

Canadian Agriculture at a Glance

Comparing Canada's agriculture with other developed nations: Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States

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Agriculture is a significant industry in [Canada](#) and [the world](#). Agricultural commodities play an important role in a country's balance of trade, food security, nutrition and the overall health of its population. During the month of May 2021 (Census Day was May 11, 2021), [the United States, Japan and the United Kingdom](#) were among [Canada's top four trading partners](#), and [together these three countries accounted for 78.7% of Canada's total exports \(all chapters\) for that month](#). With that in mind, this analysis sheds light on the competitiveness of Canada's agriculture in the global

market by drawing cross-country comparisons of selected agricultural commodities.

Despite challenges faced by the Canadian agricultural industry—labour challenges, supply chain disruptions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and an increase in extreme weather occurrences related to climate change—Canada's agriculture stacks up relatively well against selected developed nations, such as Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Commodity selection and reference year

The commodities selected for the analysis were based on the availability or accurate comparability across countries. For example, comparable data for the number of farms reporting organic products were only available from Canada, Japan and the United States. Additionally, data from different reference periods were used for the comparison of selected commodities. Where applicable, respective Census of Agriculture data for other countries were used for comparative analysis. When Census of Agriculture data for other countries were not available, other sources of data were used for comparative analysis. In order to make numbers comparable across countries, most values in this article are expressed on a per 1,000 population or a per farm basis. Readers are invited to consult the Note to readers for more information on the differences in reported reference periods for commodities mentioned in this article.

Canada has the largest total farm area per farm

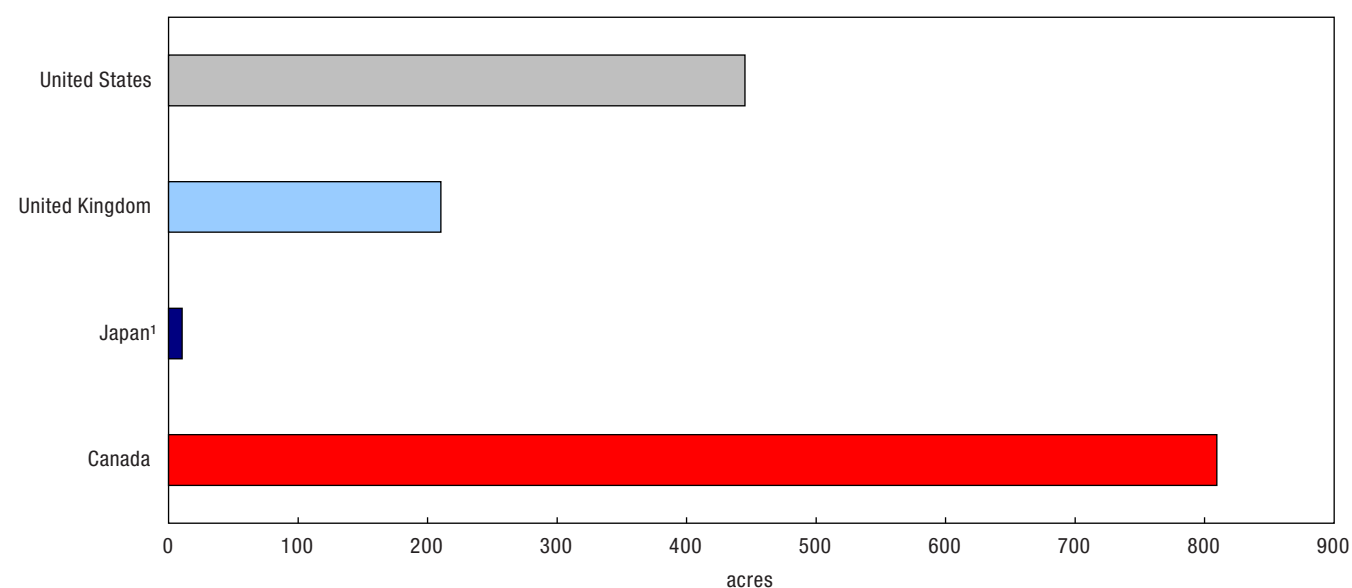
Canada led other selected nations in terms of average total farm area, with farms in Canada reporting 809.4 acres per farm in 2021. This was followed by the United States (445.0 acres per farm), the United Kingdom (210.2 acres per farm) and Japan (10.2 acres per farm).

