



Agriculture and
Agri-Food Canada

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Agroalimentaire Canada

Canada's Dairy Industry at a Glance



Overview...

- Canadian milk and dairy products are world-renowned for their excellence and are as diverse as its land and people. Enforcement of strict quality standards on dairy farms and in processing plants adds to this international reputation, along with strong commitment to sound animal welfare practices and environmental sustainability.
- The dairy industry ranks third in the Canadian agricultural sector following grains & oilseeds, and red meats. In 2011, dairy production in Canada generated total net farm receipts of \$5.8 billion and sales of \$13.7 billion, representing 16.4% of the Canadian food and beverage sector.
- 82% of Canadian dairy farms are located in Ontario and Quebec, 13% in the Western provinces and 5% in the Atlantic Provinces. The Canadian dairy cattle population totals 1.4 million and the typical Canadian dairy farm has 77 cows.
- There are 453 milk processing plants (including 273 federally-inspected) contributing to more than 22,500 jobs across Canada.
- The Canadian dairy sector operates under a supply management system based on planned domestic production, administered pricing and dairy product import controls. Canada is also an importer of dairy products. The European Union is the largest exporter to Canada followed by the United States and New Zealand. The major imported products are specialty cheeses and milk protein ingredients.

...Genetics

- The Canadian dairy industry is famous for the superior genetic quality of its herd as well as its strong dairy cattle improvement and genetic evaluation programs. About 75% of Canadian dairy herds are enrolled in milk recording programs.
- The Holstein breed is the most common dairy breed (94% of the dairy herd); Ayrshire, Brown Swiss, Canadienne, Guernsey, Jersey and Milking Shorthorn breeds are also found on Canadian farms.
- In 2011, Canadian cows enrolled in official milk recording programs produced on average 9,774 kg of milk per lactation (305 days) with an average content of 3.84% fat and 3.22% protein.
- Canada is at the forefront of new and innovative research into dairy genetics. Through genotyping, geneticists determine animals DNA profiles and are currently estimating genomic evaluations for over 60 different traits. Genomic evaluations published by the Canadian Dairy Network (CDN) are calculated using imputed genotypes (3K and 50K) since October 2010. The 6K panel is also available since October 2011.

- Canada is a net exporter of dairy animal genetics (bovine embryos, semen and live dairy cattle). Canadian dairy genetics exports totalled \$121.5 million and were exported to over 100 different countries worldwide in 2011. Canadian live breeding cattle were primarily exported to Russia, accounting for 40% of total dairy cattle exports. Canada was also successful in gaining new European markets for live cattle (Germany and France) in 2011.

...Manufacturing of Dairy Products

- The dairy processing sector is relatively concentrated. The three largest processors in the country (Saputo, Agropur and Parmalat) process close to 80% of the total raw milk produced in Canada.
- The fluid milk market (table milk and fresh cream) represents 38% of milk production or 29 million hectolitres, while the market for manufactured dairy products such as butter, cheese, yogurt and ice cream accounts for 62% of production or 48 million hectolitres of milk.
- The Canadian cheese industry has entered a maturity phase, evidenced by its know-how developed through extensive cheese making traditions and the diversity of its more than 700 varieties of cheese (cow, goat and ewe). Many of these are recognized around the world for their quality and taste.
- Production of organic milk, although fairly limited, is steadily increasing in Canada reaching 90 million litres in 2010/11; production has more than doubled in the last 5 years.
- Goat and sheep milk output is also increasing, mainly for use in cheese manufacturing. It is estimated that Canadian annual production of goat milk is over 35 million litres.
- Canadians looking for healthy and nutritional products continue to have access to an ever expanding range of quality and innovative Canadian dairy products. A variety of new dairy products have been developed, such as Greek-style yogurts or containing plant sterols, pre- and probiotic dairy products, ultra filtered and lactose free milk, and products containing Omega-3 fatty acids. Milk protein products are used as ingredients in a growing array of food items, such as infant formula, sports and nutritional beverages and confectionaries.
- Research and development of new dairy products and production methods are the result of strategic alliances among producers, processors, universities, and federal and provincial research centres.

...Quality and Safety

- Government and industry partners work in close cooperation to coordinate the movement of milk from the farm to the consumer. Dairy Farmers of Canada (DFC), the Dairy Processors Association of Canada (DPAC), the Canadian Dairy Commission (CDC), the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), provincial marketing boards, dairy processing companies, cooperatives and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) all work as partners to ensure a strong and dynamic industry.
- Strict quality standards applied throughout Canada's production and processing chain contribute to the excellent reputation of Canadian dairy products. A significant number of dairy plants are HACCP and/or ISO certified.
- The on-farm food safety program "Canadian Quality Milk" is a HACCP-based program developed by Dairy Farmers of Canada and certified by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). It serves to assure consumers that Canadian milk is produced in a safe manner.

- Thanks to the strict standards in place, several serious cattle diseases have been eradicated from Canadian dairy herds. CFIA ensures the maintenance of national eradication programs and also ensures the mandatory control and monitoring in accordance with international agreements, particularly OIE agreements, protecting Canadian livestock from serious diseases that could restrict trade or pose a risk to human health.
- Sound welfare practices for housing, management, transportation and other animal husbandry practices are in place with the *Code of Practice of the Care and Handling of Dairy Cattle*. On-farm biosecurity standards are also in development.
- Federal, provincial and territorial governments, in partnership with industry, have made the development of a full traceability system a priority in Canada. Traceability systems in Canada are based on three basic elements: animal identification, animal movement and premises identification. The dairy industry is moving into the next phases of the national traceability system (movement reporting and premises identification).

For more information, visit the Canadian Dairy Information Centre (CDIC) at <http://www.dairyinfo.gc.ca> or contact:

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