

ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS

British Columbia's Agricultural Sector:

Contributions, Challenges, and Strategic Priorities for 2026–2030

FOREWORD

I live in Abbotsford, British Columbia. I drive its roads, I shop at its farmers markets, and on most days I pass farmland — greenhouses catching the morning light along South Fraser Way, berry fields stretching east toward Chilliwack, dairy operations sitting on soils that are among the most productive in Canada. The Fraser Valley is not an abstraction to me. It is the place I wake up in every morning.

Over the past year, driving around Abbotsford, I have noticed something the statistics alone do not fully explain. BC farm income data shows the province has not turned a collective profit since 2017. And yet I see new greenhouse construction going up. I see cold storage infrastructure being expanded. I see working farms that are clearly still investing in productive capacity despite an eight-year income drought. That tension — between the financial deterioration documented in Statistics Canada's tables and the physical investment visible from the road — is one of the questions this report tries to answer.

Part of the answer, I believe, lies in supply-managed sectors and equity financing. Dairy and poultry producers, protected by supply management, continue to invest because their income floors are structurally more secure. The visible expansion is real — but it is concentrated among the most resilient operators. The smaller, non-supply-managed farms are the ones the data is describing when it says BC posted a net loss of \$456.9 million in 2024.

I also care about this sector for a simpler reason: I like fresh food at a reasonable price, and I want to see the farmers who produce it succeed. That is not a policy position. It is a preference that I share with most people who live in this region. The economic case for investing in BC agriculture is strong on its own terms. But there is a quality-of-life argument underneath it that deserves to be stated plainly.

As an economist who monitors U.S. equity markets, commodity prices, and global trade flows weekly through Streetwise Economics, I can see with some clarity that what is happening to BC's agricultural sector is not a local or isolated problem. The U.S. tariffs pressuring BC agricultural exporters are the same policy actions that drove the S&P 500 down 1.7% the week of March 17–20, 2026 — producing the worst Fed Day for markets since 2024 — and pushed oil above \$100 a barrel. The China tariffs on Canadian canola are the same strategic economic coercion tools reshaping global commodity markets. The farm debt crisis in BC — the largest annual increase since 1981 — is partly a product of the same interest rate environment that has compressed equity valuations and squeezed household balance sheets across North America.

These are connected systems. The financial markets I track weekly and the farmland I drive past daily are both expressions of the same global economic forces. Understanding one genuinely helps

in understanding the other. That dual lens — global markets analysis alongside local agricultural economics — is what Streetwise Economics is built to provide, and it is the perspective I have tried to bring to this report.

The analysis that follows is evidence-based and data-driven. But it is written by someone who lives in Abbotsford, uses the Fraser Valley's agricultural system every time he buys groceries, and believes this sector deserves the same quality of rigorous economic analysis that financial markets receive as a matter of course.

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Key StatsCan Tables	Farm income: 32-10-0052-01 Farm debt: 32-10-0049-01 Farm cash receipts: 32-10-0046-01 Balance sheet: 38-10-0237-01

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

This report is an evidence-based synthesis of primary statistical data and published research. It does not construct a novel econometric or input-output (I-O) model. Rather, it draws on authoritative data from Statistics Canada, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food (BC MAF), the Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD), and sector-specific literature to provide a comprehensive picture of BC's agricultural economy.

Direct GDP contribution estimates follow Statistics Canada's production approach: value of output minus intermediate consumption at basic prices in chained 2017 dollars (Table 32-10-0052-01). Multiplier-adjusted total economic footprint estimates are drawn from commissioned I-O analyses by AAFC and provincial research bodies; where cited, the underlying study is identified explicitly. The 2030 growth projections in Section 6 are drawn from a scenario-based I-O model employing Statistics Canada's provincial I-O tables as its base (MNP / IAFBC, 2020).

All BC-level agricultural GDP figures from Statistics Canada exclude approximately 40% of BC's agricultural activity because provincial accounts do not fully capture aquaculture, certain food processing activities, and informal farm labour — specifically, direct sales from farm to consumer, custom work performed for other farms, and certain on-farm processing activities. Estimates presented

in this report are therefore conservative lower bounds (BC MAF, 2023). The FVRD's \$3 billion economic value figure includes direct farm receipts plus estimated downstream and multiplier effects; a note clarifying this is provided at first use.

Note on foundational citations: The 2013 FVRD Agricultural Land Use Inventory, 2015 Regional Adaptation Strategy, and select 2020 FVRD snapshots remain the most current official datasets for these specific indicators. They pre-date the 2021–2024 climate shocks and 2025–2026 trade disruptions; an updated Agricultural Land Use Inventory from BC MAF is anticipated in 2025–26.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

British Columbia's agri-food system — encompassing primary agriculture, food and beverage processing, and downstream supply chains — is one of the most economically significant and geographically concentrated in Canada. The Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD), home to the province's most productive farmland and the bulk of its horticultural and livestock output, sits at the centre of this system. Despite its scale, the sector is frequently under-analyzed in provincial policy discourse relative to forestry, mining, and technology.

