

## Canada's

### Agriculture, Food and Beverage INDUSTRY

## Canada's Forage Industry

Forages are any plants consumed by livestock. They include pasture and browse plants, baled hay, silage, alfalfa pellets and cubes, immature cereals, as well as grain residues. As well as being the basis of Canada's large livestock industry, forages are very important in soil conservation—they are used in crop rotation to improve soil structure and add nitrogen to the soil.



Most forage species are in the grass and legume families. Widely grown grass species in Canada include timothy, brome grass and the fescues, while the main legume species include alfalfa and red clover. In 2005, Canadian farm cash receipts for forage and turf seed totaled \$68.9 million, while receipts for hay totaled \$140 million. Farm sales only account for less than 10% of the tame hay production. The majority is consumed on-farm. Canada has the capacity to expand its forage production destined to export markets.

Alfalfa is the most widely grown forage legume in Canada. Recognized around the world as premium forage for dairy cattle and

horses, in Canada alfalfa is often grown as hay, in combination with grasses such as timothy or brome. It will grow under most conditions and, depending on the variety of alfalfa chosen, can be adapted to a host of climatic regions.

Two forage processing industries, alfalfa dehydration and hay compaction, contribute to sustaining a dynamic and diverse forage sector in Canada. These industries are highly export oriented. Processed products include dehydrated alfalfa meal and pellets, sun-cured alfalfa pellets, alfalfa cubes and compressed bales of timothy, alfalfa or mixed hay.

Forage processing activities are concentrated in the Canadian Prairies, with some extending to Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick

The Canadian alfalfa processing industry, also known as the dehydration industry, has gradually matured over the past four decades to become one of the world's largest exporters of alfalfa pellets and cubes. In 2005, Canada exported \$37.2 million in alfalfa meal and pellets, as well as \$15.4 million in alfalfa cubes. Top export markets for Canadian alfalfa include Japan, United States and Taiwan.

Canada's compressed (or double-compressed) hay industry, first established in the mid-1980s, uses hydraulic pressure to compress field hay bales into bales less than half their original size. Access to irrigation and climatic conditions at the foothills of Canadian Rockies, and better access to the West Coast export terminals, make Alberta a choice location for hay production and processing activities. The industry has experienced significant growth in recent years. Canada exported \$105.4 million in hay, the majority was timothy hay. Japan accounts for nearly 75% of Canada's hay exports.

## 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.

## Useful Contacts

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