



# Canada's Agriculture, Food and Beverage INDUSTRY

## ● Canada's ● Canary Seed ● Industry

Canada is the world's number one producer and exporter of canary seed, a cool-season crop grown in Saskatchewan and other parts of western Canada. Native to southern Europe and the Middle East, this metre-tall grass is a major component of feed mixtures for caged and wild birds. Canary seed is currently used almost exclusively as birdseed.

Traditionally, the two registered canary seed varieties produced in Canada are Keet and Elias. However, Canada recently developed a new glabrous (hairless) kind of canary seed registered under the trademark Canario.

Canario is expected to replace traditional canary seed over the next few years, because it maintains the high protein of regular canary seed, while being less irritating to the skin during handling. This makes it the perfect option for birdseed processors and packagers. It will also further enhance Canada's competitive edge in the canary seed market by increasing the volume of seed per shipping container and elimination of the oiling and polishing steps in processing.

New Canario varieties are subject to strict quality standards. Based on commercial pedigreed seed standards, Canario varieties must be 97 per cent hairless in order to bear the Canario trademark, which is the processor's guarantee of purity.

As populations and incomes continue to grow, and as more and more people around the world are keeping birds as pets, the demand for canary seed looks strong.

Canadian researchers are exploring the possibility of extending the use of canary seed to human consumption. Because of its high protein, high oil and high unsaturated fat content, the seed has good potential as human food. It could be used in multigrain bread and in condiments, and has the potential as a fat substitute because of its high (84 per cent) unsaturated



edible oil content. In addition, canary seed has a high starch content making it suitable for some industrial uses, such as the cosmetics sector.

This penetration into human consumption and industrial use markets is expected to increase dramatically the demand for Canadian canary seed over the next decade.

### Additional information

Approximately 86 per cent of Canadian canary seed production is exported, mostly to Mexico, Belgium and Brazil.

Internationally, Canada accounts for about three quarters of the total world canary seed production. Saskatchewan is the source of approximately 85 per cent of total Canadian production, while Manitoba and Alberta produce the remainder of canary seed.





Due to bad weather conditions in 2001, canary seed harvested area decreased by 14 per cent from 2000, from 164,000 hectares to 140,000 hectares. Crop yield decreased by 36 per cent, from 1.04 tonnes per hectare in 2000 to 0.66 tonnes per hectare in 2001. Even with the lower production, in 2001 exports had increased by 5 per cent to reach 165,000 tonnes. Despite the persistence of bad weather conditions in 2002, the volume of production rebounded to 164 thousand tonnes, a 78 per cent increase over the previous year. This was largely the result of a 53 per cent increase in production area.

## For more detailed information

Julie Lalonde  
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada  
1341 Baseline Road, Tower 7  
Ottawa, Ontario  
Canada K1A 0C5  
Tel: (613) 759-6603  
Fax: (613) 759-6312  
Email: [lalondejp@agr.gc.ca](mailto:lalondejp@agr.gc.ca)

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

Canadian Special Crops Association  
1215-220 Portage Avenue  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
Canada R3C 0A5  
Web site: [www.specialcrops.mb.ca](http://www.specialcrops.mb.ca)  
Email: [office@specialcrops.mb.ca](mailto:office@specialcrops.mb.ca)  
Tel: (204) 925-3780/925-3781  
Fax: (204) 925-3785

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.