This report synthesizes the latest available data from Statistics Canada, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food, and the FVRD to provide a comprehensive picture of the sector's contributions, structural headwinds, and strategic priorities for 2026–2030. The 2024 data presents a stark picture: BC posted the largest provincial agricultural net loss in Canada, farm debt nationally rose at its fastest rate since 1981, input costs have increased 30–100% since 2020, and a simultaneous three-front trade war involving the United States, China, and India introduced unprecedented export risk across multiple commodity chains.

While supply-managed sectors — dairy, poultry, and eggs — and high-value specialty crops continue to demonstrate resilience, the breadth of the current financial, climate, and trade headwinds means targeted public investment is no longer optional. The choices made in the 2025–2028 policy window will determine whether BC's agricultural sector reaches its 2030 growth potential or contracts under compounding structural pressure.

Key Findings

1. Canada's national agri-food sector contributed \$66.8 billion to GDP in 2023–24. Agri-food and seafood exports reached a record \$100.3 billion in calendar year 2024.¹
2. BC farm cash receipts reached \$5.06 billion in 2024 (+3.8%), but operating expenses rose faster at +7.2% to \$4.83 billion. BC's realized net farm income fell 54.6% to –\$361.5 million — the largest provincial net loss in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2025b; Table 32-10-0052-01).²
3. Total net farm income in BC (including inventory valuation changes) was –\$456.9 million in 2024 — the more comprehensive measure of sector financial health (Statistics Canada, 2025b).

4. Canadian farm debt rose 14.1% in 2024 — the largest annual increase since 1981 — reaching \$159.0 billion in total liabilities. The national interest coverage ratio fell to its lowest level since 2007 (Statistics Canada, 2025c; Table 38-10-0237-01).
5. A three-front trade war is the sector's most acute near-term risk. The U.S. imposed 25% tariffs on Canadian goods effective March 4, 2025 (CUSMA-compliant goods paused to April 2, then partially de-escalated in August 2025). China escalated from 100% tariffs on canola oil, meal and peas (March 2025) to an additional 75.8% tariff on canola seed (August 2025), before a partial January 2026 deal cut the canola seed tariff to 15% and eliminated tariffs on canola meal, peas, and seafood until at least end-2026 (Globe and Mail, 2026; Canola Council, 2026). India reinstated a 30% tariff on yellow peas in November 2025. Canadian canola exports to China — valued at \$5 billion in 2024 — are expected to have fallen by more than half in 2025 (Canola Council of Canada, 2026).
6. The FVRD generates the largest annual farm receipts of any regional district in BC from just 2.4% of the province's farmed land. Direct farm receipts plus downstream multiplier effects exceed \$3 billion annually (FVRD, n.d.; FVRD RGS, 2024).
7. When direct, indirect, and induced effects are combined using published I-O multipliers, BC's agri-food system supports approximately 55,000 FTE jobs and contributes an estimated \$3.9 billion in total GDP at base-year (2018–19) values — substantially above primary agriculture GDP alone (MNP / IAFBC, 2020).
8. Labour shortages remain structural: the Canadian food and beverage manufacturing industry requires approximately 142,000 new workers by 2030 — nearly 50% of current workforce — with horticulture filling 85% of seasonal positions through Temporary Foreign Worker programs (FPSC, 2024; AAFC, 2025e).
9. Under a sustainable investment scenario, BC's agricultural sector could achieve 12–18% real GDP growth by 2030. The original 20% upper-bound projection pre-dates the 2021–2024 climate shocks; the revised range reflects post-shock baseline conditions (MNP / IAFBC, 2020; author sensitivity adjustment).

¹ The \$99.1 billion figure in AAFC's 2023–24 Departmental Results Report reflects a fiscal year basis. The \$100.3 billion figure is the calendar year 2024 value per AAFC updates (AAFC, 2025a; Canada Action, 2024). Both figures are accurate for their respective reporting periods.

² Realized net farm income = cash receipts minus operating expenses minus depreciation plus income in kind. This measure excludes inventory valuation changes. Total net farm income (–\$456.9M) additionally incorporates changes in inventory values and is the more comprehensive indicator. Data source: Statistics Canada interactive tool at www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/251126/dq251126a-eng.htm

1. SECTOR OVERVIEW AND ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION

1.1 National Scale: Canada's Agri-Food System

Agriculture occupies a foundational position in Canada's economy. In 2023–24, the national agri-food sector — comprising primary agriculture, fishing, food and beverage processing, and downstream supply chains — contributed \$66.8 billion to Canada's GDP (AAFC, 2024a). Agri-food and seafood exports reached a record \$100.3 billion in calendar year 2024, surpassing the federal government's own \$75 billion target set for 2025 (AAFC, 2025a).¹

National farm cash receipts totalled \$101.4 billion in 2025, up \$3.3 billion (+3.4%) from 2024, led by a 13.2% surge in livestock receipts driven by cattle and hog prices (Statistics Canada, 2026a). However, **crop receipts fell 1.7% to \$51.3 billion in 2025**, with canola receipts

declining on reduced marketings as tariffs constrained exports to China (Statistics Canada, 2026a). AAFC's 2026 farm income forecast projects national Net Cash Income (NCI) at \$20.2 billion in 2026 — a modest 3% increase from an estimated \$19.6 billion in 2025, both years remaining below the previous five-year average (AAFC, 2026).

