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Farming Facts 1997

Statistical Insights on Canadian Agriculture



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I ntroduction

Farming Facts is published by the Agriculture Division of Statistics Canada to illustrate the variety of information produced by the organization for the agricultural community. This edition highlights the results of the 1996 Census of Agriculture. Readers may address further inquiries to the Regional Reference Centre nearest them at the locations listed on the inside back cover.

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Highlights

1996 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE Characteristics of farm operations

■ There were 276,548 farms in Canada on May 14, 1996, according to the Census of Agriculture. The number of farms has been declining over the past 55 years. However, the decline since the 1991 Census was the smallest ever between censuses.

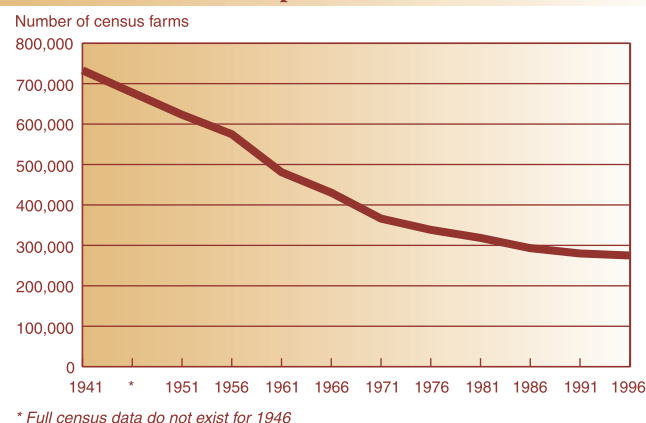
■ While the overall numbers were down, farms have been getting bigger. For example, those with gross farm receipts of \$100,000 or more accounted for 30.2% of all farms in 1996, double the proportion in 1981.

■ The livestock herd increased in the East, but gains in Western Canada were even stronger. Farmers diversified their crops in response to export markets and a broader range of consumer demands.

■ The proportion of farms in Canada on which operators used computers to help manage the business has increased at a rapid pace. It doubled since 1991, and was about eight times higher than in 1986.

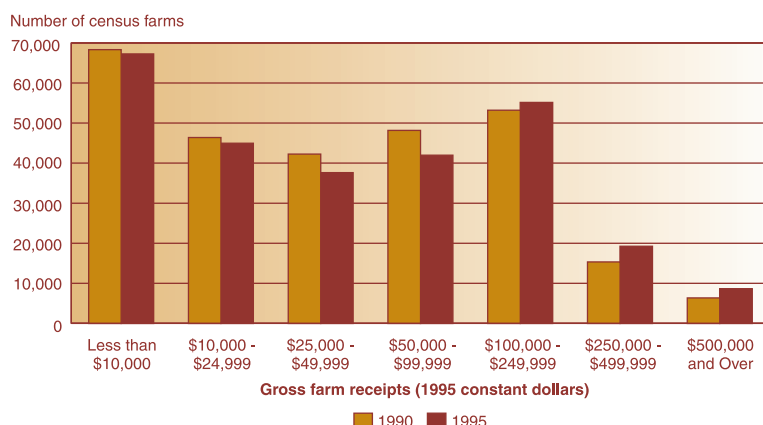
Graph 1

Decline in farms between 1991 and 1996 smallest since 1941 peak



Graph 2

Census farms by total gross farm receipts

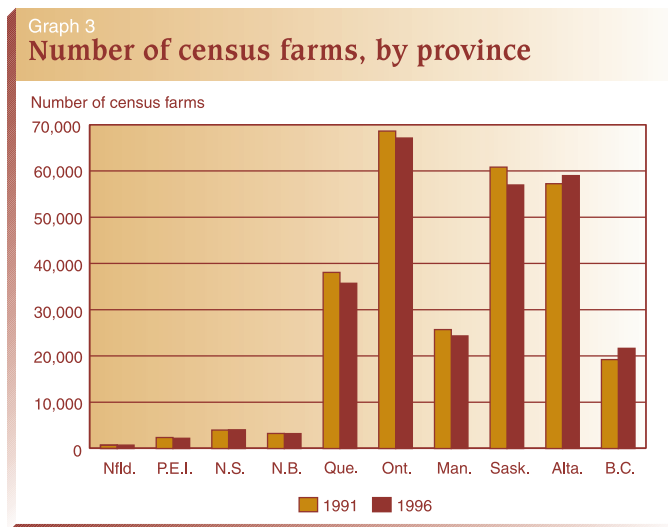


Number of Census Farms

On May 14, 1996, the day of the Census of Agriculture, there were 276,548 farms in Canada that met the Census definition. This included 1,593 farms producing only Christmas trees, which were covered for the first time in 1996. A census farm is an agricultural operation that produces an agricultural product intended for sale.