Data from the 2021 Census of Agriculture show that Canada reported 189,874 farms and 153.7 million acres of total farm area. By comparison, the United States had 2,012,050 farms and 895.3 million acres of total farm area, and the United Kingdom had 219,000

farms and 46.0 million acres of total farm area. One distinctive comparative feature of agriculture in Japan was its small size of farmland, which was just under 11.0 million acres. Conversely, Japan had the second-largest number of farms (1,075,705) among the four nations.

Despite having the second-largest land mass in the world, Canada had the smallest proportion of its total area dedicated to farming of the four countries being compared. In 2021, 6.2% of Canada's land was reported as total farm area. This was significantly lower than the United Kingdom (75.0%), the United States (36.8%) and Japan (11.8%).

Chart 1
Average farm size by selected country, 2021



1. Data for Japan were from the year 2020.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Agriculture, 2021 (3438); Statista; United Kingdom's 2021 Census of Agriculture and Horticulture; and Japan's 2020 Census of Agriculture and Forestry.

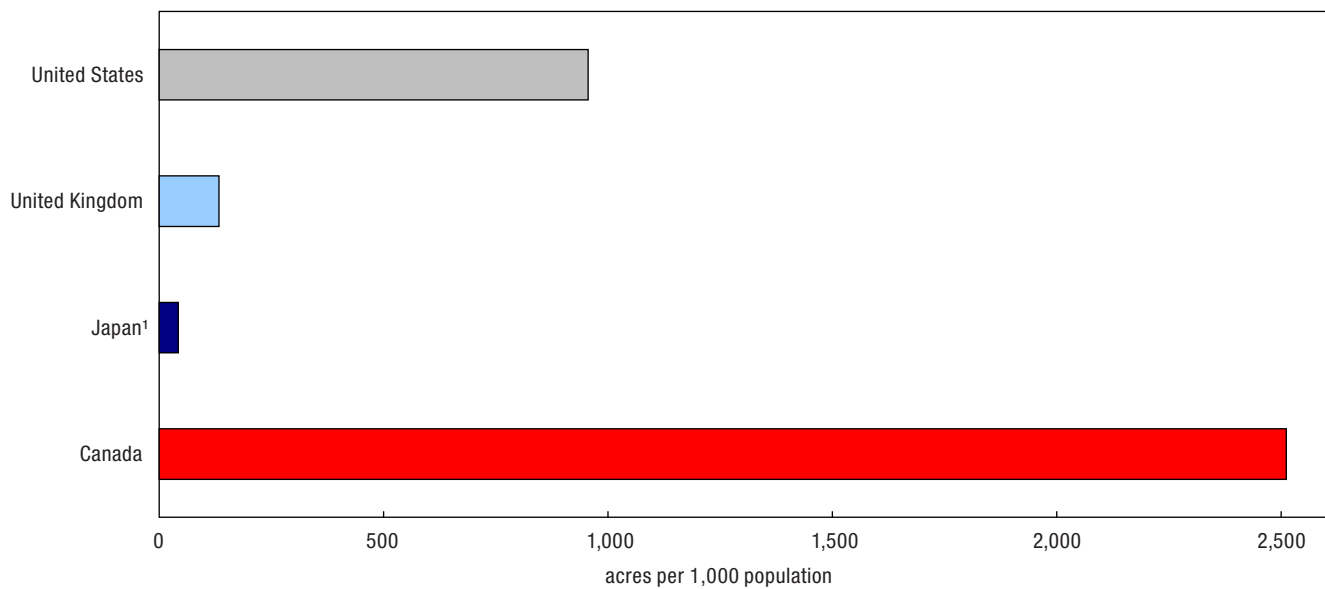
Canada leads in seeded area per 1,000 population for field crops and hay

