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Blossoming hopes

Kevin Husband of Emma Lea Farms in Delta stands among thousands of strawberry blossoms. This year's crop is around the corner, but he's planning to make sure pickers keep their distance from each other and that the only thing they come away with is a flat of berries, not a case of COVID-19. Read more about his plans in our story on page 7. PHOTO / RONDA PAYNE

Bracing for CUSMA

Demand shifts in pandemic complicate outlook


by PETER MITHAM

PARKSVILLE – A triple-threat of reduced processing capacity, shifting market demand and implementation of the Canada-US-Mexico trade agreement on July 1 has supply-managed groups on edge.

Dairy producers stand to be hit hardest, as the implementation date comes just before the new dairy year begins on August 1. While the federal government originally reassured Dairy Farmers of Canada that implementation would be after August 1, the agreement's final ratification

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Ottawa comes under fire

by PETER MITHAM

OTTAWA – Criticisms are mounting over Ottawa's apparent lack of response to the serious issues farm businesses are facing as a result of COVID-19.

Many national livestock groups are saying programs announced to date are too little, too late, while in BC, farm leaders have voiced frustration over what they describe as backtracking.

"The government needs to move fast and provide more support for the entire industry

to protect Canada's food supply," said Canadian Federation of Independent Business vice-president of agri-business Marilyn Braun-Pollon in a statement May 22.

While a national coalition of farm groups have asked for \$2.6 billion to address "impacts which are not eligible under any of the government programs announced to date" nor addressed by federal business risk management programs, federal agriculture minister Marie-Claude Bibeau's office has dismissed the demand as vague.

"We are asking CFA (Canadian Federation of Agriculture) to be a bit more up-front about digging into what specifically they're asking for," ministerial staff told *Country Life in BC*.


Meanwhile, it touted 16 programs in support of agriculture, the value of which hasn't been pinned down.

"It's a big number," staff said, noting that the final calculation will depend on participation.

The biggest number by far

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