

## Canada's

### Agriculture, Food and Beverage INDUSTRY

## Canada's Buckwheat Industry

Buckwheat is one of nature's best sources of high-quality, easily digestible proteins. It is also high in carbohydrates as well as in numerous minerals and vitamins. This makes buckwheat an ideal ingredient for a wide range of food and non-food products. Buckwheat can be milled into flour or processed into groats and grits. The groats and grits can be eaten roasted or plain, while the roasted groats may be used as a meat extender or as an ingredient in breakfast cereals and soups.



Buckwheat is a well-established Canadian crop, and has been grown on the eastern prairies for the last 45 years. Value-added activities and secondary processing of

buckwheat are on the rise. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada has focused its buckwheat research on determining the crop's functionality and devising an integrated preparation process to generate added value for the food and non-food sectors. The buckwheat industry – especially Mancan Genetica and Kade Research in Morden Manitoba – is currently working to develop uniquely Canadian frost-resistant buckwheat and a new variety with high starch content. These newer varieties are expected to join Canadian-developed AC Manisoba and Koban in replacing the traditional Mancan and Manor buckwheat varieties.

The first large-seeded buckwheat variety, Koto, is of interest to millers due to increased starch content and soft starch characteristics. Koto was released in 1998 and commercial production began in Canada in the summer of 2000.

The versatility of buckwheat has led to its diverse use. The pharmaceutical and nutraceutical industries are undertaking innovative research into the potential use of buckwheat for lowering cholesterol and fighting diabetes. The crop's nectar is also used to make honey, and aspirated buckwheat hulls offer an interesting pillow stuffer alternative to customers allergic to feathers, dust and pollen.

In 2004-2005, Canadian buckwheat production dropped to 5,000 tonnes from 10,000 tonnes in 2003-2004<sup>2</sup>. This drop in production was due to poor weather conditions in Manitoba<sup>3</sup>.

A significant portion of Canadian buckwheat production is destined for export; in 2005, 4,300 tonnes of buckwheat valued at \$2 million were exported<sup>4</sup>. Japan is the largest export market for Canadian buckwheat, accounting for roughly 46 per cent of total Canadian buckwheat exports in 2005<sup>5</sup>. The next largest market is the United States, which imported approximately 37 per cent<sup>6</sup>.



In Japan, buckwheat flour is mixed with other varieties to produce “Soba” noodles, a traditional dish. In North America, buckwheat is also used in the chocolate bar and snack food industries.

### **Additional Information**

Despite its name, buckwheat (*Gagopyrum esculentum*) is not a cereal grain, but rather a fruit or nut. This broad leaf plant includes 18 recognized natural species as well as two man-made species.



The International Symposium on Buckwheat is held every two years, bringing together leading international researchers, policy makers and scientists to improve research on cultivation, manufacturing techniques, processing and marketing.

Through innovation and the development of new buckwheat varieties, the Canadian buckwheat industry is poised for continued success internationally.

### **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: [www.ats.agr.gc.ca](http://www.ats.agr.gc.ca)**

Canada's food and agricultural products reflect our dedication to excellence, and our deep commitment to safety, quality, environmental responsibility, innovation and service.

In every facet of our industry, we seek to earn the trust of our customers by answering their needs and exceeding their expectations. Those values along with our belief in building strong relationships, have given Canadian agriculture and food products an international reputation for excellence. Customers around the world know that they can trust the goodness of Canada.

