



Canada's Agriculture, Food and Beverage INDUSTRY



Canada's Potato Industry

Canada has a long history of supplying top quality table potatoes to customers and is widely recognized as an international leader in seed potato production. The Northern Vigor phenomenon makes seed potatoes grown in Canada very interesting for southern latitude countries. Canada is a world leader in producing, storing and processing a wide variety of potatoes in innovative and environmentally responsible ways.

The potato is the most valuable vegetable crop in Canada, accounting for 63% of all vegetable farm cash receipts or \$952 million in the 2002 calendar year.

The 2001 Census of Agriculture reported 3,887 potato farms and 169,475 hectares (ha) in potato production. Canada provides about 152 registered seed potato varieties.

In 2002, Canada's production reached 4.65 million metric tonnes (MT) and was concentrated in Prince Edward Island (28%), Manitoba (18%), Alberta (16%) and New Brunswick (15%). The Atlantic area is the leading region in Canada with 45% of production, followed by the Western region with 39% and the Central region with 16%.

In 2002, 747 production units were registered in the Canadian Seed Potato Certification Program on 32,702 ha. The top ten planted varieties were Russet Burbank, Shepody, Superior, Atlantic, Yukon Gold, Chieftain, Russet Norkotah, Kennebec, Ranger Russet and Norland.

Potatoes have a wide variety of uses: fresh, processed and snack food. Over 50% of potatoes grown in Canada are processed, mostly into French fries, and about 10 to 15% of the crop is utilised for chips and dehydration. Frozen French fry production was estimated at 1.08 million tonnes in 2001-2002. The annual rate of expansion has averaged 8% annually since 1990. The PEI dehydration plant has increased it's production substantially since opening in 1998.



During the 2001-2002 crop year, 140,000 tonnes of seed potatoes (or 78%) valued at \$52 million were exported mostly to the U.S., and 281,000 tonnes of table potatoes (or 97%) valued at \$127 million were also exported to the U.S. Finally, 738,000 tonnes of frozen French fries (or 88%) worth \$738 million were exported to the U.S.

Canada is second only to the Netherlands at 990,000 tonnes as the leading world French fry exporter.

From 1971 to 2001, Canada's consumption of potatoes (fresh equivalent) has increased slightly from 71 kg per capita (KPC) to 74 KPC, accounting for 51 % all fresh vegetables consumed. Consumption of French fries has dramatically increased over 25 years. This has been the result of the rapid growth of quick service restaurants, a busy lifestyle and new flavoured products.

Additional information

Northern Vigor is an established science. Plants grown at Northern locations - higher latitudes, colder soil, longer day length- produce progeny that have enhanced growth characteristics when grown in southern locations. Scientists say the long summer days in the north produce seed potatoes with more energy and vigor resulting in even crop development, higher yield and superior grades. This vigour carries over through several generations of seed.

Scientists are also introducing new varieties to Canada and maintaining a gene bank of distinctive potato varieties. Some of these varieties carry special genes for disease resistance and may contribute to the breeding of a new variety for the industry.



The avoidance of genetically engineered varieties by major processors and retailers in order to protect market share will continue in the short term until the public becomes more educated about the issue.

Potatoes are graded according to size, shape, maturity and relative freedom from soil, injuries, blemishes and disease. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's (AAFC) Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration is helping develop the potato industry on the Prairies. Growers are being assisted through the development of a record of past production, identification and mapping of suitable lands and available water supplies, location of potato storage sheds, and analysis of how water is currently delivered to the land.

Although pesticide use in Canada is significantly lower than in many other countries, due in part to our northern climate, the trend is to use less pesticides.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) inspectors across Canada monitor operations and take random samples from establishments to verify compliance with grade standards and safety regulations. CFIA also monitors incoming shipments of imported food products. Imported products must meet the same requirements for safety, quality, labelling and packaging as domestic products. Producers and packagers must conform to very specific regulations about labels they put on their products. CFIA inspectors ensure labels are honest and accurate.

Potatoes are used as ingredient with meats or in soups, salads and bakery products. They can also be mashed, hashed, minced, boiled or roasted.

Potatoes are processed mostly into French fries, chips, flakes or starch for use by textile, soap and paste companies. Other products derived from potatoes are sugar, for pharmaceutical preparations; and vinegar, alcohol, and wine for beverages.

It takes 2 to 2.5 kilograms potatoes to produce a kilogram of French fries.

It takes 5 to 6.5 kilograms potatoes to produce a kilogram of potato chips.

Potatoes are tuber vegetables that originated in South America. They are one of the most nutritious foods in the world, containing high amounts of carbohydrates, potassium, iron, protein, fiber, phosphorous, and vitamins B1, B6 and C.

Based on a 100-gram weight, potatoes are low in calories at 77, compared to rice and pasta with 138 and 129, respectively.

For more detailed information

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Useful links

Canadian Potato Production
www.statcan.ca:80/english/freepub/22-008-UIB/free.htm

Potatoes-Situation and Trends
www.agr.gc.ca/misb/hort/home_e.html

Canadian Food Inspection Agency - Potato Section
www.inspection.gc.ca

Infohort
www.agr.gc.ca/misb/infohort/infohort_e.html

N.B. Potato Agency, www.nbpa.nb.ca

Potato Growers of Alberta
www.albertapotatoes.ca/home/index.cfm

Prince Edward Island Potato Board
www.peipotato.org

Global Potato News
www.potatonews.com/default.asp

Canadian Horticultural Council www.hortcouncil.ca

Fédération des producteurs de pomme de terre du Québec
<http://www.fpptq.qc.ca> (available in french only)

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.