribution to B.C.'s agriculture and agri-food industry in the last three years. The award is open to individuals who reside in BC and Canadian-based organizations and businesses operating in BC; Dixon-Warren is the first ever recipient of the award. The award was announced at the BC Agriculture Council's 2008 Agri-Food Industry Gala in Abbotsford in February.

The IAF is a not-for-profit organization that manages and distributes funds on behalf of the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada in support of innovative projects to benefit the agriculture and agri-food industries in BC. For more information about the Investment Agriculture Foundation and the funding programs it administers, please visit www.iafbc.com.

Bigleaf Maple Syrup Festival Draws 1,400

Interest and momentum in the Westcoast maple syrup industry continues to grow as evidenced by the tremendous success of the recent Bigleaf Maple Syrup Festival held in Duncan on February 2nd. The festival was a partnership between the Vancouver Island “Sapsuckers” and the BC Forest Discovery Centre with the hard work and dedication of a small army of volunteers contributing to its success.

The organizers had planned to start small and keep things basic for the first of what is expected to be an annual event. They projected 200 people attending, but

hoped and prepared for up to 500. These goals were quickly exceeded and throughout the day over 1400 paying attendees went through the gates. This was the largest one-day paying event that the Forest Discovery Centre has held. This was even more remarkable considering it was snowing lightly at the start of day and rained periodically.

The Forest Discovery Centre was an ideal venue for the event with good parking, easy access, a highly visible location, large grounds, suitable buildings, and maple trees in their forest.

The growth of the industry has been phenomenal and demand continues to outpace production. “It doesn’t seem that long ago that six of us got together and decided to try to start a West Coast maple sap and syrup industry”, said Gary Backlund, a bigleaf maple tapping pioneer and festival organizer. “Having 1400 people paying to get into our first maple syrup festival erased any doubt that this seed, which six of us planted, has grown into a large tree and much credit should be given to both the Master Woodland Manager Program and the Agroforestry Initiative.”

“Having 1400 people paying to get into our first maple syrup festival erased any doubt that this seed, which six of us planted, has grown into a large tree...”



Paul Minvielle demonstrates bigleaf maple tapping to a multitude of onlookers. *Photo courtesy of Bram Lucieer*

Announcements and Upcoming Events

A reminder that next **deadline** for letters of intent and applications to the British Columbia Agroforestry Industry Development Initiative is **Thursday, May 15, 2008**

“Tapping Into Birch Syrup”

Introduction to Birch Syrup Production Workshop

April 19, 2008
Quesnel, BC

Anyone interested in a new small business opportunity or small-scale food production is invited to participate in this unique training opportunity.

The workshop is geared towards prospective and existing producers (hobby and commercial) and anyone interested in agricultural or forest diversification. With the wide distribution of birch across Canada, coupled with growing interest in both agroforestry, NTFPs and the growing number of commercial producers, the birch syrup industry has huge expansion potential. There are 11 known existing commercial producers across Canada. All of them state that demand for their product exceeds supply. Birch syrup fetches a premium price with the highest known retail price exceeding \$100.00 / litre. The workshop will focus on tree and sap physio-

logy, supplies and equipment, processing and production, legislation and marketing and an introduction to other products that can be made from the birch tree. There will also be the opportunity to meet existing producers and network while sampling some birch sap and syrup products. One half of the workshop will occur at an operating “sugar bush” where the participants will be able to see a demonstration of an operating commercial evaporator and tour a birch stand used for tapping.

The workshop fee is \$100.00 and includes a copy of “The Birch Syrup Production Manual” (discounted to \$35.00), lunch and all nutrition breaks. Additional manuals can also be ordered for \$40.00.

To register or obtain additional information on the workshop or manual, please either contact:

April Cheng at the Quesnel Community and Economic Development Corporation at (250) 992-3522, 1-866-QUESNEL (783-7635) or acheng@quesnelcorp.com or Heloise Dixon-Warren at Moose Meadows Farm (250) 249-5329 /

mmfarm@goldcity.net. Registration package can also be accessed from the QCEDC website:

www.quesnelinfo.com

This project has been supported with funding from the Agroforestry Industry Development Initiative.

Kootenay Silvopasture Demonstration Tour

May 9, 2008
Cranbrook, BC

Kootenay Tree Farms invites you to a free agroforestry tour of Christmas tree silvopasture production areas located in the beautiful East Kootenay. The tour will highlight the integrated benefits of silvopasture for Christmas tree producers, livestock and wildlife production. The tour begins at 8:30 am at the start of Prichard Road, 10 km east of Cranbrook. Bring your own lunch and transportation. For full details or to RSVP your attendance, please contact Charlie Willis at (250) 489-4887 or kootenaytreefarms@shaw.ca

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Announcements and Upcoming Events *continued*

A Rancher's Point of View

April 18, 2008
Silver Hills Ranch,
Lumby, BC

Lee Hesketh and family invite you to a field day and evening social to help foster understanding and promote stewardship and sustainability within the agriculture sector.