The United States had the largest seeded area (317.2 million acres) for field crops and hay, followed by Canada (92.9 million acres), the United Kingdom (9.1 million acres) and Japan (5.3 million acres). The most prominent types of crops in the United States included corn, soybeans, rice, wheat and alfalfa. By comparison, Canada's prominent crop types included canola, wheat, barley, alfalfa and oats. There was some crossover with the United Kingdom,

where wheat, barley and oats were some of the more prominent crops, while most of Japan's cropland has been devoted to rice, wheat, beans, industrial crops and potatoes.

While the United States was the leader in total acres of seeded area for field crops and hay, Canada edged out the United States in field crops and hay area on a per 1,000 population basis. In 2021, Canada's total seeded area for field crops and hay per 1,000 population was 2,511.5 acres, followed by the United States (956.0 acres per 1,000 population), the United Kingdom (133.4 acres per 1,000 population) and Japan (42.6 acres per 1,000 population).

Chart 2
Farm area for field crops and hay per 1,000 population by selected country, 2021



1. Data for Japan were from the year 2020.

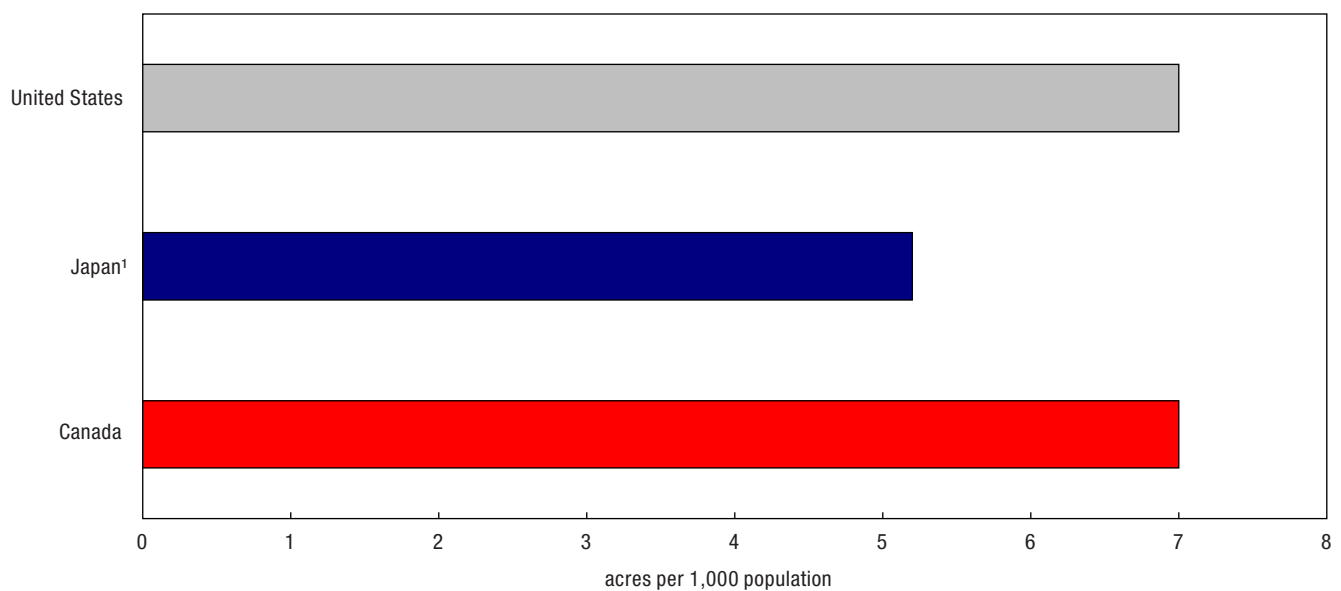
Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Agriculture, 2021 (3438); United States National Agricultural Statistics Service; United Kingdom's 2021 Census of Agriculture and Horticulture; and Japan's 2020 Census of Agriculture and Forestry.