Within Canada, primary agriculture's direct contribution to provincial GDP varies significantly. Saskatchewan leads at 5.6%, followed by Manitoba at 4.6% and Prince Edward Island at 4.4%. British Columbia's primary agriculture contributes approximately 1.2% of provincial GDP in direct terms — a figure that materially understates BC's true agri-food importance because it excludes food and beverage processing, aquaculture, and downstream supply chain activity (AAFC, 2023).

1.2 Food and Beverage Processing and the Total Economic Footprint

In 2024, Canada's food and beverage manufacturing sector generated \$173.4 billion in manufacturing sales — the largest manufacturing industry in Canada by output — directly employing 318,400 Canadians, accounting for 20.3% of total manufacturing sales and 1.6% of national GDP (AAFC, 2025b). British Columbia is home to more than 3,000 food and beverage manufacturing operations, making it the province's dominant manufacturing subsector (Canada Action, 2024).

The 2020 MNP/IAFBC study — the most comprehensive I-O analysis of BC agriculture available — estimated that when direct, indirect, and induced economic effects are combined using Statistics Canada's provincial I-O tables, BC's agriculture and food processing sector generates approximately **\$3.9 billion in total GDP contribution and supports approximately 55,000 full-time equivalent jobs** at 2018–19 base-year values (MNP / IAFBC, 2020). Applying these multipliers to 2024 farm cash receipts of \$5.06 billion implies a total economic footprint well above \$5 billion at current prices — though this is an indicative estimate pending an updated I-O analysis using post-2021 data.²

² These are indicative estimates applying 2018–19 multipliers to 2024 receipts data. An updated I-O analysis using post-2021 data is recommended as a priority research investment. The MNP/IAFBC (2020) study remains the most authoritative commissioned analysis available.

Indicator	Value	Year	Source
Canada: agri-food GDP contribution	\$66.8 billion	2023–24	AAFC, 2024a
Canada: agri-food & seafood exports	\$100.3 billion (record)	Cal. 2024	AAFC, 2025a
Canada: farm cash receipts	\$101.4 billion (+3.4%)	2025	Statistics Canada, 2026a
Canada: crop receipts	\$51.3 billion (–1.7%)	2025	Statistics Canada, 2026a
Canada: supply-managed receipts	\$15.7 billion (+3.2%)	2025	Statistics Canada, 2026a
Canada: F&B manufacturing sales	\$173.4 billion	2024	AAFC, 2025b
Canada: F&B manufacturing employment	318,400 workers	2024	AAFC, 2025b

Canada: farm debt (total liabilities)	\$159.0 billion (+14.1%)	2024	Statistics Canada, 2025c
Canada: realized net farm income	\$9.4 billion (-26.0%)	2024	Statistics Canada, 2025b
BC: farm cash receipts	\$5.06 billion (+3.8%)	2024	Statistics Canada, 2025b
BC: farm operating expenses	\$4.83 billion (+7.2%)	2024	Statistics Canada, 2025b
BC: realized net farm income	-\$361.5 million (-54.6%)	2024	Statistics Canada, 2025b
BC: total net farm income (incl. inventory)	-\$456.9 million	2024	Statistics Canada, 2025b
BC: primary agriculture share of prov. GDP	~1.2% (direct only)	2023	AAFC, 2023
BC: food & beverage manufacturing operations	>3,000 establishments	2024	Canada Action, 2024
BC agri-food total economic footprint (I-O)	~\$3.9B GDP; ~55,000 FTE jobs	2018–19 base	MNP / IAFBC, 2020
FVRD: share of BC annual farm receipts	Largest of any regional district	2024	FVRD RGS, 2024
FVRD: agricultural economic value (total)	~\$3 billion+ (direct + multiplier)	est.	MNP / IAFBC, 2020; FVRD, n.d.
FVRD: share of BC farmed land	2.4%	2021	Statistics Canada, 2021

Table 1. Key economic indicators, Canada and BC agri-food system. BC Statistics Canada GDP figures exclude ~40% of agricultural activity; all BC estimates are conservative lower bounds (BC MAF, 2023). FVRD \$3B figure includes direct receipts plus downstream multiplier effects.

1.3 The Fraser Valley: BC's Agricultural Engine

The Fraser Valley Regional District is the most intensively farmed area in Canada by output per hectare and **generates the largest annual farm receipts of any regional district in British Columbia**, confirmed in the FVRD's Fraser Valley Future 2050 Regional Growth Strategy, formally adopted by the FVRD Board in April 2024 (FVRD, 2024). Despite occupying only 2.4% of BC's farmed land and containing approximately 14% of the province's farms, the FVRD generates well over one-third of British Columbia's gross annual farm receipts. The region produces over 200 distinct commercial products — cranberries, raspberries, blueberries, potatoes, corn, dairy, and poultry — distributed to local, national, and international markets.

Spatially, agricultural land use within the FVRD is concentrated in Abbotsford (46% of farmed land) and Chilliwack (30%) (BC MAF, 2013). Over 53% of all dairy operations in BC are based in the FVRD, making the region indispensable to the province's supply-managed livestock sector. The region also contains a disproportionate share of BC's smallest farms: nearly 40% of FVRD farms are below 10 acres — a reflection of high land values and intensive production systems (FVRD, n.d.).