When farms producing only Christmas trees were excluded from the total (for purposes of comparison with previous censuses), the number of farms was 274,955, a 1.8% decrease since 1991. This decline was the smallest between censuses since the peak of 732,832 in 1941.

The provinces which gained farms since the 1991 Census were British Columbia (+12.6%), Alberta (+3.0%), Nova Scotia (+1.0%) and Newfoundland (+0.8%). Ontario reported the most farms, followed by Alberta and Saskatchewan.



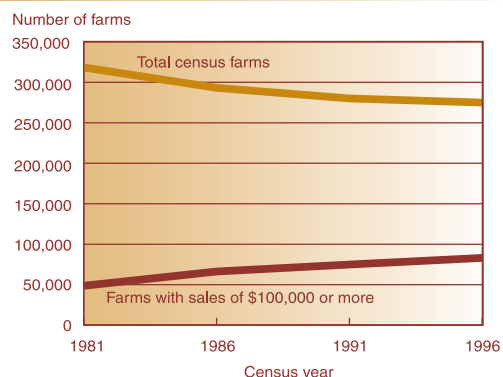
Fewer in number, but they're getting bigger

While overall numbers of farms have been declining, the size of farms in terms of gross sales has been increasing. (To make comparisons with previous Censuses of Agriculture more

accurate, all 1996 farm number figures exclude those farms that produced only Christmas trees.)

Graph 4

Farms with gross receipts of \$100,000 or more (constant 1995 dollars) increasing



Nationally between 1991 and 1996, the number of farms with gross receipts of \$100,000 or more (constant 1995 dollars) increased 10.9% to 83,090. These larger farms increased in number in all provinces except Newfoundland and New Brunswick. Saskatchewan had the highest percentage increase at 30.6%, reflecting strong crop prices in 1995.

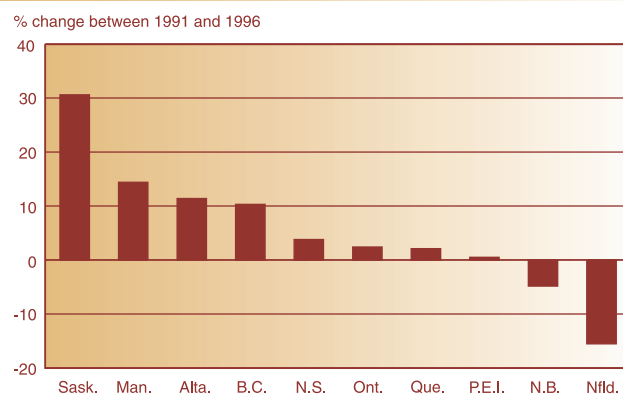
These larger farms also made up a growing proportion of all farms in Canada. Farms with gross farm receipts

of \$100,000 or more accounted for 30.2% of all farms in 1996, double the level of 15.3% reported in 1981 (constant 1995 dollars).

In Quebec, farms reporting at least \$100,000 in gross farm sales accounted for 38.9% of the total, the highest proportion in any province in 1996. Prince Edward Island was close behind with 35.0%. British Columbia had the lowest proportion of larger farms (15.7%).

Graph 5

Farms with gross receipts of \$100,000 or more (constant 1995 dollars) up in eight provinces

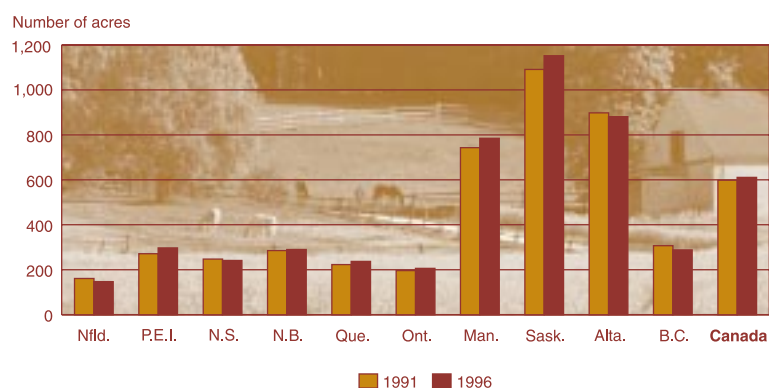


Rate of decline in farm numbers has slowed

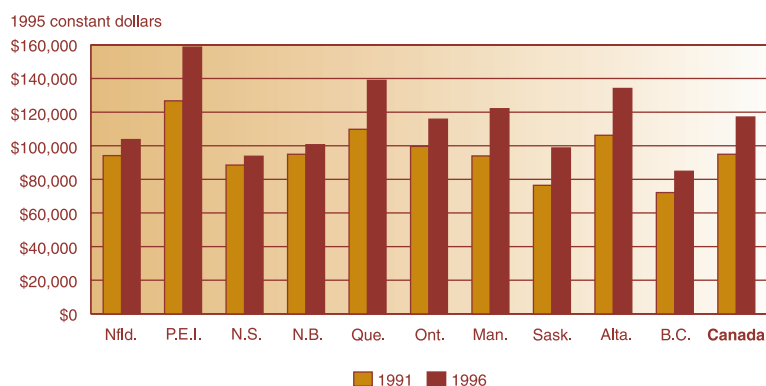
The number of farms in Canada has declined steadily since the 1940s but the rate of decline has slowed. A 1.8% decrease between 1991 and 1996, for example, contrasts with the drop of 4.5% between 1986 and 1991.

