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## **PROJECT TO EXAMINE ENHANCED LOCAL AG PROCESSING**

COURTENAY – Cowichan Valley agricultural producers will soon harvest the results of a study looking at options to enhance agriculture processing and storage in the region. Commissioned by Economic Development Cowichan, the study is funded with \$20,000 from the Island Coastal Economic Trust through the Economic Development Readiness (EDR) Program and \$24,000 from Growing Forward 2.

“The EDR program is in place to help communities and agencies develop lasting tools and strategies to support economic strength and sustainability,” said ICET Chair Phil Kent. “The limited processing capacity for agricultural products in the Cowichan Valley has been identified as a significant challenge for producers, and this study is the first step toward an action plan that supports the industry’s growth,” said ICET Chair Phil Kent.

The agricultural processing and storage study will:

- Evaluate existing facilities
- Identify options to address challenges
- Develop a strategy around the most promising options

Increasing processing and storage options will assist producers in developing the necessary flexibility to bring their products to market, increasing profitability and long-term viability of the Valley’s agriculture sector.

“The development of a series of long term solutions will help the regional industry to thrive, grow existing operations and potentially attract new producers to the area,” said Mary Marcotte, the Chair of the Cowichan Regional District Agriculture Advisory Commission.

### **About the Island Coastal Economic Trust**

The Island Coastal Economic Trust is a \$50 million endowment established in 2006 by the Government of British Columbia to help diversify the economies of central and northern Vancouver Island and the Sunshine Coast.

ICET is guided by a Board of Directors and two Regional Advisory Committees which include more than 50 locally elected officials and MLAs and five appointees. This exceptional team of leaders collaborates to set regional priorities and build vital multi-regional networks.

Through a community-centred decision-making process, ICET has approved \$47 million for over 100 economic infrastructure and economic development readiness projects on the Island and Sunshine Coast since implementing its grant program in 2007. ICET investments have leveraged over \$260 million in incremental funding into the region.

A full overview of ICET can be found at [www.islandcoastaltrust.ca](http://www.islandcoastaltrust.ca)

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