Canada and the United States are tied for field vegetable farm area per 1,000 population

The United States had the largest total farm area for field vegetables, totalling 2.3 million acres in 2021. This was followed by Japan (654,172 acres) and Canada (260,757 acres).

Despite the United States having the largest total farm area for field vegetables, Canada was on par with its southern neighbour in field vegetable area per 1,000 population. In 2021, both the United States and Canada had 7.0 acres per 1,000 population for field vegetables. By comparison, Japan had the smallest area of field vegetables, at 5.2 acres per 1,000 population.

Chart 3
Farm area for field vegetables per 1,000 population by selected country, 2021



1. Data for Japan were from the year 2020.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Agriculture, 2021 (3438); United States National Agricultural Statistics Service; and Japan's 2020 Census of Agriculture and Forestry.

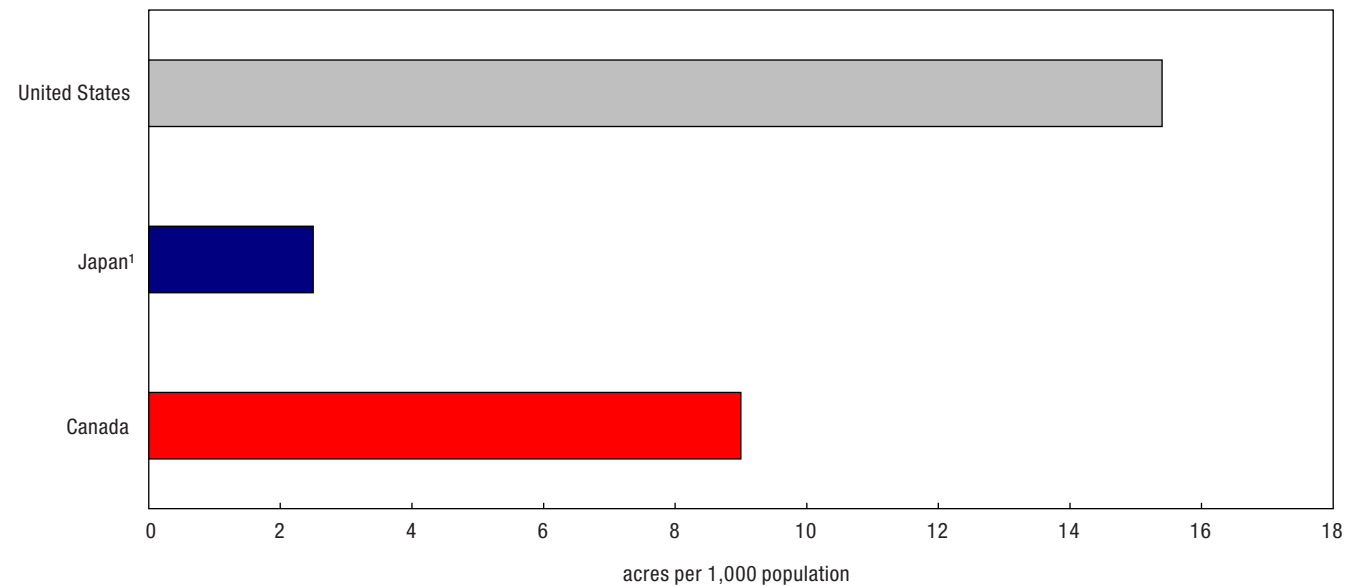
Canada trails the United States in farm area for fruits

As was the case for other commodities, the United States had the largest farm area for fruits, with farms in the United States reporting 5.1 million acres in 2021. This was followed by Canada, with 334,182 acres in 2021 and Japan with 313,377 acres in 2020.

The United States had 15.4 acres of farm area for fruits per 1,000 population, which was 1.7 times Canada's (9.0 acres per 1,000 population) and 6.2 times Japan's (2.5 acres per 1,000 population) farm area for fruits.