The Fraser Valley generates BC's largest regional farm receipts from just 2.4% of its farmed land — the highest output-to-land ratio of any regional district in Canada's most expensive farming province. This productivity is an economic asset that policy must actively protect and invest in.

2. THE FARM INCOME AND DEBT CRISIS

2.1 BC's Largest Provincial Net Loss on Record

Statistics Canada's revised 2024 farm income data (Table 32-10-0052-01, released November 26, 2025) documents a provincial agricultural sector in the most severe financial distress on record. BC farmers recorded a **realized net farm income of -\$361.5 million in 2024 (-54.6%)** — the largest provincial net loss in Canada. Total net farm income (which additionally incorporates inventory valuation changes) was **-\$456.9 million**, the more comprehensive measure of sector financial health (Statistics Canada, 2025b).²

This is not a single-year anomaly. According to the BC Agriculture Council, BC farmers have not collectively turned a profit since 2017 — a period spanning eight consecutive years of financial difficulty (BC Agriculture Council, 2025). A compounding sequence of documented climate shocks has driven this deterioration: the June–July 2021 heat dome destroyed fruit crops across the Okanagan and Fraser Valley; the November 2021 atmospheric river events inundated approximately 1,100 farms across more than 60,000 hectares, with an estimated 600,000 farm animals lost; the 2023 wildfire and drought season was the worst on record; and a historic cold snap in January 2024 destroyed a full crop cycle for many producers still recovering from prior events.

The cost structure has deteriorated simultaneously. BC farm operating expenses reached \$4.83 billion in 2024, rising 7.2% — significantly outpacing the 3.8% growth in cash receipts. Jennifer Woike, President of the BC Agriculture Council, stated: *"B.C. is the most expensive province to farm in Canada"* (CBC, 2025). Notably, BC was the only province to record declining farmland values (-3.1%) in 2023, reflecting the market's own assessment of sector stress (NFU, 2024).

Year	BC Realized Net Farm Income	National Realized NCI	Key Events / Notes
2017	Last profitable year (BC aggregate)	\$11.0 billion	Baseline reference year
2018	Declining	\$10.3 billion	Trade disputes begin (China canola)
2019	Declining	\$9.1 billion	China suspends canola import permits
2020	Recovering	\$11.3 billion	COVID-19 supply chain disruptions
2021	Severe losses (heat dome, flooding)	\$14.4 billion (record)	\$450M+ flood damage in BC
2022	Below national trend	\$13.8 billion	Interest rate hikes begin
2023	Below national trend	\$12.7 billion	Worst BC wildfire/drought season on record
2024	-\$361.5M (-54.6%) — worst on record	\$9.4 billion (-26.0%)	Cold snap; farm debt +14.1%
2025 (est.)	Stabilizing; trade disruption impact	~\$19.6 billion NCI	China canola tariff escalation/partial deal
2026 (fcst.)	Modest recovery, trade uncertainty	~\$20.2 billion NCI	Below 5-year avg; AAFC, 2026

Table 2. BC realized net farm income trend, 2017–2026. BC has consistently underperformed the national average across an eight-year profitability drought. National figures are Net Cash Income (NCI). Sources: Statistics Canada (2025b), AAFC (2026).

2.2 The Farm Debt Crisis: A Structural Warning

Alongside income losses, farm debt data presents a structural warning signal that has not received sufficient policy attention. **Canadian farm debt rose 14.1% in 2024 — the largest annual increase since 1981**, reaching \$159.0 billion in total liabilities as of December 31, 2024 (Statistics Canada, 2025c; Table 38-10-0237-01). More than four-fifths of this rise was attributable to long-term liabilities. **For the second consecutive year, interest expenses led the gain in total farm operating expenses, rising 28.6% in 2024** — as producers took on more debt in response to easing Bank of Canada rates while still operating at a loss (Statistics Canada, 2025b). The national interest coverage ratio fell to its lowest level since 2007.

In BC, where farm income has been negative for eight consecutive years, this debt trajectory is particularly concerning. Producers are borrowing to sustain operations through a prolonged

income drought rather than to finance productive capacity growth — a structurally more dangerous form of debt accumulation. Without income recovery by 2026–27, a wave of farm exits and consolidation is foreseeable, particularly among small and medium-sized operations in the Fraser Valley where land costs make debt restructuring extremely difficult.

Policy implication: The farm debt crisis requires immediate AgriStability framework reform. AAFC announced in March 2025 — directly in response to the China tariff shock — a doubling of the payment cap to \$6 million and an increase in the compensation rate to 90% for 2025 (AAFC, 2025d). These measures are a necessary first step but insufficient without parallel action on input costs, trade diversification, and streamlined program administration.

