

# Growing food in a changing climate

## Kootenay & Boundary Regional Adaptation Strategy

### The Issue

Climate change is already impacting agriculture and food production as farmers in British Columbia contend with increasing climate variability, more extreme weather events such as flooding and drought, the arrival of new pests and diseases associated with a warming climate, and a clear trend to warmer drier summers.

While farmers are experienced in responding to weather variations, the scope, scale and rate of changes associated with modern climate change are more significant than any time in human history. Agriculture is highly vulnerable to a changing climate, and even small changes can have real consequences for the volume and quality of food produced, and for farmers' livelihoods. Food producers worldwide are now facing a broad range of uncertainties in relation to climate change-related threats and opportunities.

### The Action

BC Agriculture & Food's Regional Adaptation Program team met with Kootenay and Boundary agricultural producers and local governments in winter 2019 to assess climate change-related risks and opportunities, identify strategic priorities and develop an in-depth adaptation strategy for the region.

A series of meetings engaged participants to identify the region's most pressing adaptation challenges, opportunities and capacities, and identify a series of responsive strategies and actions.

Among the climate impacts of greatest concern to food producers are warmer and drier summer conditions, increasing wildfire risk, increasing variability of weather, and changing hydrology – especially the increasing risk of spring flooding.

The following goals were identified for the region:

- Adoption of water conservation best practices and ensuring the availability of sustainable water supply for agricultural production
- Supporting comprehensive wildfire preparedness planning to minimize wildfire impacts
- Enhancing data-drive resources to support adaptation
- Supporting collaborative research on crop selection and farm practices
- Strengthening knowledge transfer to limit impacts of pests and invasive species
- Enhancing natural flood management infrastructure to mitigate flood risk,
- Reducing the impacts of flooding on agricultural lands and operations.



Orchards near Fruitvale, BC

The Kootenay & Boundary regional adaptation strategy will be released in spring 2019 to guide the development and implementation of collaborative projects that support agricultural adaptation to climate change. Projects will be supported with \$300,000 in funding from the Canadian Agricultural Partnership.



The Creston Valley is an important food growing hub in the Kootenays (photo credit: Jeff Banman)