The United Kingdom reported vegetables and fruits as a group on their Census of Agriculture and Horticulture. When vegetable and fruit area was combined, the farm area per 1,000 population was largest in the United States (22.3 acres per 1,000 population), followed by Canada (16.1 acres per 1,000 population), Japan (7.7 acres per 1,000 population) and the United Kingdom (5.9 acres per 1,000 population).

Chart 4
Farm area for fruits per 1,000 population by selected country, 2021



1. Data for Japan were from the year 2020.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Agriculture, 2021 (3438); United States National Agricultural Statistics Service; and Japan's 2020 Census of Agriculture and Forestry.

Canada has a larger greenhouse area than the United Kingdom

The greenhouse sector has been the fastest expanding segment of horticulture in Canada.

Due to its enclosed environment, greenhouse farming is able to continue production throughout the year. In 2021, farms in Canada reported 330.5 million square feet of total greenhouse area. By comparison, farms in the United Kingdom reported 308.1 million square feet. Additionally, Canada had a larger greenhouse area per 1,000 population. In 2021, there was 8,934.4 square feet of greenhouse area per 1,000 population in Canada, compared with 4,516.6 square feet per 1,000 population in the United Kingdom.

Canada ranks first in pig and cattle per 1,000 population

The number of pigs the United States imported from Canada more than doubled from 2020 to 2021.

Against the backdrop of this increased demand, farms in Canada reported 393.8 pigs per 1,000 population in 2021, the largest number of the four countries being compared, followed by the United

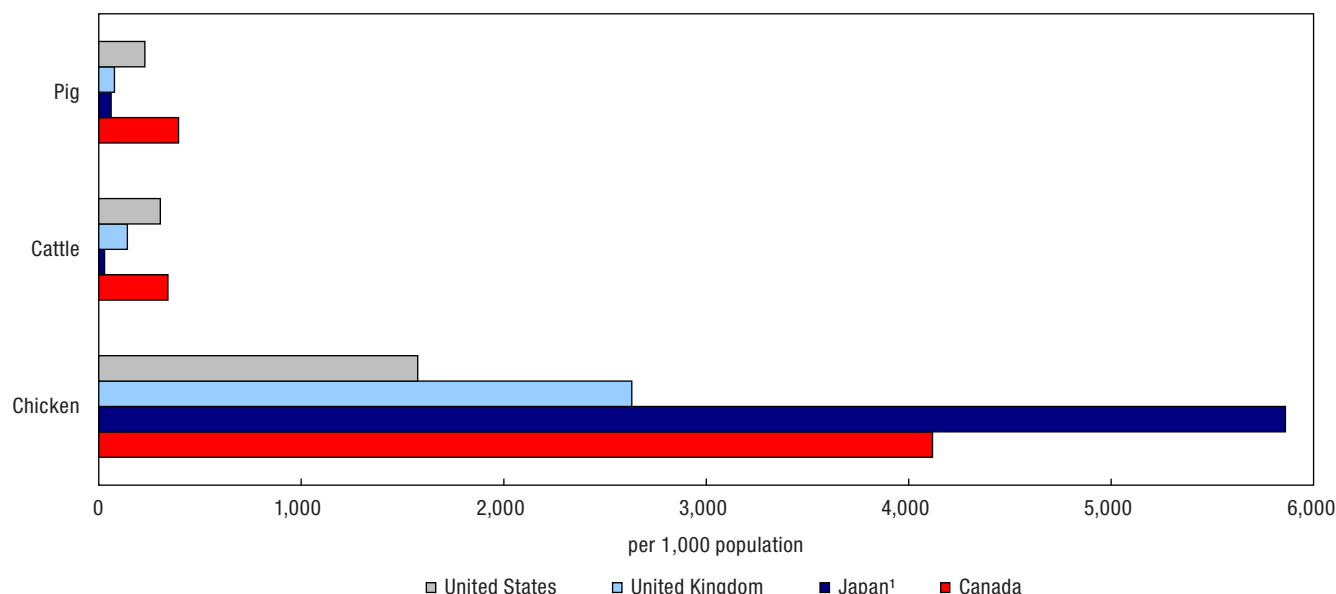
States (228.1 pigs), the United Kingdom (77.7 pigs) and Japan (61.5 pigs). In 2021, farms in Canada reported 14.6 million pigs. This inventory was larger than the inventories from Japan (7.7 million pigs) and the United Kingdom (5.3 million pigs) but was significantly smaller than the pig inventory from the United States (75.7 million pigs).

