



## Canada's

### Agriculture, Food and Beverage INDUSTRY

## Canada's Sunflower Seed Industry

Canada produces both confectionary and oilseed varieties of sunflower seed, and is a competitive partner in the growing international market for this special crop. Despite limited export volume, Canada exports more than half of its production. The hardy sunflower has a wide range of uses, from the confectionary and baking industries, to the birdseed industry, to the animal feed industry.



Sunflower seeds are highly nutritious. They contain almost every vitamin (except Vitamin C) and substantial amounts of key minerals, including magnesium, iron, copper and zinc. In addition, the protein content is very high, making sunflower seeds an ideal meat substitute. The confectionary variety is considered to be one of the healthiest snack foods available. Sunflower seeds, particularly the black oil type, are also the favourite of most seed-eating birds.

There is a growing market for Canadian-grown sunflower seed. Oil sunflower seeds are marketed primarily to the North American birdseed industry and include bulk shipments as well as cleaned and bagged product. Confection sunflower seeds are popular in Canada and in many countries of the Western hemisphere. Confectionary sunflower seeds fall into two categories: in shell or kernel. Larger sunflower seeds (in

shell) are roasted, salted and packaged for human consumption and are classified as either large or jumbo. Medium-sized seeds (kernel) are de-hulled and also packaged for human consumption. These are primarily used by the bakery industry, but are also traded domestically and exported. Smaller seeds, known as "striped birdfood," are sold in North American birdseed markets.

The black-shelled oilseed variety is richer in oil and therefore better suited to the production of sunflower oil. It is also used to produce ingredients for animal feed. Compared with other vegetable oils and animal fats, the oil in sunflower seed is very high in polyunsaturated fatty acids, making it easily digestible.

Because of deep tap root system, sunflowers are very adaptable and can be harvested even after an early snowfall, without reduction in quality. This adaptability makes them a viable alternative to grains in the southern parts of the Canadian Prairies.

Most sunflower research in Canada is done by the private sector, with some government research conducted in Brooks, Winnipeg and Morden in Manitoba. Research is focused on developing dwarf, short-season varieties such as Sunola™ which are well suited to the cooler farming climates of northern Canada.

With the development of higher-yield hybrid varieties, new herbicides and improved crop management techniques, the volume of sunflower seed production has grown considerably.

In 2005, Canadian sunflower seed production was 89,000 tonnes. This was a significant increase from 2004, when weather damage to crops resulted in production dropping to 54,400 tonnes. Sunflower seed production is expected to increase in 2006-2007 due to higher seeded area, lower abandonment and higher yields.



## Additional Information

The sunflower is an annual broadleaf plant that grows well in most regions of Canada, but flourishes in the southern portions of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. It is the only oilseed native to the northern Great Plains of North America and has been grown commercially in Canada since the early 1940s.



Canada is the thirteenth largest exporter and twenty-fifth largest producer of sunflower seeds in the world. The United States is by far the largest importer of Canadian sunflower seeds with 80 per cent of total Canadian exports (by value) in 2005.

The Canadian sunflower seed industry consistently strives to develop new approaches to growth and harvest, while looking for unique seed applications. With increased production forecasted, the industry is poised for continued success.

## For More Detailed Information

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## Other Links:

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Canada R0K 0V0  
Website: [www.canadasunflower.com](http://www.canadasunflower.com)  
Tel: (204) 822-9542

Canadian Special Crops Association  
1215-220 Portage Avenue  
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Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada – Special Crops Section  
[www.agr.gc.ca/misb/spec/index\\_e.php?page=intro](http://www.agr.gc.ca/misb/spec/index_e.php?page=intro)

**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.