



Canada's Agriculture, Food and Beverage INDUSTRY

Canada's Fruit Industry

Canada is a world leader in producing, storing and processing a wide variety of fruits in innovative and environmentally responsible ways. Increased consumer awareness of the health benefits of eating fruits and vegetables has contributed to an increase in consumption in recent years.

There are approximately 16,000 fruit growers in Canada. Apples account for the largest production, followed by blueberries, tender fruits, grapes, cranberries, strawberries and raspberries. In 2002, Canada produced an estimated 677,900 tonnes of fruit, worth about \$517 million at the farm gate. Exports of fresh fruits reached \$194 million in 2002.

In 2002, Canada exported:

- 34,816 tonnes of frozen wild ("low-bush") blueberries, worth \$83.5 million;
- 9,352 tonnes of fresh cultivated ("high-bush") blueberries, worth \$42.6 million;
- 40,083 tonnes of cranberries, worth \$30.3 million; and
- 58,533 tonnes of fresh apples, worth \$52.1 million worth.

Apples are Canada's largest fruit crop, with an estimated 412,161 tonnes grown in 2002. Commercial apple production was worth an estimated \$166 million at the farm gate in 2002. About two thirds of Canada's apples were shipped fresh, while the rest went to processing markets for uses ranging from pressing for juices and ciders to peeling and slicing for the canning and baking industries.

Three provinces account for the majority of the fruit production in Canada. The apple production is concentrated mostly in Ontario, BC and Quebec; the berry and grape production in BC and Ontario and; the tree fruit production in Ontario and BC.



Canada is the world's largest producer of wild ("low-bush") blueberries, with 43,511 tonnes produced in 2002, worth almost \$42 million at the farm gate. Most fresh fruit is handpicked to reduce bruising. However, sour cherries, blueberries, grapes and cranberries are harvested mechanically.

As well, Canadian scientists continually develop and enhance technology such as plant breeding to maximize production. In the last decade, a number of new fruit varieties and production techniques have been adapted to the Canadian climate. For example, Vinifera grapes, used in wine making, are doing very well and, as a result, have created a boom in the Canadian wine industry. New varieties of peaches, cherries, blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, kiwis, blackberries, currants and gooseberries have also been developed through breeding programs.

Pesticide use in Canada is already significantly lower than in many countries, due in part to our climate. However, in response to consumer demand for reduced pesticide use, scientists are working to find alternative ways to control pests and diseases. More producers are using integrated pest management (IPM) programs, where pest populations are closely monitored and pesticides are precisely timed and applied to maximise effectiveness and minimise usage.

With international requirements becoming more devoted to on-farm food safety, fruit growers are developing integrated fruit production (IFP) guidelines for their production. IFP was developed in conjunction with other international guidelines such as EUREPGAP in Europe. IFP is defined as the economical production of high quality fruit which gives priority to ecologically sound methods, and minimizes the use of agricultural chemicals, thereby protecting the environment and human health.





Additional information

A number of fruits are native to Canada, including cranberries, blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, black raspberries, saskatoons and the labrusca grape.

Southern Ontario and southwest British Columbia have the longest growing seasons, with about 180 frost-free days per year. Regions of Quebec and the Maritimes also have significant fruit production despite having only about 120 frost-free days.

Fruit has a variety of end uses. They can be enjoyed fresh or processed for use as juice, sauces, wines, ciders, dried fruit or jams and jellies. Fruits can be dried, canned or frozen for preservation. Many are used by the bakery trade and ice cream and yogurt manufacturers.

The berry sector is encouraged by continuing research showing several health related benefits, particularly antioxidant activity common to the Vaccinium family of crops. Berries contain anthocyanins, a natural anti-oxidant claimed to be beneficial in fighting aging, heart disease and cancer. With practically no use of pesticides or chemical fertilizers during production, the wild blueberry production can be considered as “organic” and benefit from higher prices.

The Canadian fruit industry has adapted to Canada’s cool northern climate and short growing season. It has become a world leader in improving farm management and storage techniques. Canadian apples, for example, can be supplied virtually year-round using controlled atmosphere storage.

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>.

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.