The tour will start at the Reuchel family's Vale Farms at 10 am. The group will tour a section of the ranch set aside for a smolt imprinting pond and a fish ladder in Duteau Creek. The site has been developed and maintained through a series of unique partnerships with the commitment of Vale Farms being the key to making it work.

The group will move on to Silver Hills Ranch. Mike Wallis from the Salmon River Roundtable will co-host a 3-km walking tour with Lee Hesketh along the Shuswap River. Silver Hills Ranch recently completed a trial run of the "Biodiversity Assessment" tool being developed by the Province and interested environmental groups. The Hesketh family has adapted land management strategies that are improv-

ing fish and wildlife habitat while increasing overall productivity from the land base and will explain how this tool can gather the relevant data.

Others who will be providing input include:

- Phil Hallinan from the Fraser Basin Council.
- Pete Spencer, Environmental Farm Plan Coordinator will provide an update on actions by the ranching community to address environment issues.
- Lisa Zabek who been researching silvo-pasture development and agroforestry for the interior.
- Helen Davies who has been monitoring screech owls in the Shuswap valley.

At the end of the day, an open house and social (supper will be provided) will be held at the Mabel Lake Hall. Camping space and firewood are also available. Guest staying overnight can go on a 5-km hike the following day looking at a potential grassland development. Special events will include "guess the 6 o'clock deer count" with a special prize for the guest guessing the number of deer in the ranch's hayfield.

To facilitate planning for food and transport please email your intent to attend ASAP to Lee Hesketh: silverhillsranch@aol.com

TreeVitalize Your Landscape

Improve Water Quality by Implementing Agroforestry Practices

September 24-25, 2008
Indian Head,
Saskatchewan

The AAFC-PFRA Agroforestry Division will be hosting this excellent opportunity for researchers and practitioners to come together to hear and discuss relevant issues on:

- Linking agroforestry practices with other conservation applications to restore ecological functions and reconnect hydrological processes.
- Putting the right trees in the right places, in the correct design.
- Improving water quality with agroforestry practices such as riparian tree buffers.

To receive more information on this event, please contact the AAFC-PFRA Shelterbelt Centre at 1-866-766-2284 or pftratree@agr.gc.ca.

Syrup Contest Rates BC's Best

“Interestingly, one of the dark syrups placed in the top three, confirming what many have noted as a deficiency with the conventional method of grading maple syrup.”

Two syrup contests were held at the recent Bigleaf Maple Syrup Festival in Duncan. The organizers of the festival extended their appreciation to the volunteer judges: Mara Jernigan, Hilary Abbott, Don Genova, Bill Jones, and Francois Dubuc (from Dominion & Grimm). They took a very professional approach to their mission. Fifteen people entered syrup, which was numbered and placed in identical syrup bottles that were supplied by Bees ‘n Glass. The judges viewed, smelled and tasted each syrup and rated five aspects of the

syrup from one to ten. The top numerical winners then went through a final adjudication. Syrups ranged from blonde to quite dark. The top syrups of the judged event were:

First Place: **Lawrence Lampson** of Glenora

Second Place: **Mike Innis** of Chilliwack

Third Place: **Jack Woodward** of Saltspring Island

A separate people’s choice contest was done by ballot at the tasting table. The syrup was labeled such that people knew who they were voting for.

Interestingly, one of the dark syrups placed in the top three, confirming what many have noted as a deficiency with the conventional method of grading maple syrup. The winners of the people’s choice event were:

First Place: **Ray & Hecter Tourangeau** of Port Alberni

Second Place: **Lawrence Lampson** of Glenora

Third Place: **Paul Minvielle** of Saltspring Island.

Agroforestry Initiative Receives Additional Support from Investment Agriculture Foundation

The BC Agroforestry Industry Development Initiative is pleased to announce it has received an additional allotment of \$79,000 from the Investment Agriculture Foundation (IAF) of BC to implement innovative, cost-share projects to benefit the development of the agroforestry sector in BC. This brings the total commitment from IAF to the Agroforestry Initiative to \$579,000 for the period of 2003 to 2008.

For this final year of the Agroforestry Initiative’s five-year mandate the Agroforestry Management Committee will consider projects for funding that focus on supporting extension and marketing activities. Priority will be given for funding new, innovative projects that address "Raising Agroforestry Awareness" through education, training and access to agroforestry information and those that "Improve Linkages"

between agroforestry producers, processors, wholesalers and consumers of agroforestry products. A detailed listing of the Agroforestry Initiative’s strategic goals, an application guide and forms, as well as intake deadlines, are available on the main page of the Initiative’s website: www.woodlot.bc.ca/agroforestry/

Contact Us

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If you have suggestions for future editions of the *Update* or know of an event that should be included, please let us know.

The **Federation of British Columbia Woodlot Associations** administers the BC Agroforestry Initiative.



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