2.3 Input Cost Inflation: The Tariff and Supply Chain Dimension

Input prices for key fertilizers and pest control products rose 30–100% cumulatively since 2020. The initial spike was driven primarily by global factors — Russia's war in Ukraine disrupting global fertilizer markets, elevated natural gas prices affecting nitrogen production, and pandemic-induced supply chain disruptions. U.S. tariffs and bilateral trade uncertainty have contributed materially since 2025, particularly for BC's horticulture sector which relies heavily on U.S.-sourced specialty inputs (BC Agriculture Council, 2025; AAFC input price indices). Nationally, commercial feed expenses fell 10.7% in 2024 as grain and oilseed supplies improved, but fertilizer costs and interest expenses continued rising, reinforcing the margin squeeze (Statistics Canada, 2025b).

BC canola growers in the Peace Region — responsible for approximately 95% of BC's annual canola crop across up to 110,000 acres — illustrate the bilateral squeeze precisely. *"Right now, fertilizer prices are insanely high, and yet commodity prices are still in the dumps"*, said Malcolm Odermatt, President of the BC Grain Producers Association, speaking after the January 2026 Canada-China deal (CBC, 2026). This combination of high input costs and depressed commodity prices defines the operating environment that BC's most exposed producers are navigating heading into the 2026 crop season.

3. TRADE EXPOSURE AND THE THREE-FRONT TARIFF ENVIRONMENT

3.1 Export Dependence: US Market Concentration

Canada's agricultural sector is deeply integrated into continental supply chains. The majority of BC's horticultural and animal products destined for export are sent to the United States — 95.3% and 96.6% of those categories respectively (NFU, 2024). BC exported \$6.2 billion of agri-food products internationally in 2022, reaching 118 markets (Canada Action, 2024). Despite this geographic breadth, the depth of U.S. dependency means any sustained bilateral disruption carries outsized risk for the province's export base.

The softwood lumber tariff precedent — a dispute costing BC's forest sector billions across multiple decades with no final resolution — is the historical reference BC agricultural exporters must internalize. The lesson is that bilateral trade disputes, once embedded, are extremely difficult to resolve through WTO or multilateral mechanisms alone.

3.2 The 2025–2026 Three-Front Trade War

The tariff environment facing BC's agricultural sector as of March 2026 is materially more complex than at any point in recent history. **Three separate bilateral trade disputes simultaneously affect Canadian agricultural exports**, each with distinct commodity exposure and resolution timelines.

United States

Effective March 4, 2025, the U.S. imposed a 25% tariff on all Canadian goods, including agricultural products, under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA). Canada responded immediately with 25% retaliatory tariffs on approximately CA\$30 billion of U.S. goods — approximately \$5.8 billion of which targeted U.S. agricultural products (American Farm Bureau, 2025). A pause on CUSMA-compliant goods was extended to April 2, 2025, providing temporary relief for supply-managed sectors. Canada removed retaliatory tariffs on CUSMA-compliant goods in August 2025, partially de-escalating the bilateral situation, but structural uncertainty over the durability of the current trade framework remains (MLT Aikins, 2025). BC's horticultural exporters — representing 95.3% of export volume to the U.S. — remain the most exposed subsector.

China: Escalation and Partial Resolution

China's tariff actions against Canadian agricultural products proceeded in two phases. **Phase 1 (March 20, 2025):** China imposed 100% tariffs on Canadian canola oil, canola meal, and yellow peas, and 25% tariffs on pork and seafood — in direct retaliation for Canada's October 2024 tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles, steel, and aluminum (Bonniefield, 2025; Globe and Mail, 2026). **Phase 2 (August 2025):** China escalated with a 75.8% anti-dumping duty on Canadian canola seed itself — the most significant escalation, given that canola seed represents approximately 80% of Canada's canola exports to China by volume (Bonniefield, 2025). Canadian exports of canola and canola products to China were valued at approximately \$5 billion in 2024; for 2025, the Canola Council of Canada estimates export value fell to less than half that amount (Canola Council, 2026). University of Saskatchewan professor Stuart Smyth noted that similar Chinese tariffs in 2019–2020 cost the canola industry \$2.3 billion and that *"if this stays in for six or eight months, we could be looking at billions of dollars in costs"* (CBC, 2025b).

Partial Resolution (January 16, 2026): Prime Minister Carney reached a deal with China in Beijing that cut the canola seed tariff from 75.8% to 15% and eliminated tariffs on canola meal, peas, seafood, and lobster until at least end-2026 (Globe and Mail, 2026). In exchange, Canada agreed to allow approximately 50,000 Chinese-made electric vehicles into Canada at a reduced tariff rate. The Canola Council of Canada welcomed the deal but noted that a 15% residual tariff on canola seed *"is still an impediment to trade, and it will take the canola market time to adjust"* (Globe and Mail, 2026). BC canola producers in the Peace Region — still facing high input costs and depressed basis — described the deal as welcome but cautioned they are *"not out of the woods yet by any means"* (CBC, 2026). Tariffs on pork remain fully in force as of March 2026.

India: Yellow Peas

India reinstated a 30% tariff on Canadian yellow peas effective November 2025, compounding the China shock for BC's pulse sector. Combined, Chinese and Indian restrictions simultaneously closed Canada's two largest yellow pea export markets, with Chinese pea imports from Canadian

licensed facilities falling from approximately 500,000 tonnes annually to just 70,400 tonnes in 2025/26 (Western Producer, 2025).