Five provinces — Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island — experienced smaller declines between 1991 and 1996 than during the previous intercensal period. The most notable deceleration took place in Prince Edward Island, where the decline of 6.8% since 1991 was substantially smaller than the 16.7% loss between 1986 and 1991. British Columbia, Alberta, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland all gained farms since 1991 and contributed to slowing the national rate of decline in numbers of farms.

Graph 6
Average census farm size

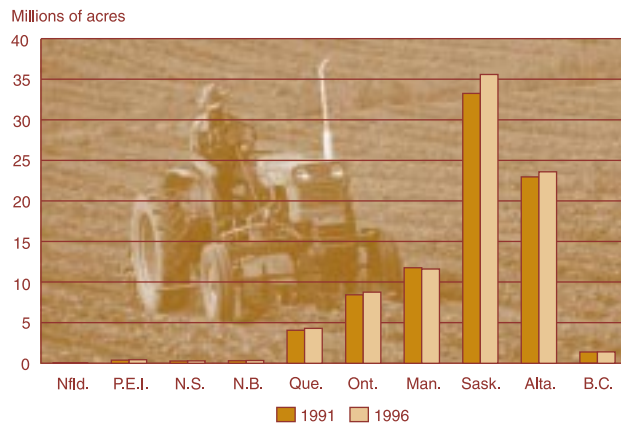


Graph 7
Average gross farm receipts in 1995 constant dollars

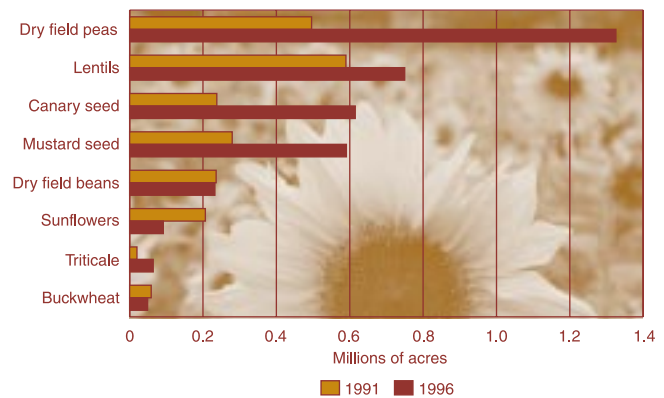


Crops

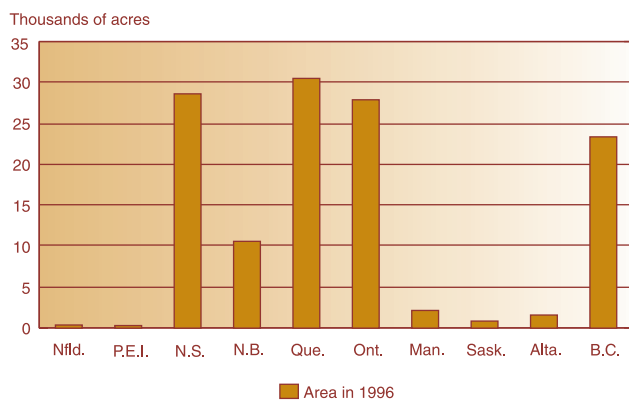
Graph 8
Land in crops, by province



Graph 9
Specialty crop areas, Canada



Graph 10
Christmas tree area, by province



Tillage Practices Used to Prepare Land for Seeding

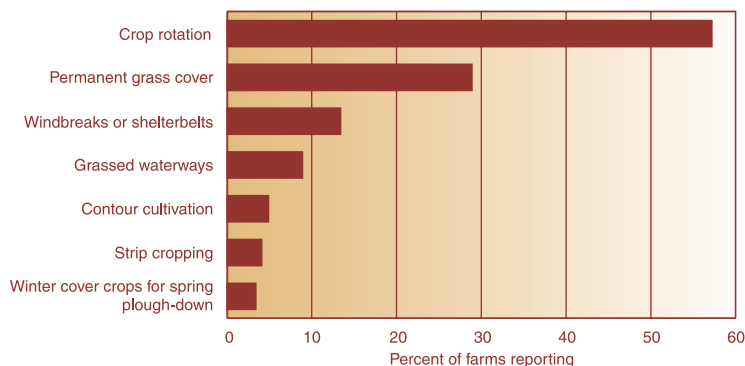
Almost 71 million acres of land were prepared for seeding in Canada in 1996. Conventional tillage methods were used on 53% of that area, this can be compared to 69% in 1991. Minimum tillage practices were used on 31% of the land prepared for seeding in Canada, up from 24% in 1991. The big success story was the increase in the number of acres planted using no tillage. Acres planted this way increased from under 5 million acres in 1991 to over 11 million acres in 1996.

