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Kootenay Farms Regional Food Hub in Creston Opening

(Creston, BC) – Fields Forward Society is excited to announce the opening of the Kootenay Farms Regional Food Hub and Innovation Centre in the Creston Valley on Friday, October 15 from 12:30 – 2 pm. The Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries Lana Popham will join us for the Grand opening. Due to COVID-19 protocols, the event is by invitation only, with vaccination requirements in place. Farmers and food processors from across the Columbia Basin will have access to the food processing facility starting next week.

The Food Hub is a project whose initial start-up is jointly funded by the Provincial Government and the Columbia Basin Trust. It seeks to expand opportunities for food producers and processors within the Kootenay-Columbia Basin region.

“The Kootenay Farms Food Hub is bringing new opportunities to local businesses and strengthening food security, allowing more people to enjoy made-in-B.C. food and beverage products” said Lana Popham, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries. “The B.C. Food Hub Network is growing all over the province creating jobs, supporting farming and skills training, and building up communities and I can’t wait to see the innovation and flavours that come out of the Kootenay region.”

“The Ministry of Agriculture’s support for Food Hubs in Creston and across British Columbia is strengthening local food and agriculture” said Danny Turner, Chair of Fields Forward.

“The Fields Forward Society has worked tirelessly to develop a vision for collaboration for Basin food producers and processors that benefits the whole region. The Trust has been a proud supporter of this project from early on, seeing the opportunity to increase Basin residents’ access to foods that are locally produced and processed,” said Johnny Strilaeff, President and CEO of Columbia Basin Trust. “The Kootenay Farms Food Hub will increase and strengthen food and beverage options available in the region, helping producers to work together and expand offerings, while also creating employment opportunities.”

The Province of British Columbia is providing \$800,000 over three years to support the initiative. The Columbia Basin Trust contributed \$150,000 to purchase commercial scale equipment for the Food Hub.

“The Columbia Basin Trust has provided Fields Forward with tremendous support over the last three years. We couldn’t have succeeded with this Food Hub initiative without their ongoing interest and support in food security and farming.” said Elizabeth Quinn, Executive Director of Fields Forward Society.

The Food Hub currently has customers using the food hub for packaging juice, a farmer has an acre for pumpkins ready to make soup, and in the early winter peach and plum jam will be made in the commercial kitchen and bottled, lot coded and labeled in the facility.

The purpose of the Food Hub is to help Kootenay region food and farm businesses to grow and innovate by giving them access to community-based processing equipment and facilities they might otherwise not afford. It will also offer an aggregation and distribution service, and sales support. Cold, dry and freezer storage is planned. Businesses will rent the equipment or hire Fields Forward's staff on a fee-for-service basis. Fields Forward will participate in the BC Food Hub Network connecting and learning from 12 food hubs throughout the province.

Fields Forward Society is a food and agriculture initiative in Creston Valley working to build a vibrant and productive local agri-food system.

For more information, visit www.fieldsforward.ca

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