Risk Category	Affected BC Subsectors	Severity	Quantified Impact (where available)	Source
US 25% tariff (March 2025)	All agri-food exports; horticulture (95.3% US-bound)	HIGH	CA\$30B retaliation package; partial de-escalation Aug 2025	MLT Aikins, 2025
China tariffs — canola (2025–26)	Canola (Peace Region); canola oil/meal processing	HIGH	Export value fell from ~\$5B to <\$2.5B in 2025	Canola Council, 2026
China tariffs — seafood & pork (2025)	BC seafood; pork exporters	HIGH	BC seafood to China ~–30% in 2025	RBC, 2026
India 30% tariff — yellow peas (Nov 2025)	Pulse sector	HIGH	Chinese + Indian closures = 2 largest markets lost simultaneously	Western Producer, 2025
Input cost inflation (+30–100% since 2020)	All subsectors, esp. horticulture & canola	HIGH	Operating expenses +7.2% in BC (2024)	Statistics Canada, 2025b
Farm income insolvency (8-yr loss streak)	Small/medium farms; Lower Mainland	HIGH	–\$456.9M total net loss in 2024 (largest in Canada)	Statistics Canada, 2025b
Farm debt (+14.1%, largest increase since 1981)	All subsectors	HIGH	\$159.0B national total liabilities; interest coverage lowest since 2007	Statistics Canada, 2025c
Climate / extreme weather (documented record)	All valley-floor production	HIGH	2021 flood: 1,100 farms, 60,000 ha inundated; 600,000 animals lost	BCAC, 2025
Labour shortage (50% workforce turnover by 2030)	Horticulture, dairy, poultry	HIGH	142,000 workers needed nationally by 2030	FPSC, 2024
Water stress / irrigation	Irrigated crops and livestock	MEDIUM–HIGH	42% of FVRD field crops rely on irrigation	BC MAF, 2013
ALR encroachment	Farmland supply base	MEDIUM	Pending 2025–26 ALUI update from BC MAF	BC MAF, 2013

Table 3. Risk matrix for BC's agricultural sector, 2026–2030. Severity assessments based on documented evidence from cited primary sources.

4. LABOUR MARKET CONDITIONS

4.1 National Employment Trends and Structural Shortages

Labour availability is the most acutely documented structural constraint in Canada's agricultural and agri-food system. The national food and beverage manufacturing sector directly employed over 315,000 Canadians as of 2024, facing approximately 50,000 unfilled vacancies. Between 2023 and 2030, the sector is projected to require approximately 92,500 additional workers — driven primarily by replacement demand from an estimated 66,800 retirements — bringing total labour requirements to 142,000 new workers by 2030, nearly 50% of the current workforce (FPSC, 2024).

In British Columbia, the agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting sector employed approximately 115,600 workers across Western Canada in 2024, a 12% decline from the prior year (latest available). Average hourly wages in BC's agriculture sector were approximately \$28.00 for general workers and \$33.46 for skilled occupations (Job Bank Canada, 2024). The wage gap between agricultural employment and competing Lower Mainland service sector employment is a structural barrier to domestic labour recruitment that market forces alone will not resolve.

Horticulture is the most labour-intensive and most exposed subsector. Nationally, horticulture accounts for 45% of all paid employees in primary agriculture and 85% of all seasonal agricultural Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs) (AAFC, 2025e). Over 21% of BC agriculture jobs were filled by TFWs at the time of the most recent complete census (MNP / IAFBC, 2020 — latest available BC-specific figure). The TFW pathway, while essential, creates its own policy vulnerability: under the current U.S.-Canada trade environment, border policy uncertainty adds an additional layer of TFW program risk to horticulture harvest timelines.

4.2 Workforce Development Gap in the Fraser Valley

The Fraser Valley is home to significant agricultural education and research infrastructure, including the University of the Fraser Valley's Faculty of Agriculture and Food, the Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre in Agassiz (a federal AAFC facility), and the Institute for Sustainable Food Systems at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. Despite this, the sector consistently reports shortfalls in mid-level technical and analytical roles — farm managers, agricultural economists, food systems analysts, and sustainability specialists.

Policy implication: The workforce gap in BC's agri-food sector is not primarily a skills production failure — it is a retention failure. The institutions exist to train agricultural economists and food systems professionals. The missing instrument is coordinated wage subsidy and employer partnership programming that retains graduates in the Fraser Valley rather than allowing migration to Vancouver or higher-paying urban centres.

5. CLIMATE RISK AND WATER SECURITY

5.1 A Documented Record of Climate-Driven Losses

Climate change is no longer a future risk for BC agriculture — it is a documented and compounding driver of current financial losses. The sequence of events between 2021 and 2024 constitutes an empirical record of accelerating climate exposure. In June–July 2021, an unprecedented heat dome drove temperatures above 40°C for multiple consecutive days, destroying fruit crops on the branch across the Okanagan and Fraser Valley. In November 2021,

two atmospheric river events caused catastrophic flooding: approximately 1,100 farms were impacted, more than 60,000 hectares of farmland were inundated, and an estimated 600,000 farm animals were lost (BC Agriculture Council, 2025). In 2023, BC experienced its worst drought and wildfire season on record. In January 2024, a historic cold snap destroyed a full crop cycle for producers still recovering from prior shocks.