Cattle are another livestock commodity where Canada stood out. In 2021, farms in Canada reported 341.7 head of cattle per 1,000 population. This was followed by the United States (304.2 head), the United Kingdom (140.7 head) and Japan (28.7 head). In total, farms in Canada reported 12.6 million head of cattle in 2021. This inventory was larger than the inventories from the United Kingdom (9.6 million head) and Japan (3.6 million head) but was significantly smaller than the inventory from the United States (100.9 million head).

In 2021, farms in Canada reported the second highest number of chickens per 1,000 population (4,117.1 chickens), behind Japan (5,860.7 chickens). This was followed by the United Kingdom (2,632.2 chickens) and the United States (1,575.7 chickens). In 2021, farms in Canada reported 152.3 million chickens. This compared with 730.3 million chickens in Japan, 522.7 million chickens in the United States and 179.5 million chickens in the United Kingdom.

Chart 5

Livestock and chicken inventories per 1,000 population by selected country, 2021



¹ Data for Japan were from the year 2020.

Sources: Statistics Canada, Census of Agriculture, 2021 (3438); United States National Agricultural Statistics Service; United Kingdom's 2021 Census of Agriculture and Horticulture; and Japan's 2020 Census of Agriculture and Forestry.

In 2021, the United Kingdom was the leader among the four nations in sheep inventory, with 33.0 million sheep. This was followed by the United States (5.2 million sheep) and Canada (1.1 million sheep). The United Kingdom also led the group in the number of sheep per 1,000 population (483.8 sheep). This was followed by Canada (28.4 sheep) and the United States (15.6 sheep).

Canada leads the United States but still lags behind Japan in the proportion of farms reporting organic production

[In response to growing demand for organic products in Canada](#), Canada has been expanding its organic sector since 2016. In 2021, 5,658 farms reported organic products, up from 4,289 in 2016. Meanwhile, the proportion of farms reporting organic products increased from 2.2% in 2016 to 3.0% in 2021. This was higher than the proportion in the United States in 2017 (0.9%).

Despite an increase of nearly one-third (31.9%) in the number of farms reporting organic products from 2016 to 2021, Canada had a smaller percentage of its farms reporting organic products compared with Japan. In 2020, 6.4% of farms in Japan (69,309 farms) reported organic products.

Among all farms that reported organic products in Canada, over half (57.0%) were classified as oilseed and grain and other crop farms. Meanwhile, in the United States, farms classified as vegetable and melon and fruit and tree nut were the leading farm types, accounting for 18.8% and 18.7% of total farms reporting organic products in 2017. In Japan, over half (50.9%) of organic farms reported planting paddy rice, followed by vegetables (35.6%) in 2020.

[Japan and Canada have been trading partners in organic products for years](#), and their classification of organic products is standardized. This allows for some comparisons of organic production between these two countries.

The market value of farmland and buildings in Canada is higher than the United States on a per farm basis

On average, the market value of farmland and buildings in Canada was CAD\$3.2 million per farm, which was CAD\$1.2 million more than in the United States. Canada had a larger average farm area (809.4 acres per farm) than the United States (445.0 acres per farm). This may contribute to the higher market value of land per farm in Canada.

Farms in Canada reported CAD\$603.8 billion for the market value of land and buildings owned in 2021. By comparison, farms in the United States reported CAD\$3,996.7 billion in 2021, with the market value per farm at CAD\$2.0 million.

