

## Agriculture in Canada

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### Trends and highlights

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Farmers in Canada, as in other countries, felt the impact of inflation in 1975. Gross farm income and production costs were higher than they had ever been. Net farm income, at \$4.3 billion, was up \$900 million from 1974, but was expected to be down to about \$3 billion in 1976.

The Canada Department of Agriculture continued to develop policies and programs to stabilize farm income and to relate production to national and export demands. A long-range dairy policy tying producer returns to a formula based on the consumer price index and the cost of production was announced. New developments in the domestic feed grain policy were outlined including availability of domestic feed grains at corn-competitive prices, relocation of reserve stocks, modifications in feed freight assistance, and funding for programs to assist the feed and livestock industries. The changes were made to encourage increased livestock and feed grain production according to the natural potential of each region.

The Agricultural Stabilization Act was amended to increase price support levels for cattle, sheep and hogs; industrial milk and cream; corn and soybeans; and oats and barley marketed outside the jurisdiction of the Canadian Wheat Board. Prices of these commodities would be supported at not less than 90% of their average market prices of the past five years, adjusted for changes in production costs. In June and July 1976, new support prices were announced for corn, soybeans, carrots, pears, prune plums and lambs.

Purchase programs, deficiency payments or subsidies were provided during 1975 to support potato producers in the Maritimes, Quebec and Ontario; cherry growers in Ontario and British Columbia; apple growers in Nova Scotia; and processing-pear producers in Ontario.

Early in April 1976, under the federal Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Storage Construction Financial Assistance Program, agreements were signed with four producer groups for construction or renovation of fruit and vegetable storage facilities.

New crop varieties, better methods of detecting and controlling diseases and pests, new farming techniques, and a breakthrough in predetermining the sex of cattle embryos were among federal government research accomplishments of economic importance.

Studies by the Animal Pathology Division, Health of Animals Branch, led to development of a technique for collecting a 12- to 14-day embryo from a pedigreed cow, determining the sex of the embryo, and then transferring it into the uterus of a less valuable cow. The first calf to be presexed and transferred in this manner was born at Ottawa late in 1975. Veterinary scientists devised a new management system to reduce the incidence and severity of scours in beef herds in western Canada. An antigen was also developed to detect Aleutian disease which causes high losses in mink.

Four wheat, two barley, two oats and six new forage crop varieties were released by the Research Branch for commercial production, along with one variety each of rapeseed, sunflowers, soybeans, flax, potatoes and tomatoes. Early high-yielding corn hybrids, also developed by branch scientists, were released to the seed industry. Two varieties of strawberries, Totem in British Columbia and Bounty in Nova Scotia, were important new cultivars. A new ash tree, Fall Gold, selected for its superior autumn colour, was introduced in Manitoba.