

Guest Blog: Beyond the Market Serves New Northern Farmers

This information was provided by blog author, Jillian Merrick, coordinator of the Beyond the Market project. It is intended to accompany the rest of the blog, which is available at www.refbc.com/news/guest-blog-beyond-market-serves-new-northern-farmers.

There are many facts about northern BC agriculture that surprise even the most informed economists and community developers. Most often, BC's agriculture sector is discussed in terms of the Fraser Valley, Okanagan, and other breadbaskets in the southern half of the province, but the northern farm belt deserves consideration too.

If we define northern BC as everything north of Clinton, then northern BC agriculture accounts for **70% of the province's Agricultural Land Reserve** and **20% of BC's farms**. Overall, the region generates **10% of BC's agricultural gross receipts**.

Agriculture provides income, not just for farm owners, but also for their employees. In 2011, **agriculture in the North created 473 full-time equivalent jobs**. A total of 3,226 employees work in the agriculture sector.

In addition, the region is home to:

- 90% of BC's wheat, oat and canola acreage, 71% of BC's alfalfa acreage, 61% of BC's hay acreage;
- 90% of BC's bison herd, 40% of BC's beef cattle herd, 40% of BC's horses, 30% of BC's sheep herd, 24% of BC's goat herd, 20% of BC's dairy herd.

Agriculture in British Columbia's North is a significant cornerstone of the regional economy and social fabric.