



Canada's Agriculture, Food and Beverage INDUSTRY

Canada's Forage Industry

Forages are any plants consumed by livestock. They include pasture and browse plants, baled hay, silage, alfalfa pellets and cubes, immature cereals, as well as grain residues. As well as being the basis of Canada's large livestock industry, forages are very important in soil conservation—they are used in crop rotation to improve soil structure and add nitrogen to the soil.

Throughout Canada, more than 26 million hectares are devoted annually for livestock grazing and forage production. Of this, about 16 million hectares are native pasture, 4 million hectares are tame or seeded pasture, and 6 million hectares are cultivated tame hay and fodder crops. In total, it is estimated that around 40 per cent of Canada's total farm area is allocated for grazing and growing forage crops.

Two forage processing industries, alfalfa dehydration and hay compaction, contribute to sustaining a dynamic and diverse forage sector in Canada. These industries are highly export oriented. Processed products include dehydrated alfalfa meal and pellets, sun-cured alfalfa pellets, alfalfa cubes and compressed bales of timothy, alfalfa or mixed hay.

Alfalfa is considered the queen of forage and is the most widely grown forage legume in Canada. Recognized around the world as premium forage for dairy cattle and horses, in Canada alfalfa is often grown as hay, in combination with grasses such as timothy or brome. It will grow under most conditions and, depending on the variety of alfalfa chosen, can be adapted to a host of climatic regions.

The Canadian alfalfa processing industry, also known as the dehydration industry, has gradually matured over the past four decades to become the world's



largest exporter of alfalfa pellets and the second-largest exporter of alfalfa cubes. The industry produces 350,000 tonnes of alfalfa pellets and 225,000 tonnes of alfalfa cubes annually.

Canada's compressed (or double-compressed) hay industry, first established in the mid-1980s, uses hydraulic pressure to compress field hay bales into bales less than half their original size. Access to irrigation and climatic conditions at the foothills of Canadian Rockies, and better access to the West Coast export terminals, make Alberta a choice location for hay production and processing activities. The industry has experienced significant growth in the last four years. The industry processes 260,000 tonnes of hay annually.

Additional information

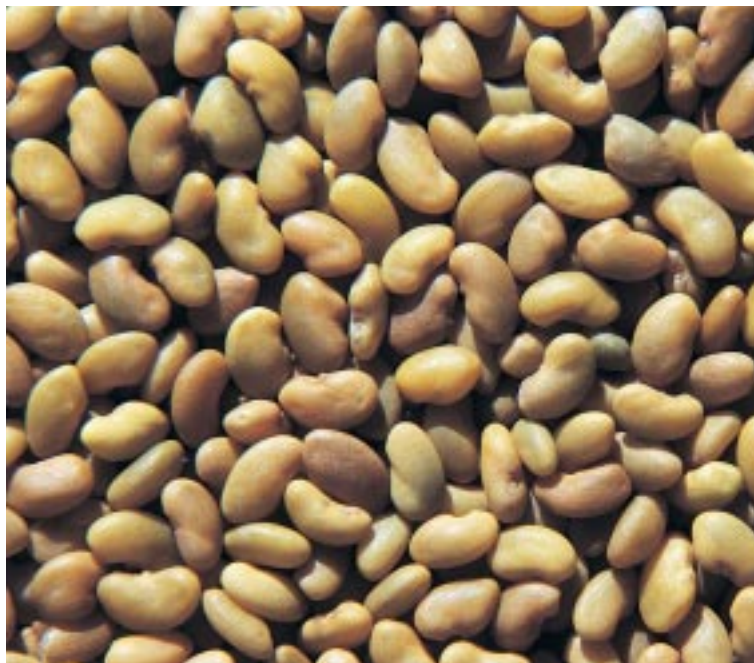
Most forage species are in the grass and legume families. The widely grown grass species in Canada include timothy, bromegrass and the fescues, while the main legume species include alfalfa and red clover.

Forage processing activities are concentrated in the Canadian Prairies, with some extending to Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick.

The forage processing industries are highly export oriented. The Canadian dehydration industry generates nearly \$100 million in exports, while the compressed hay industry generates \$86 million annually. Japan, South Korea, the United States and Taiwan are the primary markets for Canadian forage products.

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.