

# Agriculture in Canada

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Canada is one of the largest agricultural producers and exporters in the world. As with other developed nations, the proportion of the population and GDP devoted to agriculture fell dramatically over the 20th century but it remains an important element of the Canadian economy.

A wide range of agriculture is practised in Canada, from sprawling wheat fields of the prairies to summer produce of the Okanagan valley. In the federal government, overview of Canadian agriculture is the responsibility of the department of Agriculture and Agri-Food.<sup>[1]</sup>

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## History

*See also: History of agriculture and Classification of indigenous peoples of the Americas*

In the 17th century Samuel de Champlain and Gabriel Sagard recorded that the Iroquois and Huron cultivated the soil for maize or "Indian corn".<sup>[2]</sup> Maize (*Zea mays*), potatoes (*Solanum tuberosum*), beans (*phaseolus*), squash (*Cucurbita*) and the sunflower (*Helianthus annus*) were grown throughout agricultural lands in North America by the 16th century. As early as 2300 BC evidence of squash was introduced to the northeastern

Nova Scotia	3,923
Ontario	59,729
Prince Edward Island	1,845
Quebec	32,139
Saskatchewan	50,598
Northwest Territories	30
Nunavut	0
Yukon	666

## Canadian agricultural government departments

The Department of Agriculture set out in the British North America Act (B.N.A.) of 1867 states each province may have jurisdiction over agricultural concerns, as well as the Dominion Government may also make law in regard to agriculture. Newfoundland agricultural affairs were dealt with by the Agricultural Division of the Department of Natural Resources at Confederation.<sup>[10]</sup>

The B.N.A. Act states that the federal Government has sole authority in coastal and inland fishery matters. Provinces have rights over non-tidal waters and fishing practices there only.<sup>[10]</sup>

### Canadian agricultural government departments

Department	Function
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada	Responsible for policies governing agriculture production, farming income, research and development, inspection, and the regulation of animals and plants. Headed by the Minister of Agriculture (Canada).
Canadian Dairy Commission	Responsible for providing dairy producers a fair return for labour and investment and provide consumers with high quality dairy products.
Canadian Food Inspection Agency	CFIA consolidates the delivery of all federal food, animal and plant health inspection programs.
Canadian Grain Commission	Responsible for the grain industry. Headed by the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food
Canadian Wheat Board	
Fisheries and Oceans Canada	Responsibility for the conservation and sustainable use of Canada's fisheries resources.
National Farm Products Council	Responsible for promoting efficient and competitive agriculture in Canada and oversees the Canadian Egg Marketing Agency, Canadian Turkey Marketing Agency, Chicken Farmers of Canada and Canada Hatching Egg Producers.

## Agricultural economy

*See also: Crow Rate and Western Economic Diversification Canada*



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## Daily Policy Digest

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### Tax and Spending Issues

December 20, 1999

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#### Farm Subsidies Fall In Canada

While annual farm subsidies among European Union countries now amount to a towering \$130 billion, Canada has cut such payments to a mere \$3 billion. EU authorities ignore arguments that such payments hurt consumers and taxpayers, preferring to dwell on the benefits of keeping people down on the farm and preserving rural landscapes for tourists.

Canada, on the other hand, has survived the loss of large rural populations, with only 3 percent of its work force now employed in farming.

- Whereas in the period 1991-93 some 30 percent of Canada's farming income came from subsidies, only 16 percent did in 1998.
- Comparing the same periods, subsidies rose from 19 percent of U.S. farmers' income to 22 percent.
- Subsidies comprised only about 1 percent of New Zealand farmers' income in 1998 and 7 percent for those in Australia.
- Yet subsidies have barely retreated from 47 percent of farmers' income in the EU to an estimated 45 percent last year.

Canada has cut wheat subsidies from 31 percent of gross receipts in 1991 to 9 percent today. That compares to 38 percent in the U.S. and 56 percent in the EU. Australia's wheat subsidy is 4 percent and New Zealand's is zero.

While Canadian farmers bemoan the loss of their subsidies and political clout, they are turning to free-market approaches to best their political opponents in Ottawa. They are demanding abolition of the Canadian Wheat Board -- a government-monopoly purchasing system that started as a war measure in 1943.

The state company buys all the wheat and barley grown for export in western Canada, sells it overseas and pays farmers the average price. But the wheat farmers' trade group points to surveys that indicate farmers get as little as 80 percent of the price charged by their American farming neighbors.

The government monopoly, farmers say, has retarded development of western flour and pasta mills -- processing operations that add value. So many farmers have switched to planting canola -- a crop that is marketed privately and outside the board's monopoly. Last year, for the first time, canola overtook wheat to become Canada's most important source of farm income.

Source: James Brooke, "Down and Out in Rural Canada," *New York Times*, December 18, 1999.

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