With the risk of soil erosion by wind greater in the flat, wide open and often dry Prairies, one would assume that these farmers adopt conservation practices to a greater degree than their eastern counterparts. While this was true in the past, the economic benefits of reduced tillage are making it popular all

across Canada. In fact, Ontario had 18% of its seeded land being prepared using no tillage, second only to Saskatchewan at 22%.

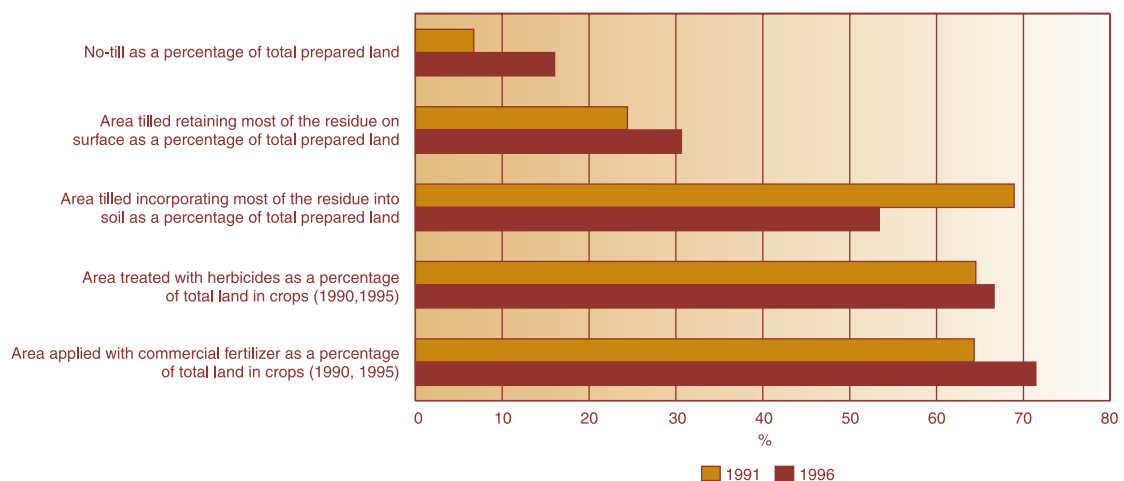
Graph 11

Soil conservation practices, Canada, 1996



Graph 12

Land management practices, Canada



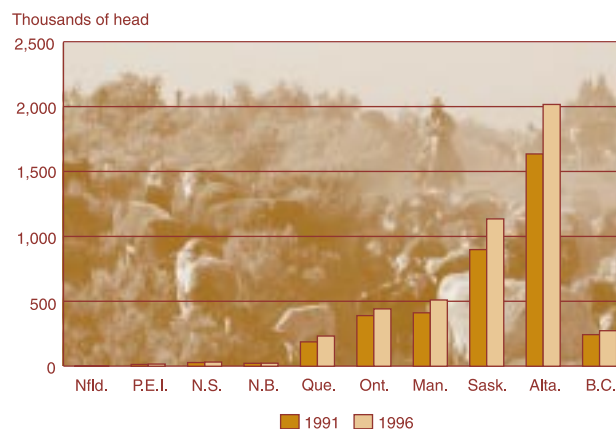
Livestock

Exports drove big jumps in red meat sector

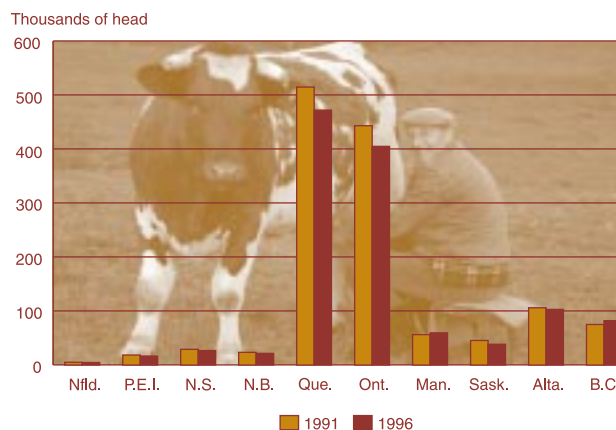
Strong export markets drove big increases in the red meat sector between 1991 and 1996, as domestic demand was relatively flat.

