



Canada's

Agriculture, Food and Beverage INDUSTRY

Canada's Vegetable Industry

Canada's varied climate has created unique opportunities for innovation and technological advances that are helping to ensure a ready supply of fresh vegetables year-round.

Those innovations include a thriving greenhouse sub-sector and some of the most advanced storage technologies in the world. Canadian researchers are also looking at ways to improve packaging that will help extend shelf life and expand markets. Examples of innovative packaging already in use include plastics that allow air to circulate while retaining moisture and environmentally friendly packing that is completely biodegradable in 14 days.



In 2007, Canadian growers produced close to \$2.5 billion worth of vegetables at the farm gate (including greenhouse and potatoes). Greenhouse vegetables accounted for over \$789 million of farm cash receipts, almost a

10% increase from 2005. Furthermore, in 2007, indoor production facilities across Canada produced 81,600 tonnes of fresh mushrooms, valued at \$275 million.

In order to remain competitive and to continue export growth, Canadians are continuously improving production methods, product quality and marketing efforts. Canadian scientists are studying the potential for introducing new vegetable varieties to Canada with characteristics that address risks to production, enhance freshness, facilitate economic diversification and that are adapted to specific regional growing conditions.

The volume of exports of fresh vegetable (excluding potatoes) has grown 15% from five years ago to reach 533,000 tonnes, with a large percentage in greenhouse vegetables and mushrooms. Canada also exported about 590,417 tonnes of table and seed potatoes in 2007 to markets around the world.

Potatoes, along with sweet corn and tomatoes, are some of the most extensively grown vegetables in Canada. About 4.9 million tonnes of potatoes worth approximately 900 million dollars were grown in 2007, more than half of them processed, mostly into french fries.

Other crops range from the native fiddleheads, wild garlic and rutabagas to the more common lettuce, onions, carrots, tomatoes and cabbage. Members of the cole crop family (broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, cabbage and kale) also grow well in Canada. Canadian farmers are customizing their production to meet foreign market needs. In response to growing demand for oriental vegetables, crops such as pak choi, bok choi, nappa and Chinese broccoli are increasingly being grown in Canada.

Organic production and processing capacity in Canada is also growing very rapidly, encouraged by consumer demand at home



and abroad. The number of certified organic farms has increased over 60% since 2001 to 3,555 in 2006, (of which 916 were certified organic fruit and vegetable farms). An additional 12,000 farms, of which 2,754 were fruit & vegetable farms, reported growing organically but were not certified. This will likely soon change as new regulations are slated to come into effect on December 14, 2008, making it mandatory for organic products traded inter-provincially or internationally to be certified to the strict national organic standards.



Due to Canada's cooler northern climate, pesticide use is significantly lower than would be required in a warmer climate. Furthermore, Canadian producers are using integrated pest management programs under which pest populations are monitored and the use of pesticides is precisely timed to maximize effect and minimize use.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) monitors Canada's vegetable industry, taking random samples from greenhouses and fresh vegetable establishments to verify compliance with grade standards and safety regulations. CFIA inspectors also check to see that producers and packagers conform to very specific product labeling regulations. These regulatory measures coupled with Canada's cooler climate and niche markets have contributed to the competitiveness of the Canadian vegetable industry internationally.

For More Detailed Information

Mark Drouin

Senior Market Development Advisor
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
1341 Baseline Road, Tower 5, Rm 337
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada K1A 0C5
Tel: (613) 773-0259
Fax: (613) 773-0299
E-mail: drouinm@agr.gc.ca

Other Links

Canadian Horticultural Council
www.hortcouncil.ca

Canadian Produce Marketing Association
<http://www.cpma.ca/>

Organic Products Regulations and Standards
<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/orgbio/orgbioe.shtml>

Canada Agricultural Products Act – Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Regulations
<http://lois.justice.gc.ca/en/C-0.4/C.R.C.-c.285/index.html>

Further information on products, suppliers and investment opportunities in the Canadian agri-food industry is available on the Agri-Food Trade Service Web site at: www.ats.agr.gc.ca

Canada's food and agricultural products reflect our dedication to excellence, and our deep commitment to safety, quality, environmental responsibility, innovation and service.

In every facet of our industry, we seek to earn the trust of our customers by answering their needs and exceeding their expectations. Those values along with our belief in building strong relationships, have given Canadian agriculture and food products an international reputation for excellence. Customers around the world know that they can trust the goodness of Canada.

