

POLICY

Farmers demand better protection for farmland

7

PROCESSING

Butcher hub boosts cut-and-wrap capacity

11

PARTNERS

Trust replaces contracts at Wild Valley Foods

29



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\$496M for new health lab

Opening set for
2032

PETER MITHAM

ABBOTSFORD – The province has officially announced plans for a new plant and animal health centre in Abbotsford, but plenty of details have yet to be worked out en route to the \$496 million facility opening in 2032.

“This is probably the biggest announcement agriculture has made, in my time at least,” BC agriculture minister Lana Popham said in announcing the project on October 14, a day after the

On the fence

Paul and Alex Devick of Devick's Ranch in Heffley Creek have been experimenting with corn and cover crops as part of the BC Living Lab program to improve soil health and develop climate-resilient farming practices. The experience has been positive, even though the results weren't always what they expected. See story on page 21. KELLY SINOSKI

New lab ▶

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Farmland values fall flat

PETER MITHAM

PENTICTON – BC farmland values were flat in the first half of this year as economic uncertainties stalled deal-making in the province's most expensive regions.

A mid-year review of farmland value trends by Farm Credit Canada (FCC) indicated zero growth in values in BC, versus a 6% rise nationally. Ontario, another province also afflicted by a general downturn in real estate activity this year as economic uncertainties made

buyers more cautious, also saw zero growth in values.

With values stalled, appreciation over the latest 12 months fell to 5.2%, down from 11.3% at the end of 2024. The gains were largely secured in the latter half of 2024, a relatively stable period following cuts to interest rates in the first half of 2024 and a more positive economic outlook.

US trade policies put an end to the optimism, unleashing a more uncertain environment with broad impacts.

“The buyers are taking more of a cautious approach,” FCC senior economist Leigh Anderson told *Country Life in BC*.

The attitude paused activity in sectors such as dairy, vegetables and fruit – particularly orchard and vineyard properties – that typically account for some of the highest valuations.

“There's very few sales,” says Phil Fox of Fox & Fox at Re/Max Pentiction Realty, which specializes in vineyard

Uncertainty ▶

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