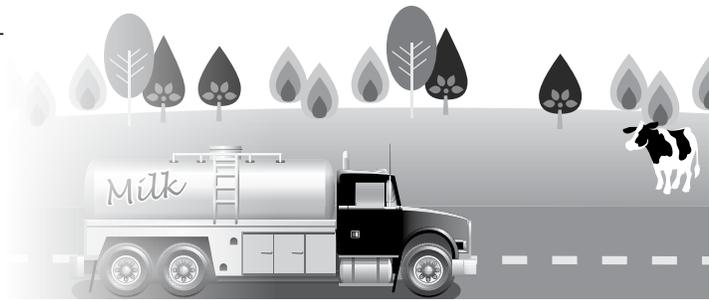


# Changes in Farming



## The Dairy Farming Industry

The total number of dairy farms has decreased over time. However, the size of the farms and the number of dairy cows on a farm has increased. Dairy farmers have learned to use technology and better farming methods to increase their production of milk.

Like dairy farms, the total number of all farms in Canada is decreasing. However, also like dairy farms, the average farm size has increased.

Technology allows farmers to produce the same amount of plants or animals with fewer people. These larger farms also mean that some rural people now live further away from an urban community. The average age of farmers has gone up. Fewer young people are involved with farming.

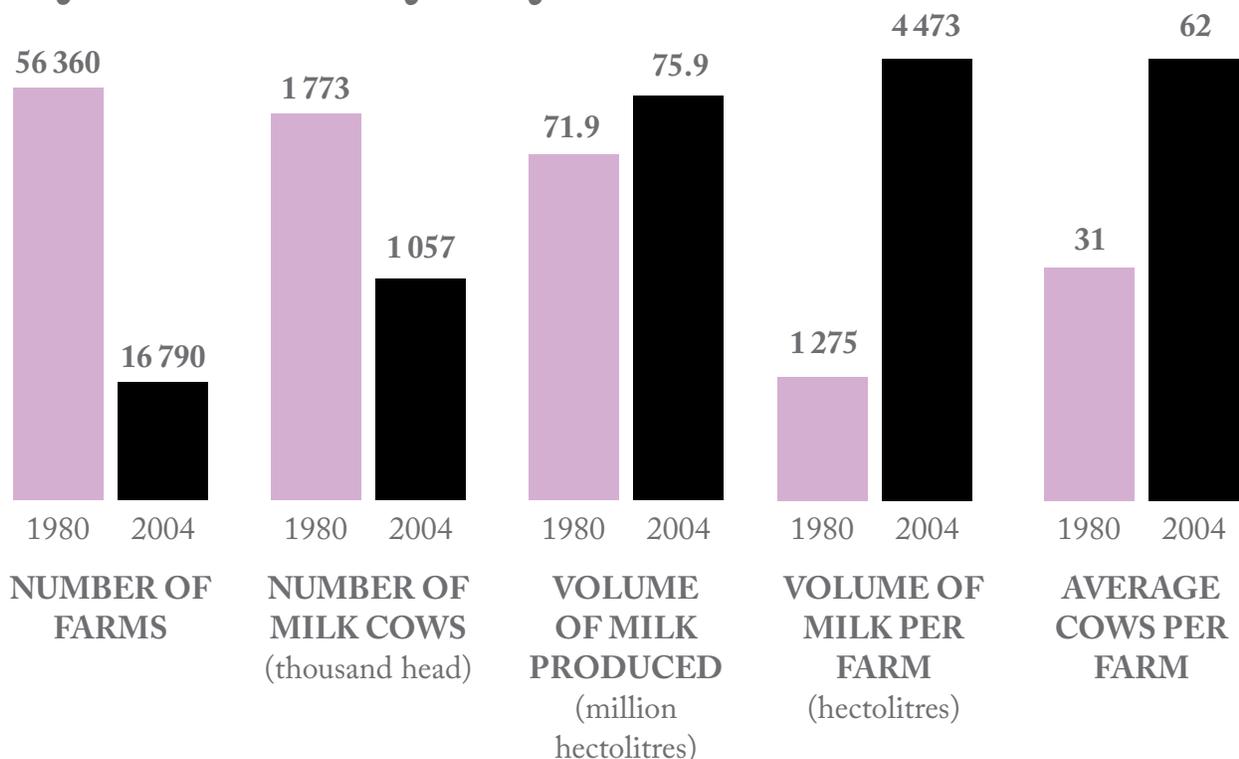
## Did You Know?

