

## Agriculture on Prince Edward Island

May 2006

### General

Prince Edward Island is a great place to farm. Driving through the countryside, it is impossible not to admire the constantly changing landscape. With a total land area of 1.4 million acres, P.E.I. has approximately 646,000 acres cleared for farm use. Agriculture is very important to the rural way of life with 5.8 percent of the population living on farms compared with 3 percent in the rest of Canada. The latest census figures (2001) show that there are 1,845 farms with 4,000 individuals who were primarily engaged in growing crops and raising livestock. Prince Edward Island's total farm cash receipts were \$364 million in 2005. Potatoes alone contributed more than 52 percent of total farm cash receipts. Most operations are involved in the production of one or more of Prince Edward Island's major agricultural commodities: potatoes, dairy, hogs, beef, vegetables and small fruit crops.



### Agri-food Processing

Prince Edward Island has about 65 agri-food companies creating a strong agri-food processing industry. Food processing (both agriculture and fish) accounts for 66 percent of our manufacturing industry; this share raises to 78 per cent for value added. Primary agriculture and agri-food processing contributes 11 percent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) while the national average is 3.6 percent. The 2003 value of the products in the processing industry (including fish) was \$934 million.

### Major Agricultural Commodities

#### Potatoes

Potatoes represent Prince Edward Island's single largest agricultural commodity. In 2005 Island potato producers planted 95,500 acres of potatoes. Farm value of the potato crop is subject to large fluctuations; in the last five years values have ranged from 139.9 to 261 million dollars. Production in 2005 was 24 million hundredweights (cwt). The increase in potato acreage in the province during the past decade is a direct result of expansion in the processing industry. Processing accounts for approximately 60 percent of the crop. Prince Edward Island potatoes are processed into frozen potato products and chips. They are also supplied to the fresh table market in eastern Canada, the United States and overseas. Prince Edward Island seed potatoes are shipped within North America and to countries overseas.

#### Dairy

There are approximately 230 dairy farmers in the province. Dairy production has become highly specialized and mechanized, like other farming industries. Quality standards are very high with rigid inspection programs covering every phase from the health of the cow through to the finished product. The size of milk cow herds range in number from 20 to more than 250 with the average milking herd having 50 cows. Annual milk production exceeds 94 million liters, 15 percent is used to supply the fresh market and the balance is manufactured into butter, cheese, ice cream and other dairy products. Breeding stock is sold to dairy farms in other parts Canada, the United States and other countries around the world. Quota price was around \$ 32,000 per kg in March 2005.

## **Hogs**

There are approximately 130 hog farms producing 215,000 hogs annually that sell to Garden Province Meats in Charlottetown. Many hog farms have moved to confined housing with highly mechanized, temperature-controlled barns. A number of larger operations also produce quality disease free breeding stock to supply animals for local operations and for export as breeding stock.

## **Beef**

Beef production on Prince Edward Island accounts for 35 percent of all farms, greater than any other type of farming operation. The beef industry comprises two main sectors; cow-calf operations where calves are raised to the feeder stage and beef feedlots that purchase the feeders to finish for market. The average cow/calf herd is 25 cows. The larger feedlot operations are concentrated in the Kensington-Summerside area where their proximity to potato processing plants and large potato packing operations allows the feedlots to incorporate cull potatoes and potato by-products into the feed ration. A new beef processing plant recently opened in the Borden/Carleton area produces beef for the Maritime market.

## **Vegetables**

Vegetables are an important cash crop to many producers and are a source of fresh and processed product for consumers in Atlantic Canada. A core group of diversified growers produce a significant percentage of the fresh market vegetable acreage. Broccoli and cauliflower are processed at a local facility for off -Island markets, while carrots and brussel sprouts are shipped to off-Island processors. Rutabagas, carrots and cabbage are stored and sold throughout the year to local, national and international markets.

## **Fruit**

The main fruit crops are lowbush blueberries, cranberries, strawberries, raspberries and apples. Very small quantities of specialty fruits such as gooseberries and highbush blueberries are also grown. A number of cranberry bogs have been constructed and are now coming into production. The province also produces strawberry nursery stock that is sold primarily into the southern USA.

## **Organic Farming**

There are approximately 35 certified organic producers in the province who produce crops and/or raise livestock organically. Farmers can only label their products “certified organic” if they produce according to a national standard, pass an annual inspection and maintain an audit trail of their crop and livestock inputs. Certified organic produce can be purchased direct from a farmer, at a farmer’s markets or at local retailers.

## **Others**

There are other crops and livestock that are produced by a smaller number of farms including eggs, broilers, turkeys, sheep, honey, mushrooms, medicinal and culinary herbs.

For further information visit our website at [www.peifarm.ca](http://www.peifarm.ca) or phone **1 866 – PEIFARM** (734-3276)