

When drought struck Western Canada in spring and early summer, farmers took advantage of cultivation and irrigation practices researched by Agriculture Canada scientists to save what might have been a disastrous crop.

The 1977-78 dairy policy enabled the federal government to write off \$152 million in export sales debt. In all, the government contributed \$477 million toward the dairy program through the Canadian Dairy Commission.

New crop varieties licensed by the department included Coulter, a durum wheat; Saturn, a sunflower variety; Candle, a new rapeseed variety; and Norstar wheat.

During 1977 a new \$22 million agriculture centre at Lethbridge, Alta. was officially opened. The centre, with a floor area of 25 084 square metres, is shared by research and food production and marketing staff of the federal department and regional offices of the provincial agriculture department.

11.1.2 Agricultural regions

Climate, soil conditions and geography have combined to form several distinct farming regions in Canada. A harsh northern climate restricts most agriculture to the southern portion of the country and nearly all farms lie within 483 kilometres of the southern border. In the Atlantic provinces and Central Canada farming is limited to coastal regions and river valleys, and soils vary in depth and fertility. In the Prairie region soil is fertile but rain is light. Farming is limited to high plateaus and river valleys in the western mountainous region.

Farming is an important business in Canada. About 68.3 million hectares (168.8 million acres) in 10 provinces are cultivated; 44.1 million hectares (109.0 million acres) are improved land. In 1976, farm cash receipts exceeded \$9.9 billion and agricultural exports exceeded \$3.9 billion.

There are four main types of farms in Canada. Livestock farms include those specializing in feedlot finishing of cattle, large-scale feeding of hogs bought as weanlings, dairying, poultry production for meat and eggs, and breeding and raising livestock. Grain farms produce such crops as wheat, oats, flax and rapeseed. Special crop farms produce vegetables, fruits, potatoes or other root crops, tobacco or forest products. Other farms combine livestock and grain production. Although each region has its specialties, none is limited to one type of farming.

The Atlantic region. This area includes Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and the Gaspé district of Quebec. It is hilly, with a general covering of relatively fertile soil developed under forest cover. The climate is modified by the sea, but also affected by cold currents from the coast of Labrador and winds from the north. Precipitation averages 760 to 1 400 millimetres annually. Mixed farming is general and forage crops support a healthy livestock industry. Some small farmers combine fishing or lumbering with farming.

Nova Scotia's main agricultural areas surround the Bay of Fundy and Northumberland Strait where they are protected from Atlantic gales. Dairying and poultry production are common and beef farming is increasing. The Annapolis Valley is famous for fruit, particularly apples. New Brunswick produces potatoes and livestock in the Saint John River Valley and there is mixed farming in the northwest. More than a third of the commercial farms in the province are dairy farms.

Farming is the principal occupation on Prince Edward Island. Potatoes are the leading crop but the fertile land also supports mixed grains, dairying and other livestock enterprises. Small fruits and vegetables are produced.

In Newfoundland agriculture is of only local importance because of rough terrain. Bogland offers some potential for reclaiming and vegetable farming.

The central region. This lowland area bordering the St. Lawrence River includes the Ottawa Valley and extends through Southern Ontario to Lake Huron. Fertile soils, mostly formed by glacial drift and lake sediment developed under deciduous forest cover, and a mild climate modified by the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River, account for varied farming. Precipitation averages 760 to 1 140 mm a year. It is the most densely populated part of the country, providing large markets for farm produce.