



Canada's Agriculture, Food and Beverage INDUSTRY

● ● ● Canada's Pulse Industry

Pulses are dry seeds of legumes that are used as food or feed. They include peas, beans, lentils and chickpeas. Pulses are excellent sources of proteins, vitamins, minerals and other nutrients while being low in fat and high in fibre. Pulses were first cultivated in the Middle East, Central and South America, but their nutritious qualities and taste have led to their extensive use around the world. There is now a renewed interest in pulses in both developed and developing countries.

Canada is a large producer and exporter of agricultural commodities and products, with a comparative advantage over other pulse producing nations. It can grow high quality pulses at relatively low costs because the climate is favourable and farmers alternate high scale production of pulses with that of cereals,

using modern agricultural technology in reasonably priced farmland. In fact, Canadian farmers can grow more pulses relative to cereal yields than almost any country in the world. Canada's cool climate provides pulse crops with natural protection against insects and disease. In addition, there is a well established infrastructure to store and move grain and pulses from the producing regions to the port terminals.

Pulse seeded area in Canada has increased 3,500 per cent between 1980 and 2001, and production peaked in 2000 at 4.4 million tonnes. The forecast was that this expansion would continue at the same rate during the next five years. However, poor growing weather has stalled this growth. The year 2001 saw a fall to 3.5 million tonnes followed by 2.2 million tonnes of pulses being produced in 2002. The majority of the growth in this sector over the last 20 years can be attributed to international demand, as more than 70 per cent of the output is exported. The acceptance of these Canadian products is such that, during the last four



Image courtesy of Pulse Canada

years, pulses have been exported to 140 countries. Canada is now the world's largest exporter of lentils and peas, the third largest exporter of chickpeas and the fifth largest dry bean exporting nation.

The dramatic increase in demand for pulses is driven by several factors:

- Some country populations are growing at a pace that cannot be matched by the expansion of their own agricultural sectors.
- Globalization is allowing local producers to stop the cultivation of pulses for the domestic market if they can produce more profitable crops for exports.
- Weather patterns are changing and disturbing the expected agricultural output in some regions of the world.
- Health-conscious consumers in affluent markets are increasing their consumption of vegetal protein in their diet and pulses are the perfect fit for this purpose.
- Feed peas are used extensively as feed ingredient in Canada and the EU. Since feed ingredients formulated for cattle, swine, poultry and fish are under scrutiny because of their impact on the final meat product, feed peas are bound to take over a larger part of the international market.

Canada has taken a leadership role in innovative research and development in the pulse sector. Ongoing research and careful crop management have contributed to the high quality of Canadian crops. Importers have noted the willingness of the Canadian pulse industry to develop and produce new varieties in Canada in order to meet the taste of the international consumer.

In the absence of international standards, Canada has taken the lead in the development of terminology, protocols and standard evaluation methods for the worldwide pulse industry. Within Canada, the Canadian Grain Commission sets quality standards for pulse crops. Its programs result in shipments that consistently meet contract specifications for quality, safety and quantity. In 2001, the Commission launched a research program to grade lentils more effectively by using portable computerized image analysis technology.

Canada is also pursuing policies that will allow pulse producers to better meet their business needs while remaining market-oriented and globally competitive. These policies are integrating food safety, innovation and environmental responsibility.

Additional Information

Importers abroad can place their requests for Canadian pulses through the following Web site: www.pulsecanada.com

By completing an electronic order form, a request is quickly distributed to all Canadian pulse exporters members of the Canadian Special Crops Association. The list of members can be accessed at: www.specialcrops.mb.ca

For general information on Canadian pulses, please look at the following Web site: www.agr.gc.ca/misb/spcrops

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.