According to the 1996 Census of Agriculture, there were 4.7 million beef cows in Canada, a 22.3% increase since the 1991 Census. Beef cow numbers rose in every province between 1991 and 1996; however, the West experienced higher growth (+23.4%) than the East (+16.3%). Western Canada accounted for 84.1% of the national total, an increase from 82.7% in 1986.

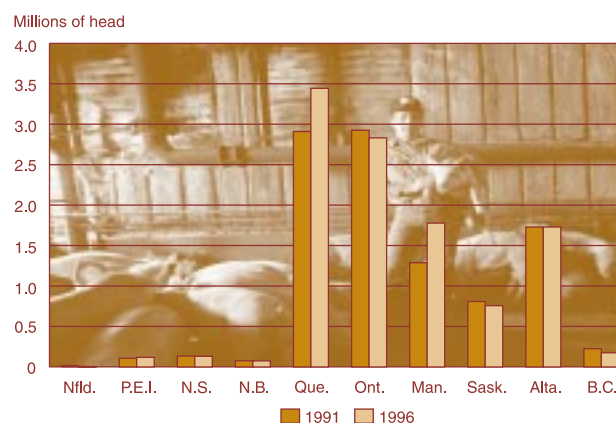
Graph 13
Total beef cows, by province



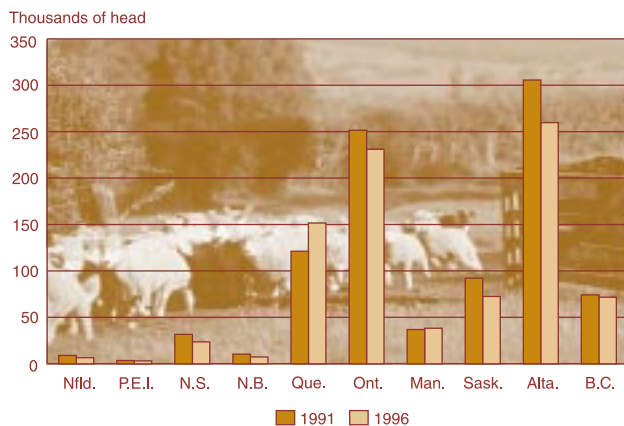
Graph 14
Total dairy cows, by province



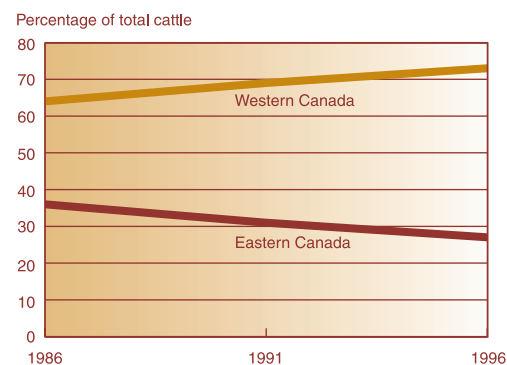
Graph 15
Total pigs, by province



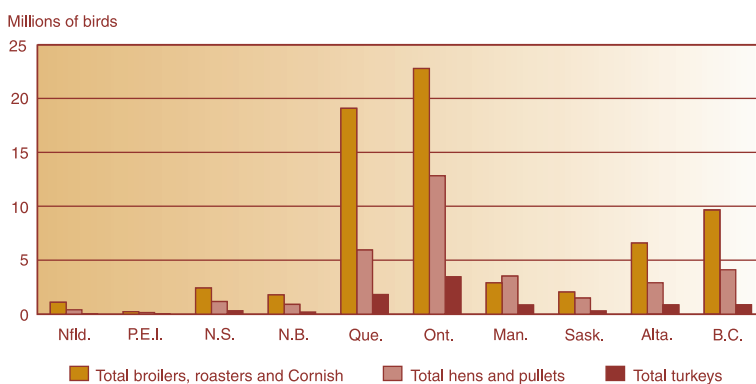
Graph 16
Total sheep, by province



Graph 17
Proportion of total cattle in Eastern and Western Canada, 1986, 1991 and 1996 Census of Agriculture



Graph 18
Poultry numbers, by province, 1996



More bison, elk, goats on the hoof

Many non-traditional livestock species have increased on farms since the last census, while data on some species are available for the first time from the 1996 Census of Agriculture. Much of the growth resulted from consumer interest in a wide variety of foods, often through the hotel and restaurant trade.

There were 125,819 goats in 1996, up 42.8% since 1991. Ontario accounted for more than one-third (36.0%) of all goats, with Alberta accounting for another one-quarter (26.2%). Goat milk provides an alternative to cow milk for people with lactose-related milk allergies. The Canadian market for goat meat has also expanded.

