



# Canada's Agriculture, Food and Beverage INDUSTRY



## Canada's Potato Industry

Canada has a long history of supplying top quality table potatoes to customers and is widely recognized as an international leader in seed potato production. The Northern Vigor phenomenon makes seed potatoes grown in Canada very interesting for southern latitude countries. Canada is a world leader in producing, storing and processing a wide variety of potatoes in innovative and environmentally responsible ways.

The potato is the most valuable vegetable crop in Canada, accounting for 63% of all vegetable farm cash receipts or \$952 million in the 2002 calendar year.

The 2001 Census of Agriculture reported 3,887 potato farms and 169,475 hectares (ha) in potato production. Canada provides about 152 registered seed potato varieties.

In 2002, Canada's production reached 4.65 million metric tonnes (MT) and was concentrated in Prince Edward Island (28%), Manitoba (18%), Alberta (16%) and New Brunswick (15%). The Atlantic area is the leading region in Canada with 45% of production, followed by the Western region with 39% and the Central region with 16%.

In 2002, 747 production units were registered in the Canadian Seed Potato Certification Program on 32,702 ha. The top ten planted varieties were Russet Burbank, Shepody, Superior, Atlantic, Yukon Gold, Chieftain, Russet Norkotah, Kennebec, Ranger Russet and Norland.

Potatoes have a wide variety of uses: fresh, processed and snack food. Over 50% of potatoes grown in Canada are processed, mostly into French fries, and about 10 to 15% of the crop is utilised for chips and dehydration. Frozen French fry production was estimated at 1.08 million tonnes in 2001-2002. The annual rate of expansion has averaged 8% annually since 1990. The PEI dehydration plant has increased its production substantially since opening in 1998.



During the 2001-2002 crop year, 140,000 tonnes of seed potatoes (or 78%) valued at \$52 million were exported mostly to the U.S., and 281,000 tonnes of table potatoes (or 97%) valued at \$127 million were also exported to the U.S. Finally, 738,000 tonnes of frozen French fries (or 88%) worth \$738 million were exported to the U.S.

Canada is second only to the Netherlands at 990,000 tonnes as the leading world French fry exporter.

From 1971 to 2001, Canada's consumption of potatoes (fresh equivalent) has increased slightly from 71 kg per capita (KPC) to 74 KPC, accounting for 51 % all fresh vegetables consumed. Consumption of French fries has dramatically increased over 25 years. This has been the result of the rapid growth of quick service restaurants, a busy lifestyle and new flavoured products.

### Additional information

Northern Vigor is an established science. Plants grown at Northern locations - higher latitudes, colder soil, longer day length- produce progeny that have enhanced growth characteristics when grown in southern locations. Scientists say the long summer days in the north produce seed potatoes with more energy and vigor resulting in even crop development, higher yield and superior grades. This vigour carries over through several generations of seed.

Scientists are also introducing new varieties to Canada and maintaining a gene bank of distinctive potato varieties. Some of these varieties carry special genes for disease resistance and may contribute to the breeding of a new variety for the industry.