There are almost 230 000 farms in Canada that produce materials and products. These materials and products range from grains and oilseeds to vegetables, fruits, and animals.

In 1931, one out of every three Canadians lived on a farm. In 2006, one out of every 46 Canadians lived on a farm.

Farm families are getting smaller. In 1971, the average size of a farm family was 4.3 people. In 2006, the average size of a farm family was 3.1.

## Change in the Size of the Dairy Industry



## Technology on the Modern Farm

by Patricia Grotenhuis

“So many people seem to look back at the “good old days” as the way things should be now on farms. That would, however, put an end to the tremendous growth and development we have seen recently.

Technology is everywhere on the farm. GPS technology was used in tractors and for tracking soil types on farms long before it was common in vehicles. My parents have had a home computer to do tasks related to the farm for as long as I can remember. Radio Frequency Identification, or RFID, tags are used to track [animals] so that if there is a disease outbreak, recalls will be simpler.

Today’s modern farms are technology-dependent. And in many ways, [this technology helps] the farms become more environmentally conscious. It is true that today’s farms are dependent on fossil fuels...it would not be possible to feed as many people as we do otherwise. Farmers are trying to cut back on that reliance, though.

It is not just the farmers who have benefitted from advancements on the farm. Consumers can now enjoy products year-round that used to be seasonal, such as eggs. The environment has benefitted from farmers using new equipment and technology... Animals on the farm have benefitted from larger stalls, improved handling systems and technologies, like alarm systems, that alert the farmers when the power goes off.

There will always be a **nostalgia** [a good feeling when the past is remembered] associated with the farms of the past. When looking at the farms of today, though, we should take notice of the large advancements we have made in caring for the land and animals, and be proud of those changes. Just think of what the next generation or two of farmers can accomplish! ”

From *Let's Talk Farm Animals* website. [www.letstalkfarmanimals.ca/2012/03/09/technology-on-the-modern-farm/](http://www.letstalkfarmanimals.ca/2012/03/09/technology-on-the-modern-farm/)

## Dairy Products

Changing interests and “tastes” of people who buy dairy products have also resulted in change. Different types of dairy products, such as yogurt, frozen yogurt, flavoured milks, dairy desserts, gourmet ice cream flavours, and special cheeses, have become more popular over the past 20 years.

People are also increasingly concerned about health and nutritional value of the foods they eat. Organic dairy products, including fluid milk, are also becoming more popular.



## Population Change

Just as dairy farms have gone through change, Canada's population has also changed. The total population of Canada is increasing. More and more people are moving to cities and towns, which are becoming larger in size. Cities and towns now cover much of the land that was once used to farm.

## Farm Population

Canada's census data keeps track of the population of Canada. The census also records the population that lives on Canadian farms. Take a look at the chart below. What trends do you see?

	1921	1931	1941	1951	1956	1961	1966
Total population in Canada (x 100 000)	88	104	115	140	160	182	200
Farm population (x 100 000)		33	32	29	27	21	20

	1971	1976	1981	1986	1991	1996
Total population in Canada (x 100 000)	215	229	243	252	272	288
Farm population (x 100 000)	16	13	12	10	9	9

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What is the effect of fewer young people being involved in farming? Do you think this is a trend? Why or why not?

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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](http://www.moo2you.ca). Look at the Dairy Cows and Population Density maps. How does the location of dairy farms compare to Canada's population distribution?

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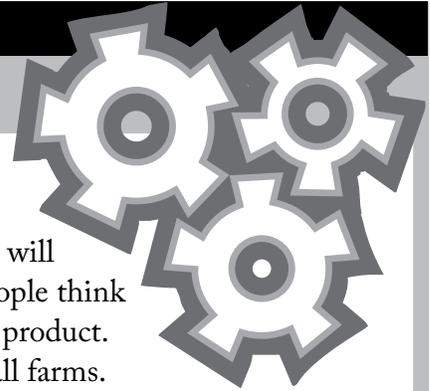
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## Researcher's Corner

### Exploring Change



The size of Canada's farms and its total population are going through similar changes – they are both increasing. However, there are still many small farms. Some people think these farms will be **amalgamated**, or combined to make a larger farm. Other people think that small farms can specialize successfully on a specific type of product. They think that Canada's future will include both large and small farms.

Find three examples of change from this article. List them in the **Cause and Effect Chart** below, or make your own. For each change, describe why you think it has occurred. Then, describe what you think the possible result of this change may be in the future.

Change	Cause	Effect

Do you think these three changes are true for communities in Alberta? Why do you think this?

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