The number of bison almost tripled to 45,437 in 1996 from 15,775 in 1991. The West accounted for 89.5% of the 1996 total, with Alberta having the largest provincial bison herd at 22,782.

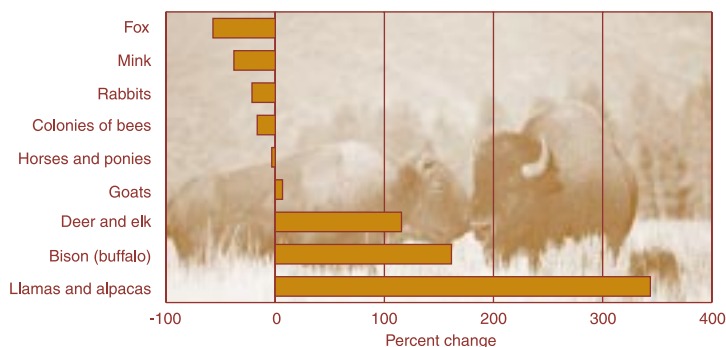
In addition, Canadian farms had 69,883 deer and elk in 1996. Four provinces accounted for 86.6% of these animals — British Columbia (27.9%), Ontario (22.5%), Saskatchewan (20.9%) and Alberta (15.3%).

Deer and elk are raised for meat, hides and velvet. The most valuable product from these animals is the velvet from their antlers, most of which is exported. Asian cultures have long used velvet products, believing that their use maintains strength, energy and general good health. It is often eaten as a delicacy, brewed in teas and included in health products.

Though not raised particularly for meat, llamas and their close cousins, alpacas, are being used for a number of purposes, including fibre production, guarding sheep from predators and as companion animals. There were 8,669 llamas on Canadian farms in 1996, more than four times the total of 2,028 in 1991. Western farms had the majority of llamas (84.9%).

Graph 19

Percent change of farms reporting other livestock from 1991 to 1996, Canada



Computer Technology

Use in farm management almost doubled

As farm operations become larger and more specialized, computer technology becomes a valuable tool for making production decisions.

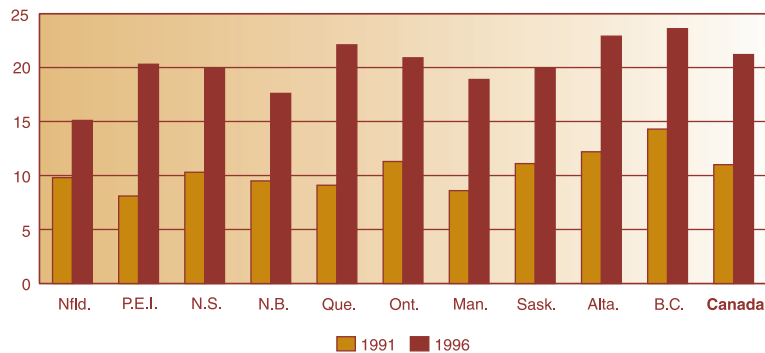
In 1996, 21.2% of all farms in Canada had a personal computer used for farm management, compared with 11.0% in 1991 and 2.7% in 1986. It should be noted that computers which were in farm households, but were not used for farm management applications are not included in the Census of Agriculture figures.

Rural residents, including farmers, often face challenges in accessing computer technology in part because of inadequate phone lines in some areas. However, improvements are being made. In November 1996, the last "party line" in Manitoba was converted to a private telephone line. Party lines have also been eliminated in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Other provinces are systematically replacing shared telephone lines and converting to touch-tone service. Computer use may also expand as alternatives are found to urban-based Internet providers, and the associated long-distance charges are reduced.

Graph 20

Proportion of census farms with a computer for farm management, by province

Percentage of farms with a computer



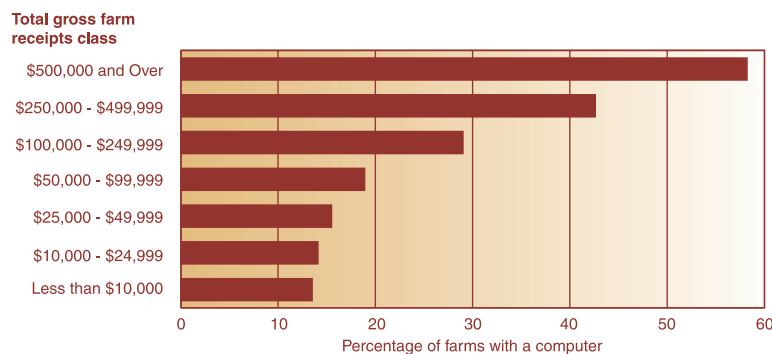
Computer use varied by province, farm type, and farm size

Almost one quarter (23.6%) of farms in British Columbia had a computer in 1996, the highest of any province. Only two others — Alberta (22.9%) and Quebec (22.1%) — were above the national average.

