

## Agriculture at a Glance, 2001

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The business of agriculture earns and spends billions. Canadian farmers' total gross receipts were \$38.3 billion in 2000, and their operating expenses totalled \$33.2 billion. Factors such as the commodities they produce, the prices they receive and the weather make each farmer's situation different.



Only 2.4% of Canadians live and work on farms, or about 727,000 people in 2001. Living in a rural area doesn't necessarily mean you're farming: farm families made up only 11.5% of the whole rural population in 2001. Beyond the farm gate, the food processing industry — grain elevators, flour mills, bakeries, slaughterhouses, dairies and myriad other facilities that prepare and package our food — employs about 200 000 people, according to 1998 figures.

The major crops produced in Canada are, for the most part, things we eat or feed to the animals that we eat. Measured by value, wheat is our biggest crop. Canola is crushed for its oil; it's a relative newcomer, but it offers farmers higher value per hectare than traditional grain crops, as do soybeans. Soybeans are crushed for oil too, but they're also used in a multitude of processed foods for people, as well as animal feeds. Although a small portion of barley is used for brewing beer, most of it is fed to cattle. Its main competitor in the cattle feed market is corn; only a fraction of Canada's corn crop is intended for human consumption. Corn-based ethanol is also being used more and more as a renewable, clean-burning automotive fuel additive. Potatoes have become an important Canadian export, thanks to the world-wide popularity of french fries.

Cattle and hogs have also become major Canadian exports, a result of trade agreements with the United States and other countries. The 2001 Census of Agriculture, taken before the discovery of one case of BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) shut down many export markets for Canadian beef in May 2003, reported 15.6 million head of cattle, nearly 14 million hogs, and 126 million hens and chickens.

Those animals aren't just for eating. Cattle hides are used for leather products, as are pig hides. But pigskin is also used to replace human skin for burn victims. Various pigs' organs are used in more than 40 different drugs. And pigs' heart valves are used to replace damaged human ones.

Livestock are usually sent to market by truck. Grain, however, is typically carried by rail from Prairie elevators to ports, or directly into the United States and Mexico. From 1997/98 to 2001/02, an average of 24.4 million tonnes of wheat, barley, oats, canola and flaxseed were shipped to grain terminals in Vancouver and Prince Rupert

in British Columbia, in Churchill, Manitoba and in various ports on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River.

## **Census of Agriculture**

The Census of Agriculture is the most comprehensive measurement available in Canada of what crops are being grown and animals being raised, and where. It is taken at the same time every five years as the Census of Population, but most Canadians never see a Census of Agriculture questionnaire — unless they're part of that 2.4% of the population living on a farm.

The Census of Agriculture asks farmers to report all the crops, animals and other products they're growing for sale. That list is long and wide-ranging, from alfalfa to grapes, sheep and lambs, ginseng, bees, maple trees and Christmas trees.

Farmers are also asked to report their expenses, their gross receipts, and various practices such as fertilizer use, tillage methods and computer use. A relatively recent addition to the census questionnaire is a question about organic products.

Each of the maps in this subtopic are derived from the publication *Canadian Agriculture at a Glance* and correspond to maps and articles published in this book. The Atlas of Canada has provided a Web link from each map to the corresponding .pdf version of the complete *Canadian Agriculture at a Glance* article on the Statistics Canada Web site as they become available.

The data used in these maps are from the 2001 Census of Agriculture. For further information on the census and other important mapping information, please refer to the "6<sup>th</sup>\_Data and Mapping Notes on Agriculture 2001 Maps" document.