



# Canada's Agriculture, Food and Beverage INDUSTRY

## ● Canada's ● Buckwheat ● Industry

Buckwheat is one of the best sources of high-quality, easily digestible protein in the plant kingdom. It is also very high in carbohydrates as well as in numerous minerals and vitamins. This makes buckwheat an ideal ingredient for a wide range of food and non-food products. Buckwheat can either be milled into flour or processed into groats and grits. The groats and grits can be eaten roasted or plain, while the roasted groats may be used as a meat extender or as an ingredient in breakfast cereals and soups. In Japan, buckwheat flour is mixed with other varieties to produce "Soba" noodles, a traditional dish. In North America, buckwheat is also used in the chocolate bar and snack food industries.

Buckwheat is a well-established crop in Canada, and has been grown on the eastern prairies for the last 40 years. Value-added activities and secondary processing of buckwheat are on the rise. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada has focused its buckwheat research on determining the crop's functionality and devising an integrated preparation process to generate added value for the food and non-food sectors. The buckwheat industry - especially Mancan Genetics and Kade Research in Morden Manitoba - is currently working to develop uniquely Canadian frost-resistant buckwheat and a new variety with high starch content. These newer varieties are expected to join Canadian-developed AC Manisoba and Koban in replacing the traditional Mancan and Manor buckwheat varieties.

The first large-seeded buckwheat variety, Koto, is of interest to millers due to increased starch content and soft starch characteristics. Koto was released in 1998 and began to be commercially produced in Canada in the summer of 2000.

The pharmaceutical and nutraceutical industries are undertaking innovative research into the potential use of buckwheat for lowering cholesterol and fighting



diabetes. The crop's nectar is also used to make honey, and aspirated buckwheat hulls offer an interesting pillow stuffer alternative to consumers allergic to feathers, dust and pollen.

From 1996 to 1998, approximately one half of all Canadian buckwheat was used domestically. Since 1998, exports have exceeded domestic use. In 2001, despite poor weather affecting most of the crops in the Prairies, production remained steady at 14,000 tonnes. The poor weather continued in 2002 with production dropping to 12,000 tonnes and exports falling to 5,400 tonnes. However, this downward trend in exports is expected to be reversed in the long term as a result of new export opportunities and improved growing conditions.





## Additional information

Despite its name, buckwheat (*Fagopyrum esculentum*) is not a cereal grain, but a fruit or nut. This broad leaf plant includes 18 recognized natural species as well as two man-made species.

Japan is the largest export market for Canadian buckwheat, accounting for roughly 61 percent of total Canadian buckwheat exports in 2002. The next largest market is the United States, which imported approximately 36 per cent.

The International Symposium on Buckwheat is held every two years, bringing together leading international researchers, policy makers and scientists to improve research on cultivation, manufacturing techniques, processing and marketing.

## For more detailed information

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**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: <http://ats.agr.ca>.**

## Useful contacts

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Canada's food and beverage industry is recognized internationally as being among the best in the world, both in terms of ensuring food safety and quality, and in providing a trade friendly environment. Consumers are more aware of food security, safety and quality, and are demanding more information about how their food is produced. More than ever, consumers want to know that their food is safe and that it has been produced in an environmentally responsible manner.

Canada's objective is to be the world leader in food safety, innovation, and environmentally responsible production and to be the best at meeting the needs of consumers at home and abroad.