



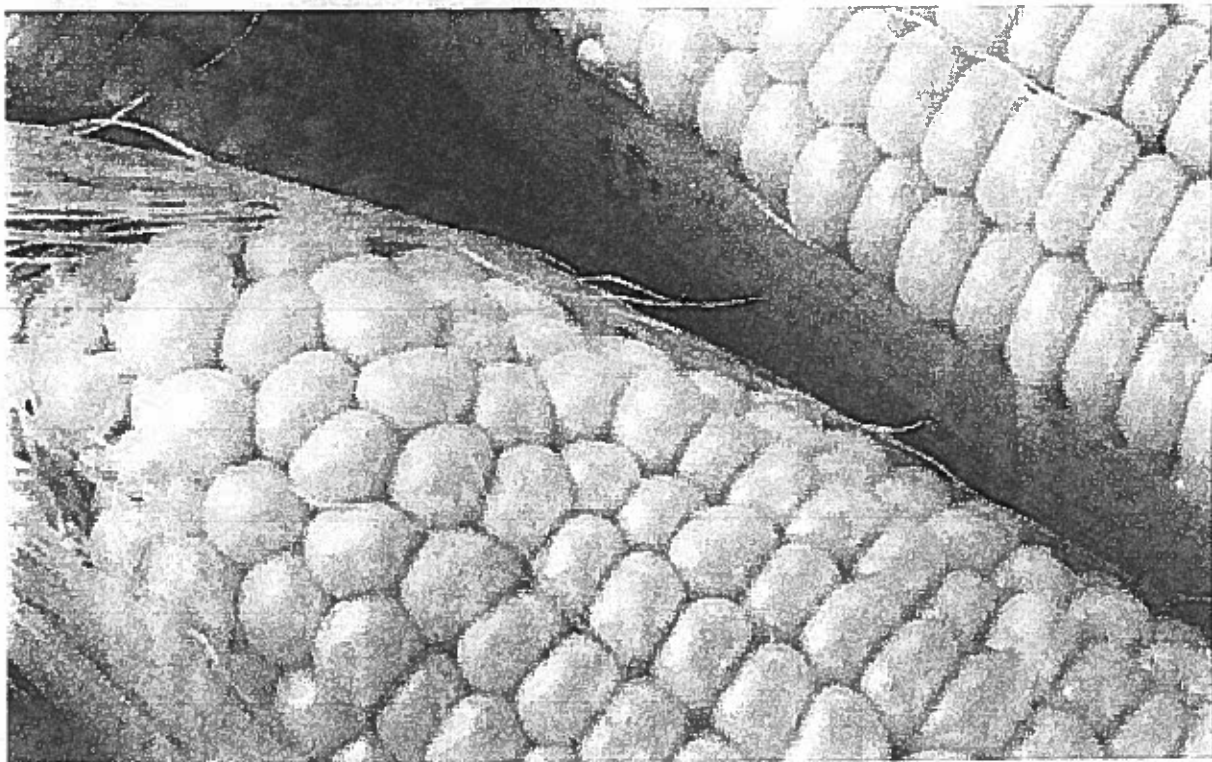
Canada's Vegetable Industry

Canada's varied climate has created unique opportunities for innovation and technological advances that are helping to ensure a ready supply of fresh vegetables year-round.

Those innovations include a thriving greenhouse sub-sector and some of the most advanced storage technologies in the world. Canadian researchers are also looking at ways to improve packaging that will help extend shelf life and expand markets. Plastics that allow air to circulate while retaining moisture are already in use, as is environmentally friendly packaging that is completely biodegradable in 14 days.

There are about 15,000 vegetable growers in Canada producing close to 7 million tonnes of vegetables worth \$2.4 billion at the farm gate in 2002. Twenty per cent of these growers supply an estimated 80 per cent of Canada's production. In 2002, greenhouse vegetable production was 350 thousand tonnes, worth almost \$610 million, a 20% increase over two years ago and almost two and a half times that of 5 years ago. Indoor production facilities across Canada ensured a regular supply of fresh mushrooms, producing 86,400 tonnes, valued at \$274 million.

Canadian producers continue to improve production, product quality and marketing efforts to remain competitive in world markets and to continue export growth. Canadian scientists are studying the potential for introducing new vegetable varieties to Canada with characteristics that address risks to production, enhance freshness, facilitate economic diversification and that are adapted to specific regional growing conditions.



The volume of exports of fresh vegetables (excluding potatoes) has grown 65 per cent from five years ago to reach 403,000 tonnes, mostly in greenhouse vegetables and mushrooms. Canada also exported about 421,000 tonnes of table and seed potatoes in 2001-2002 to markets around the world.

Potatoes, along with sweet corn and green peas, are the most extensively grown vegetables in Canada. About 4.6 million tonnes of potatoes were grown in 2002, more than half of them processed, mostly into french fries.

Other crops range from the native fiddleheads, wild garlic and rutabagas to the more common lettuce, onions, carrots, tomatoes and cabbage. Members of the cole crop family (broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, cabbage and kale) also grow well in Canada. And new types of oriental vegetables now grown in Canada—like pak choi, bok choi, nappa and Chinese broccoli—are becoming increasingly popular in retail markets.

The organic agriculture industry in Canada is also growing very rapidly, encouraged by consumer demand at home and abroad. There are currently 2,230 organic farmers with an estimated total certified acreage of 340,000 hectares, about 150 processors and handlers, and about 45 certifiers, many with accreditation from various foreign bodies. About 1.6 per cent of the commercial vegetable area under cultivation in Canada produces organic vegetables. Government and industry are currently working to revise the national organic standard to make it the best in the world.

Pesticide use in Canada is significantly lower than in many other countries, due in part to our cooler northern climate, and Canadian producers are using integrated pest management programs under which pest populations are monitored and the use of pesticides is precisely timed to maximize effect and minimize use.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) monitors Canada's vegetable industry, taking random samples from greenhouses and fresh vegetable establishments to verify compliance with grade standards and safety regulations. CFIA inspectors also check to see that producers and packagers conform to very specific product labelling regulations.

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: <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.

