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COUNTRY LIFE IN BC

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Land prices fall

Lower interest rates will help, but not in the short term

PETER MITHAM

ABBOTSFORD – BC farmland values fell 3.1% last year, Farm Credit Canada reported March 12, the first annual decline since 2010 and the most significant drop since 1998.

Properties on the South Coast led the decline, with FCC reporting a 19.3% drop in values to an average of \$112,200 an acre.

This was more than four times the decline reported for the Okanagan, where

Farmland values ▶



Ready! Seed! Go!

Clayton Fox of Silver Rill Corn in Saanichton planted three acres of peaches-and-cream corn on March 15. This date marks the earliest planting at the Central Saanich farm and was the day before nearly 40 BC communities surpassed heat records. "I do about 60 total acres of sweet corn, staggered each week or so from now until early July," Fox says. "We only specialize in the highest possible quality varieties, and it is all sold fresh at our own market." *SUBMITTED*

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New leadership for WALI

PETER MITHAM

ABBOTSFORD – The Western Agriculture Labour Initiative (WALI) has a new general manager.

Veronica Moreno stepped into the role April 1, succeeding Reg Ens, who stepped into semi-retirement on Vancouver Island at the end of March.

"It never seems to be a good time, and I'm glad BCAC has agreed with Veronica to take on the role as GM," Ens says. "She knows the people,

she knows the system, she knows the nuances, so it's great to have that corporate history."

The change in leadership comes as the farm labour sector faces a number of challenges.

A recent report for the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council indicates a growing farm labour gap in BC.

By 2030, the province's farm sector will face a shortfall of 17,716 domestic workers, up from 16,075

today. Of 12,655 farms surveyed, 42% indicate challenges finding needed workers and 29% report zero domestic workers applying to work with them. This has prompted 31% of farms in BC to employ temporary foreign workers.

WALI has been a key industry partner in addressing issues related to foreign labour. It will become even more so now as Moreno will be among the most

WALI in good hands ▶

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