The FVRD's Regional Adaptation Strategy projects meaningful increases in growing degree days and frost-free periods alongside shifts in precipitation patterns — creating both opportunities (extended growing seasons, potential for new crop varieties) and material risks (heat stress on livestock, shifting pest and disease pressure, increased irrigation demand, and infrastructure vulnerability to extreme precipitation) (FVRD, 2015). These projections were established as foundational but pre-date the 2021–2024 event sequence; their core conclusions have been validated empirically.

5.2 Water Stress as a Binding Constraint

Agriculture is the primary consumer of both surface and groundwater resources in the Fraser Valley. As of the last comprehensive Agricultural Land Use Inventory (BC MAF, 2013 — updated ALUI anticipated 2025–26), approximately 42% of cultivated field crops relied on irrigation. As temperatures rise and growing seasons lengthen, irrigation demand will increase precisely as climate projections show increasing summer water stress and reduced snowpack recharge.

The November 2021 flooding demonstrated conclusively that existing infrastructure is not calibrated to the precipitation volatility now embedded in BC's climate trajectory. Climate adaptation investment in water infrastructure is an immediate economic priority, not a medium-term consideration. Without adequate irrigation infrastructure and governance frameworks, crop yields, quality, and livestock productivity face material downside risk throughout the 2026–2030 period.

6. GROWTH SCENARIOS AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES TO 2030

6.1 Revised Growth Projections Under Post-Shock Conditions

A commissioned economic study by MNP LLP for the Investment Agriculture Foundation of British Columbia modeled three growth scenarios for BC's agricultural sector from 2020 to 2030 using Statistics Canada's provincial I-O tables as a base. The sustainable growth scenario projected up to 20% real GDP growth by 2030, predicated on productivity improvements, technology adoption, market diversification, and workforce investment. The business-as-usual scenario yielded more modest expansion; the no-investment scenario projected stagnation (MNP / IAFBC, 2020).

The 2021–2024 climate shocks, the eight-year profitability drought, the \$159 billion national farm debt crisis, and the three-front trade war that materialized after this study's publication all represent significant adverse developments not captured in the original modeling baseline. A conservative sensitivity adjustment — accounting for the post-shock baseline, higher input costs, reduced farm equity, and ongoing trade uncertainty — suggests the realistic sustainable-growth

range is now 12–18% real GDP growth by 2030, rather than the original 20% upper bound. The no-investment scenario now more plausibly implies contraction rather than stagnation. The policy choices made in the 2025–2028 window will determine which path is realized.

AAFC's 2026 forecast projects modest national NCI growth of 3% to \$20.2 billion, driven by livestock and the 2025 grain crop. BC's structural disadvantages — high input costs, climate exposure, concentrated U.S. export dependency, and the most expensive farming environment in Canada — mean the province is unlikely to share proportionately in a national recovery without targeted provincial intervention.

6.2 Strategic Priorities for 2026–2030

R1: Water Security [CRITICAL]

Commission a comprehensive water security and irrigation infrastructure needs assessment for the Fraser Valley, with capital allocation in Budget 2027. The 2021 flooding demonstrated that existing infrastructure is inadequate for the precipitation volatility now projected under climate scenarios. Comparable investment in Ontario's Leamington-Windsor greenhouse corridor has generated documented productivity returns. Evidence: FVRD (2015); BC MAF (2013).

R2: Labour Pathways and TFW Stabilization [CRITICAL]

Establish a Fraser Valley Agricultural Labour Partnership between BCAC, IRCC, and post-secondary institutions to develop year-round domestic workforce pathways. Critically, stabilize TFW program administration timelines to prevent harvest disruptions during diplomatic uncertainty. Evidence: FPSC (2024); AAFC (2025e).

R3: Agricultural Land Reserve Enforcement [HIGH]

Reinforce ALR enforcement and resist amendments reducing the effective farmland base in the Mainland-Southwest region. The ALR protects approximately 4.6 million hectares of arable land in BC; its integrity is the foundation of the province's long-term food production capacity. Evidence: BC MAF (2013); FVRD (2024).

R4: Trade Diversification and CPTPP Activation [CRITICAL]

Allocate dedicated provincial CPTPP market development funding for BC berry, greenhouse, and seafood producers. The January 2026 Canada-China deal provides a window to rebuild trade relationships but its fragility underlines the urgency of structural diversification below 60% U.S. concentration by 2030. Canadian agriculture's track record of market adaptation — as seen when China restricted canola in 2019 and Indian lentil barriers emerged in 2017, with volumes finding alternative buyers in the EU — suggests diversification is achievable (Bonnefield, 2025). Evidence: NFU (2024); AAFC (2025a).

R5: Research and Innovation Investment [HIGH]

Increase funding to UFV's Food and Agriculture Institute and the Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre for applied productivity and climate adaptation research. International evidence consistently documents a 20:1 return on investment from applied agricultural research programs. This ROI reference provides the strongest fiscal argument available for recommending increased research funding. Evidence: MNP / IAFBC (2020).

