

Farming Facts

Agriculture, including dairy farming, is the human activity of raising animals and growing crops for food and other products. The amount of land that is used for agriculture in Canada only makes up about seven percent of the actual land surface. The remaining 93 percent of land is not available for farming.

Canada's agricultural activities can be described as land-based. This means that physical land is necessary for farmers to work. Therefore, the climate, type of soil, and topography influence the type of farming that can take place.

Topography refers to the shape and features of the land. Dairy farming requires land. The land is used by dairy cows to live and graze on. It is also used to grow crops for feed.

Dairy farming starts with natural resources, as cows need land, soil, water, and sunlight to produce milk. When milk is transported to a dairy processing plant, it is made into many different products.

Dairy farming is a **primary industry**, as it depends directly on natural resources. Dairy farming uses these natural resources to raise cows that produce milk. Milk is an ingredient used to make many products.

Dairy processing adds value to Canada's natural resources because farmers use the land, soil, air, sun, and water to raise cows and provide milk to dairy processors. These dairy processors, in turn, make milk into a number of different products. There are many different types of jobs that are created by the dairy industry.

Dairy processing means that the dairy industry is also a secondary industry. A **secondary industry** uses materials or ingredients made by primary industries. Secondary industries change these materials or ingredients into products.

A dairy processing plant is an example of a secondary industry.

What do average dairy farms in Canada look like today?

- The average number of dairy cows in a farmer's herd has increased over time to 72.
- Canada had 12 965 dairy farms in 2011 with a total of about 1 400 000 cows.
- 81 percent of Canada's dairy farms are located in Quebec and Ontario.
- Most dairy farms are owned and operated by families.
- Work on a dairy farm occurs seven days a week for 12 months a year.
- Cows are milked two, and sometimes three, times a day.
- Many dairy farmers grow their own hay or other grains that are used to make some of the feed they give to their dairy cows.
- Dairy farmers recycle water and use manure to fertilize crops and help protect the soil.
- The sale of milk is usually the main source of income for the dairy farmer. Sometimes, however, the farmer also works at another job in his or her community.
- Most dairy farmers are in their mid-forties.
- An average dairy farmer employs three people full-time.
- Most dairy farmers now use automated milking systems and some use computers to feed and manage their dairy cows. This has changed from past times in which farmers hand-milked the cows by themselves.

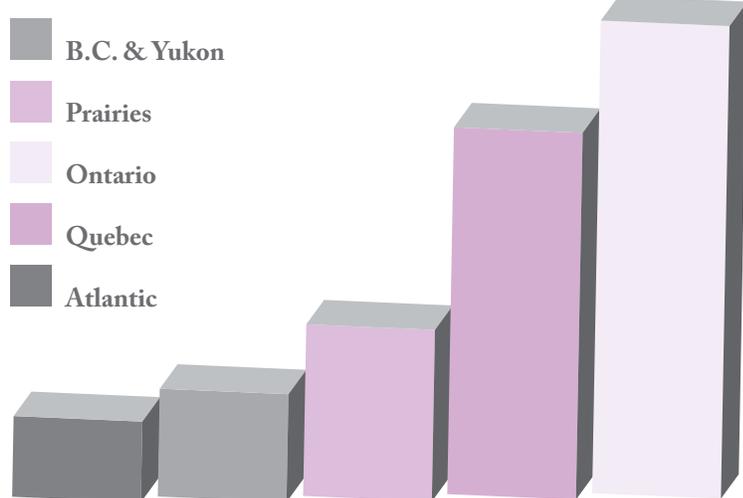
- Every two days, milk is picked up from farms by transport trucks and brought to milk processors.
- Dairy farmers sell their milk to a processing plant that is most likely owned by one of three large Canadian milk processing companies – Parmalat, Saputo, or Agropur.

The location of all the dairy farms in Canada is dependent on what is available in the environment. Therefore, dairy farmers must make sure they protect the resources that they depend on.

Dairy farmers work to limit the amount of energy and water they use. Water used to clean feed alleys in a barn is reused to irrigate fields. Manure is used to fertilize crops and conserve soil.

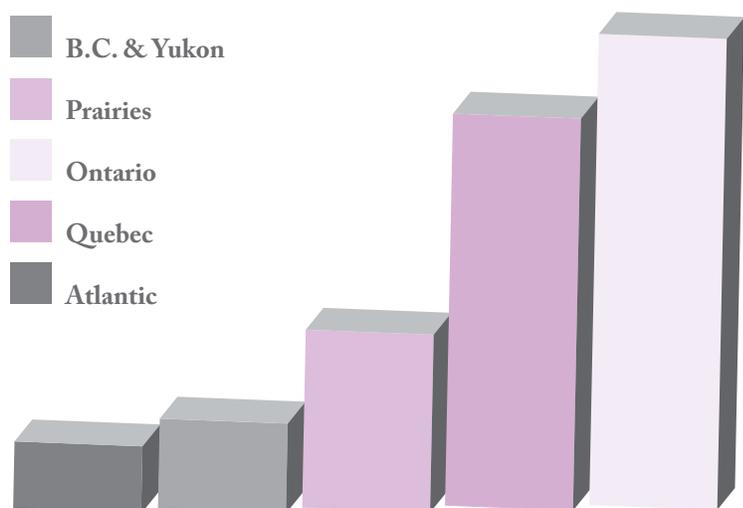
Dairy farmers also work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cows and farms. Cows produce methane during their digestion process. Manure emits methane and nitrous oxide. Dairy farmers have improved the type of feed used and increased production of milk. This has resulted in their ability to produce the same amount of milk with fewer cows. These changing and improved practices have helped to reduce greenhouse gas.

Number of Jobs in the Dairy Industry



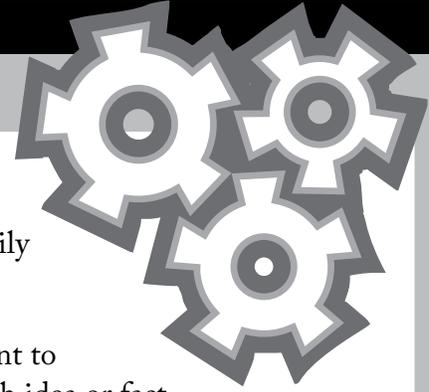
The dairy industry is important to Canada and includes both farms and milk processing plants. Many thousands of Canadians depend on the dairy industry to make a living.

Billions of Dollars Contributed by the Dairy Industry



Dairy farms in every province in Canada contribute to the Canadian economy. The dairy industry's **economic activity** refers to the total amount of money generated by the sale and production of milk and dairy products as well as jobs created in industries that provide goods and services to dairy farmers and milk processors.

Starting a Dairy Farm



Numbers and statistics can give us information about the sizes of farms and what and how much they produce. However, they can also help to build understandings about ways of life and daily responsibilities of dairy farmers.

What three ideas or facts do you think would be most important to consider for a family that wants to start a dairy farm? Rank each idea or fact below.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Why did you rank these ideas or facts this way?

If you could locate a family dairy farm anywhere in Canada, where would you locate it? Why?

What types of activities would you have to be prepared to do as a dairy farmer? Describe or sketch three different examples in the box below.

Extend your creativity! Create a sketch that shows what you think a “typical” Canadian dairy farm looks like. Use the information in this article to create your sketch.



Go to the *Dairy Drive Interactive App* in the **Dairy Drive** inquiry page or the **Game Corner** on the *Moo2You* website at www.moo2you.ca. Look at the Dairy Cows map. How would you describe where most of Canada’s dairy farms are located?

