



Canada's Agriculture, Food and Beverage INDUSTRY

Canada's Organic Industry

Organic agriculture is a holistic system of production with a principle goal to develop productive enterprises that are sustainable and harmonious with the environment. Organic foods are produced without the use of chemical fertilisers or synthetic pesticides, processed without the use of irradiation, and are not derived through genetic engineering. Livestock are provided ethical animal husbandry that promotes good health and prevents disease.

Canada is an ideal country for producing organic food because of its large and varied land base and its cooler climate, which reduces pest and disease problems. Canadian farmers' support for the organic way of life is growing. For the first time, the Census of Agriculture in 2001 collected data on organic farms in Canada in which 2,230 producers, working on about 340,000 hectares of land, reported producing certified organic products, just under 1% of the total number of farms in Canada. There are 46 certifying

bodies, and 150 processors and distributors in Canada. Despite its small size, very few other sectors in Canada can claim the 20% annual growth in retail sales that this sector has demonstrated over the past ten years. Organic grain production is the fastest growing sector and also represents by far the largest export commodity.

Most of Canada's organic products are exported, primarily to the United States where much of it is processed and resold to other markets. Canada also exports organic products to the European Union and Japan. Worldwide sales of organic products are estimated at \$20 billion, mostly in the United States, European Union and Japan. The Canadian organic sector is positioning itself to increase and diversify its market share in these and other markets.

The National Standard of Canada for Organic Agriculture was published in June 1999 and is currently being revised to be adopted in the summer 2003. The Standards Council of Canada is an internationally recognized accreditation body that accredits organic certification bodies in Canada in accordance with International Standards Organization guidelines.





Additional information

- Regional organic farming organizations exist across Canada and a national grower organization, Canadian Organic Growers (COG), represents grower interests at a national level. The Canadian National Organic Coalition (CNOC), a coalition of mixed industry interests, was formed in 2002.
- The Organic Agriculture Centre for Canada was created in June 2001 to provide broad support for organic farmers and those in transition, through the development of new research programs, courses and deployment of effective methods for disseminating information.
- Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia are the main producing and exporting provinces.
- Approximately one in twenty fruit and vegetable farms in Canada consider themselves to be organic producers.
- Canada is among the top five world producers of organic grains and oilseeds, with an estimated retail/food service value between \$700 million and \$1 billion, including processed and non-processed products.
- Canadian organic retail sales growth is expected to increase 20 per cent a year to \$3.1 billion in 2005.
- The industry has as a goal to increase its market share to 10 per cent of the Canadian retail market by 2010.

According to COG:

- Farm cash receipts from this industry reached about \$500 million in 2000, representing about 1.0 to 1.5 per cent of agriculture's total farm cash receipts; and the number of certified producers increased 34 per cent between 1999 and 2000.

- Imports of organic products represent approximately 70 to 80% of Canada's consumption.

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 links

Canadian Organic Growers: www.cog.ca

Standards Council of Canada:
<http://www.scc.ca/certific/index.html>

Canadian General Standards Board:
<http://w3.pwgsc.gc.ca/cgsb>

Canadian Food Inspection Agency:
www.inspection.gc.ca

Education

Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada:
http://www.nsac.ns.ca/pas/staff/rma/Organic_Centre.htm

McGill University: www.eap.mcgill.ca

University of Guelph: www.uoguelph.ca

Centre d'agriculture biologique du Québec:
www.cab.qc.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.