



Overview of Canada's Dairy Industry



Overview

The Canadian dairy sector operates under a supply management system based on planned domestic production, administered pricing and dairy product import controls. The dairy industry ranks second (based on farm cash receipts) in the Canadian agriculture sector ranking just behind red meats.

In addition to being world-renowned for their excellence, the Canadian milk and dairy products are recognized for their variety and high-quality. Enforcement of strict quality standards on dairy farms and in processing plants enhances this international reputation, along with a strong commitment to sound animal welfare practices and environmental sustainability.

The table below highlights some key features of the Canadian dairy industry:

2024 Highlights

Farm	
Total net farm cash receipts from dairying	\$8.88 billion
Dairy cattle population (dairy cows and heifers)	1.375 million head (July 1, 2024)
Number of dairy farms	9,256 (Aug. 1, 2024)
Milk production	96.61 million hl
Organic milk production	1.54 million hl (dairy year 2023/24)

Processing Sector	
Dairy manufacturing shipments	\$19.3 billion
Number of plants	549 dairy plants
Milk utilization	
Fluid milk	26.9 million hl
Industrial milk	69.60 million hl
Production of main products	Cheese (500.1 thousand tonnes) Yogurt (387.3 thousand tonnes) Hard ice cream (177.3 thousand litres) Butter (112.8 thousand tonnes) Skim milk powder (85.1 thousand tonnes)
Dairy product available per person (2023)	Fluid milk (64.8 litres) Cheese (22.3 kg) Cream (10.2 litres) Yogurt (9.8 litres) Butter (6.6 kg)
Dairy workforce Manufacturing sector (2024) Dairy farm operations (2021 Census of Agriculture)	28,830 jobs 16,665 jobs
Trade	
Dairy products	
Imports	\$1641.3 million
Main products imported	Cheese, butter, whey products and milk protein substances
Major suppliers	United States, Netherlands, New Zealand and United Kingdom
Exports	\$554.7 million
Main products exported	Whey products, skim milk powder, cheese, yogurt and products consisting of natural milk constituents
Major markets	United States, Australia, Netherlands and France
Dairy genetics	
Net exports (Bovine embryos, semen and live dairy cattle)	\$201.3 million
Net imports (Bovine embryos, semen and live dairy cattle)	\$16.4 million
Major markets for Canadian animal genetics	United States (Dairy cattle) United States, Brazil and Netherlands (Dairy semen) United States, Australia and United Kingdom (Embryos)