Operators of larger farms more often had a computer for farm management. In 1996, 58.2% of farms reporting \$500,000 or more (constant 1995 dollars) in gross farm receipts had a computer, up from 42.1% in 1991 and 18.3% in 1986. The relative complexity of management for these large farms is one factor in explaining this situation.

Graph 21

Percentage of census farms with a computer by total gross farm receipts class, 1996, Canada



Assets and Liabilities

Current and Long-Term Assets and Liabilities

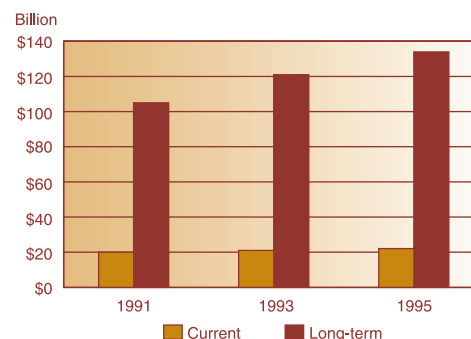
- Current and long-term assets increased steadily between 1991 and 1995.
- Current assets made up 14% of total assets in 1995.
- Long term assets increased at a greater rate than current assets.
- Current and long term liabilities fluctuated between 1991 and 1995, being lower in 1993 before rising in 1995.
- Current liabilities made up 16% of total liabilities in 1995.
- Both current and long term liabilities have remained fairly constant since 1991.

Average Assets, Liabilities and Net Worth, by Region, Canada

- Net worth and assets have increased steadily on Canadian farms since 1991.
- B.C. had the highest average assets and net worth in 1995, followed by Alberta and Ontario.
- Saskatchewan had the lowest average liabilities in 1995.

Graph 22

Current and long-term assets, Canada, 1991, 1993 and 1995

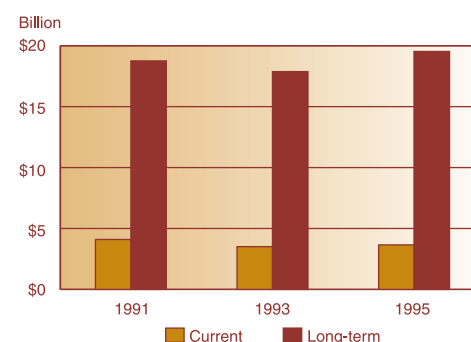


Note: Average values have been calculated for all farms with sales at least \$2,000.

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Farm Financial Survey.

Graph 23

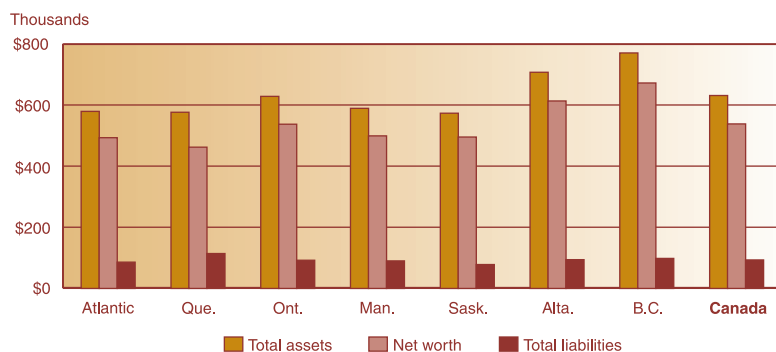
Current and long-term liabilities, Canada, 1991, 1993 and 1995



Note: Average values have been calculated for all farms with sales at least \$2,000.

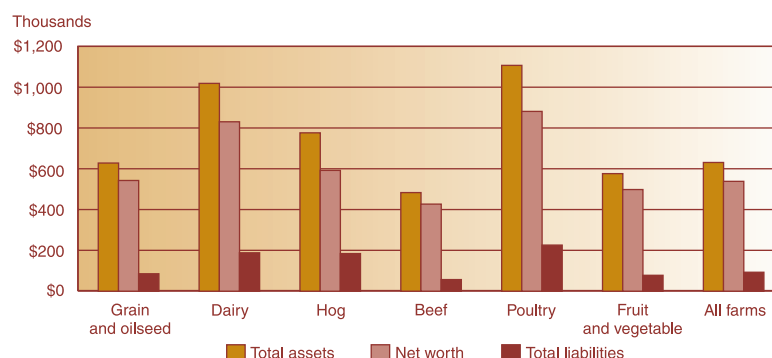
Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Farm Financial Survey.

Graph 24
Assets, liabilities and net worth by region, 1995
 Average per farm



Note: Average values have been calculated for all farms with sales at least \$2,000.
 Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Farm Financial Survey.

Graph 25
Assets, liabilities and net worth by farm type, Canada, 1995
 Average per farm



Note: Average values have been calculated for all farms with sales at least \$2,000.
 Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Farm Financial Survey.