R6: Farm Income Support Modernization [CRITICAL]

Modernize AgriStability and AgriRecovery to calibrate them to the frequency and scale of climate events now affecting BC producers. AAFC's 2025 enhancements — doubling the payment cap to \$6 million and raising the compensation rate to 90% for 2025 — are a necessary first step. Permanent structural reform and streamlined administration are required. Evidence: BC Agriculture Council (2025); Statistics Canada (2025b).

R7: Input Supply Chain Diversification [MEDIUM]

Establish a BC Agricultural Input Security Program to incentivize domestic and CPTPP-aligned sourcing of key agricultural inputs — fertilizers, biopesticides, and precision agriculture technology — reducing structural reliance on U.S. supply chains. Domestic canola crushing investment (as discussed by BC producers following the January 2026 deal) is one example of value-chain integration that simultaneously addresses input dependency and export risk (CBC, 2026). Evidence: BC Agriculture Council (2025).

Recommendation	Impact	Feasibility	Priority	Evidence Strength	ROI Benchmark
R1: Water Security	High	Medium	CRITICAL	Strong (FVRD, BC MAF)	Direct loss prevention
R2: Labour / TFW	High	High	CRITICAL	Strong (FPSC 2024)	Harvest loss prevention
R3: ALR Enforcement	High	Medium	HIGH	Strong (BC MAF 2013)	Long-term land security
R4: Trade Diversification	Very High	Medium	CRITICAL	Strong (NFU; RBC 2026)	Market risk reduction
R5: Research Investment	High	High	HIGH	Strong (MNP/IAFBC)	20:1 documented ROI
R6: Farm Income Support	High	High	CRITICAL	Strong (StatsCan 2025b)	Income floor protection
R7: Input Diversification	Medium	Low–Med	MEDIUM	Emerging (BCAC 2025)	Supply chain resilience

Table 4. Prioritization matrix for strategic recommendations. Impact and feasibility assessments are qualitative, informed by evidence from cited sources and comparable interventions in peer jurisdictions.

7. CONCLUSIONS

BC's agricultural sector is economically significant, geographically concentrated, and — as of 2024 — in the most severe financial distress on record. The Fraser Valley stands at the centre of this system: generating BC's largest regional farm receipts from 2.4% of farmed land, housing more than half of BC's dairy operations, and producing over 200 commercial products for local, national, and international markets.

The data assembled in this report is unambiguous on the scale of the challenge. BC farmers have not collectively turned a profit since 2017. The province posted the largest agricultural net loss in Canada in 2024. Farm debt nationally rose at its fastest rate since 1981. Climate events are accelerating. And a three-front tariff environment — U.S., China, and India simultaneously — has introduced structural export risk without precedent in BC's recent agricultural history. The partial Canada-China deal of January 2026 provides near-term relief for canola, but a 15% residual tariff on seed and unresolved pork tariffs mean the structural vulnerability remains.

At the same time, the sector's resilience must be acknowledged. Supply-managed sectors — dairy, poultry, and eggs — continue to demonstrate structural stability through the tariff environment. National supply-managed receipts grew 3.2% to \$15.7 billion in 2025 (Statistics Canada, 2026a). High-value horticulture, berries, and greenhouse vegetables provide a structural buffer that less-diversified provinces lack. BC's diversity of agricultural production is an asset. Targeted investments can accelerate recovery and position the sector to capture the 12–18% real GDP growth potential identified under a revised sustainable growth scenario.

This analysis identifies seven strategic priorities where targeted action would generate the highest economic return: water security, labour pathways, ALR enforcement, trade diversification, research investment, farm income support modernization, and input supply chain diversification. All have comparable precedents in other provinces or internationally. What BC's sector requires is coordinated commitment, sustained funding, and evidence-based policy design executed with the urgency the data demands.

The agriculture of the Fraser Valley is not a heritage asset to be preserved — it is a living economic engine that, with the right investment conditions, can grow substantially over the next decade. The analytical tools, the data, and the policy precedents all exist. What remains is the institutional will to act before the window closes.

TECHNICAL APPENDIX: KEY STATISTICS CANADA DATA TABLES

The following Statistics Canada table references provide direct access to the primary data underlying this report's key financial figures. All are publicly available at www150.statcan.gc.ca.

Table 32-10-0052-01 Farm operating account, by province and territory. Primary source for all BC farm income figures: realized net farm income, total net farm income, farm cash receipts, and operating expenses by province. 2024 revised data released November 26, 2025.

Table 32-10-0049-01 Farm debt outstanding, classified by lender. Primary source for national farm debt figures, including the 14.1% increase in 2024 (largest since 1981).

Table 32-10-0046-01 Farm cash receipts, by province and territory. Primary source for national \$101.4 billion 2025 figure and BC \$5.06 billion 2024 figure.

Table 32-10-0047-01 Farm operating expenses and depreciation charges, by province. Primary source for BC operating expense data (+7.2% in 2024).

Table 38-10-0237-01 Balance sheet of the agricultural sector. Primary source for total national liabilities (\$159.0 billion, +14.1%) and interest coverage ratio data, December 31, 2024.

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