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MEDIA RELEASE

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Report urges more action to prepare BC for uncertain food future

British Columbians should not assume that food supplies will continue to be easily accessible in future, and more steps should be taken to improve food security as climate change and other pressures evolve, according to a new report from the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions (PICS).

The report – *Climate Change and Food Security in British Columbia* – co-authored by Canada Research Chair Aleck Ostry and Rachelle Beveridge from the University of Victoria (UVic) and Dr. Christiana Miewald from Simon Fraser University – is an independent white paper from PICS, a collaboration of BC's four research-intensive universities led by UVic.

The report examines how climate change is expected to alter British Columbia's current system of food production, import and export, along with non-climatic pressures on food supply such as population growth and the world trend towards agriculturally intensive Western, and less healthy, diets of meat, dairy and fats.

Lead author Ostry says approximately half of the food consumed in BC comes from other parts of Canada or other countries. Given that California is the province's main source for fruit and vegetables, diversification away from this climate-change sensitive region should be a priority for BC food security policy, he says.

"Drought-prone California is just one example of where we are vulnerable. BC's own fruit bowl, the Okanagan, is also facing likely drier growing conditions, and the province's greenhouse vegetable industry is mainly export oriented. Self-sufficiency will be a key issue for our future food security."

However Ostry says uncertainty about how climate change will unfold within BC regions means locally sourced food isn't the sole solution, especially when it is environmentally better to import certain goods. He says BC needs to increase supply, reduce emissions in the agricultural sector and improve food security – and that will require developing proactive, evidence-based policies. The report makes seven recommendations:

1. Facilitate more agricultural and health sector partnerships to ensure more effective food policies.
2. Encourage people to choose healthier and more environmentally sustainable diets.
3. Promote local agriculture to reduce BC's dependence on imports.
4. Develop a better policy evidence base, especially for analyzing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions at each stage in food supply chains and for assessing the economic implications of different production, import and export strategies.
5. Determine the likely impacts of different climatic scenarios on BC crops to maximize land productivity.
6. Ensure that current initiatives underway in BC to manage GHG emissions from the meat industry and from manure are effective, as these are the agricultural sector's biggest emitters.
7. In a world of rising food prices, develop policies to cushion the impact of reduced food availability and access for those with low incomes.

The full report can be read at www.pics.uvic.ca/white_papers.php

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