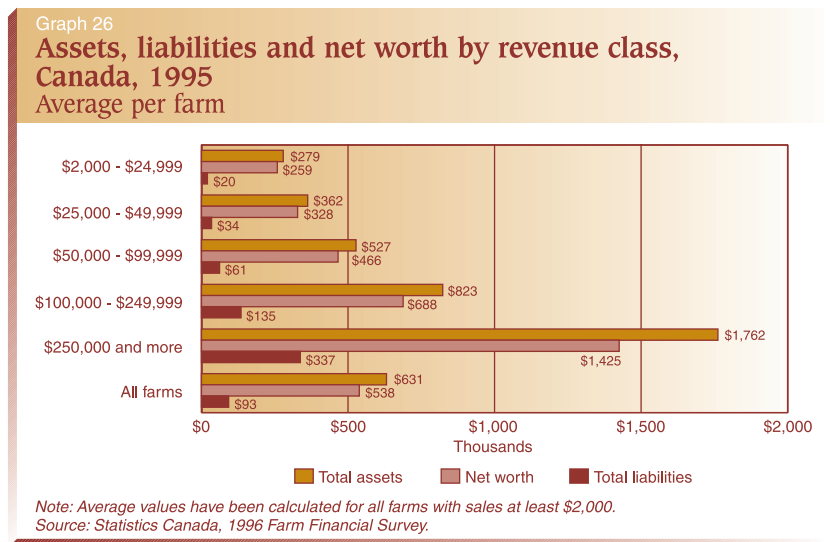
Average Assets, Liabilities and Net Worth, by Farm Type, Canada

- Except for beef operations, average asset levels for the major farm types were higher in 1995 compared to 1993.
- Between 1993 and 1995, the largest increase in average assets was for hog farms which rose 26% to \$776,265.
- Average liabilities increased across most farm types from 1993 to 1995. The increases ranged from 27% (to \$184,324) for hog farms to 3% (to \$56,725) for beef operations. In all cases the increases were due to higher levels of long-term debt.

- Average net worth for all farm types (except beef) increased in 1995, since higher asset values more than compensated for higher levels of debt per farm.

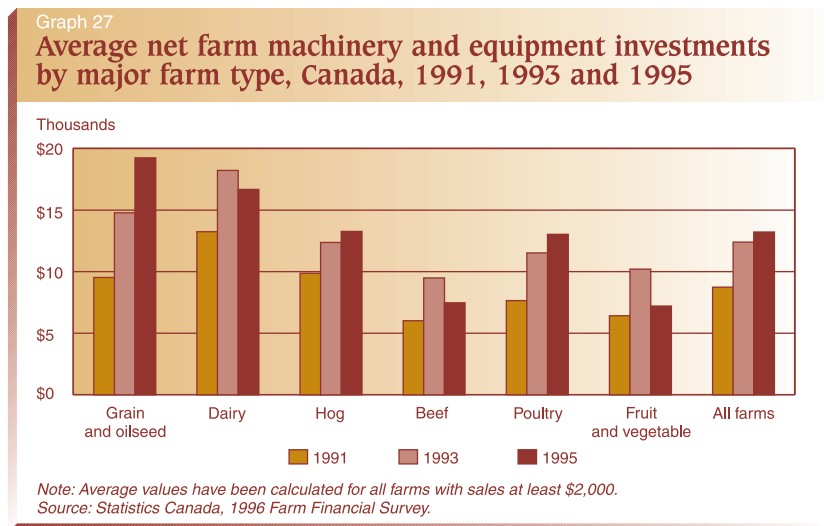
Average Assets, Liabilities and Net Worth, by Revenue Class, Canada

- In 1995, asset values per farm were up for all revenue classes when compared to 1993. Over the two-year time period, farms with \$250,000 and more of revenue reported the largest increase in average assets.
- Average liabilities were also higher for most revenue groups between 1993 and 1995. Slight declines in debt were reported for operations with revenues of \$250,000 and more and \$50,000 to \$99,999.
- Compared to 1993, the highest revenue group reported a 4% increase in average net worth in 1995. Among the remaining revenue classes, average levels of net worth varied from \$687,713 for operations with \$100,000 to \$249,999 in revenue to \$258,631 for farms with \$2,000 to \$24,999 in revenue.



Average Net Farm Machinery and Equipment Investments by Major Farm Type, Canada

- Average net investments in farm machinery increased considerably from \$8,734 in 1991 to \$12,398 in 1993, and increased again by almost \$1,000 to \$13,221 in 1995.
- The 1995 increase was mainly accounted for by an average \$4,000 increase in investments by grain and oilseed farms. Hog and poultry farms also showed an increase of about \$1,000 each.
- Dairy, beef and fruit and vegetable farms showed some decrease in 1995.



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