Canada has fewer farm operators per farm than the United States

On average, the United States had 1.7 farm operators per farm. This was more than the United Kingdom (1.4 operators per farm), Canada (1.4 operators per farm) and Japan (1.3 operators per farm).

Canada also had fewer farm operators. In 2021, 262,455 farm operators were reported in Canada. This was fewer than what was reported in the United States in 2017 (3.4 million), Japan in 2020 (1.4 million) and the United Kingdom in 2021 (301,000).

Canada has a smaller percentage of female farm operators than Japan and the United States

In 2020, 39.7% of Japan's farm operators were female, which was higher than the United States (36.1%) and Canada (30.4%). In 2021, there were 79,795 female farm operators in Canada. By comparison, there were 1.2 million female farm operators in the United States in 2017 and 540,894 female farm operators in Japan in 2020.

Canada's average farm operator is younger than the United States

In 2021, the average age of farm operators in Canada was 56.0 years. This was younger than what was reported in the United States in 2017 (57.5 years).

Moreover, the proportion of younger farm operators in Canada was slightly larger than in the United States. In 2021, farm operators under 35 years accounted for 8.6% of farm operators in Canada. By comparison, farm operators under 35 years accounted for 8.4% of farm operators in the United States in 2017.

Canada also had a smaller proportion of older farm operators. In 2021, farm operators 55 years and over accounted for 60.5% of farm operators in Canada, whereas farm operators 55 years and over accounted for 62.0% of farm operators in the United States in 2017.

Note to readers

Data for Canada came from the [2021 Census of Agriculture](#).

Data for Japan were extracted from the [2020 Census of Agriculture and Forestry](#), data for the United Kingdom were based on its [June 2021 Census of Agriculture and Horticulture](#), and data for the United States were constructed from the [National Agricultural Statistics Service](#) and their [2017 Census of Agriculture](#). Data were accessed on September 28, 2022.

Statistics reported in USD\$ were converted to CAD\$ on September 27, 2022

Canada's 2021 Census of Agriculture allowed for up to three farm operators to be reported, whereas Japan's 2020 Census of Agriculture and Forestry allowed for up to eight farm operators to be reported. The United States allowed up to four operators (producers) to be reported in its 2017 Census of Agriculture. Farm operator data in Japan include household members, owners and officials engaged in farming for at least 60 days.

The conceptual definition of a farm and a farm operator may vary between Canada, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The reference period for data collected from Japan is 2020.

Data for total farm area for fruits exclude berries in the United States and berries and nuts in Japan.

The United Kingdom's 2021 Census of Agriculture reported farm area for total arable crops, while Canada's 2021 Census of Agriculture reported farm area for field crops and hay.

The United Kingdom reported total vegetables and fruits together.

Total chicken numbers include only hens and broilers, and total cattle consists of dairy cows and beef cattle in Japan's 2020 Census of Agriculture and Forestry.

Definitions and concepts that apply only to Canada

Census Day was May 11, 2021.

A significant conceptual change to the main statistical unit used by Statistics Canada's Agriculture Statistics Program was introduced for the 2021 Census of Agriculture. A "farm" or an "agricultural holding" (i.e., the census farm) now refers to a unit that produces agricultural products and reports revenues or expenses for tax purposes to the Canada Revenue Agency. Before 2021, a "farm" was an agricultural operation that produced at least one agricultural product intended for sale.

National data presented in this article exclude data from Canada's three territories.

The Census of Agriculture is conducted every five years and is a census of all agricultural operations that produce agricultural products and report revenues or expenses for tax purposes to the Canada Revenue Agency. The following important concepts are used in this analysis:

Total farm area, which is land owned or operated by an agricultural operation, includes cropland, summer fallow, improved and unimproved pasture, woodlands and wetlands, and all other land (including idle land and land on which farm buildings are located).

Total farm area also includes the total area of land owned, leased, rented, crop-shared or used by this operation minus land area used by others.

Farm operator refers to any person responsible for the management decisions in operating a farm or an agricultural operation, and is also known as an agricultural operator, farmer, operator or rancher.