

BC farmers get more by giving back

Challenging financial times create opportunities for generosity

As the costs of farming continue to rise and food security for so many people in



Viewpoint
CRAIG EDWARDS

our province becomes threatened, it's time we take a closer look at supporting those who grow and distribute the food that feeds us. Farmers are the backbone of BC's food system. You play a vital role in our society, supplying fresh produce to BC residents and retailers.

You are also among those most unappreciated, facing immense challenges in making ends meet for your businesses and families.

Take, for instance, the example of four Fraser Valley farmers and two Okanagan orchardists who contributed over half a million dollars (retail value) of fresh produce to the Greater Vancouver Food Bank (GVFB) last year. These individuals are not just growing crops, they're nourishing communities and ensuring those in need have access to high-quality, nutritious food.

While the donation of food is a positive story on its own, there is still a harsh reality about the state of farming. Despite being able to provide food donations to the food bank, these BC farmers still need to grapple with significant financial burdens from soaring overhead costs, escalating prices for fertilizer and fuel, and the rising cost of labour. Finding opportunities to reduce costs, such as taxes, is becoming a greater necessity for BC farmers to be successful in today's world.

This is where the BC Farmers Food Donation Tax Credit comes in. Originally adopted in 2016 and now extended until December 31, 2026, this tax credit presents a unique opportunity to alleviate some of the financial pressures facing the farm

sector. If that is not enough, many researchers and writers are finding evidence to support that giving does in fact make you richer. Author and researcher Arthur C. Brooks has found that charitable giving stimulates prosperity, for both individuals and corporations. According to his research, giving back can have long-term benefits for financial health.

Through a pilot project initiated with our farm partners, we've begun to explore the potential of this tax credit to reduce their year-end taxes payable. In just one tax season, we've seen over \$125,000 in tax credits claimed, reducing their tax burden and allowing them to keep more money in their pockets.

Besides the direct financial impact, one of the most compelling aspects of this initiative is its ability to reduce food waste. The farming industry often leaves a significant portion of crops unharvested due to the high labour cost, especially when

customer quotas have already been met. This results in perfectly good, high-quality produce going to waste. This is a loss for both farmers and our communities in need.

By leveraging the BC Farmers Food Donation Tax Credit, you can turn surplus produce into additional tax savings. The donation of surplus crops (acknowledged through an in-kind tax receipt) to organizations like the GVFB and other qualified charities offers BC farmers an additional tax credit equivalent to 25% of the retail value of the donated goods. The tax credit applies to most products produced in BC, including meat, eggs, dairy products, fruits and vegetables that have been grown, raised or harvested on a BC farm. Not only does this reduce your payable taxes for the year, but it also ensures that nutritious food reaches those who need it most.

Imagine the impact this could have on hungry families in our province. Food Banks

Canada found that more than 16% of BC residents are living with food insecurity – those who cannot afford the quality and quantity of food they need to avoid hunger. This can be skipping meals so their children can eat, not buying fruits and vegetables or having to go to work or school hungry. This is the harsh reality for our neighbours, friends and community members who are in need. Every day, the food bank hears the stories of people who need our help and who benefit directly from the generosity of our farmers.

Heppell's Potatoes in Surrey is one of many BC farms that have generously donated products to their local community and received tax credits for doing so.

"The Farmer Tax Credit allows us to reduce our taxes while donating nutritious produce to the food banks," said Tyler Heppell. "This tax credit is a tool that each farmer should be using as it not only helps operations but

feeds those who can't afford to shop at our local grocery stores."

Other Fraser Valley producers such as KBF Farms, Jit Bains Inc., Rai Farms, Witzke Farm and Sam Enterprises Ltd. have all donated produce to GVFB and utilized the Farmer Tax Credit.

The opportunity to reduce your tax burden and minimize food wastage has arrived, but only those who make use of the BC Farmer Food Donation Tax Credit will benefit. We need farmers like you to seize the benefits of this opportunity and show the government there is a need for greater farmer support. Give back to get more, and help us cultivate a brighter future for farming and food security in BC. To learn more, reach out to GVFB to participate and impact your community this season.

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