

The Prairie region. Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta contain 75% of the farmland in Canada. Precipitation that averages only 330 to 510 mm a year and a climate of bitter winters and short hot summers favour the production of high quality hard red spring wheat, by far the largest single crop. Rangeland and pasture support a large number of cattle and livestock rearing in general is a major industry.

Manitoba has the highest rainfall of the three provinces and an average of 100 frost-free days, resulting in more varied farming. Wheat and other grains predominate but rapeseed is also grown, and there is mixed farming with an emphasis on livestock. Vegetables, sugar beets and sunflowers are grown south of Winnipeg and processed locally. Dairy farms are common around Winnipeg; hog production and sheep farms are widespread and beef cattle are raised in the southwest.

Saskatchewan grows about two-thirds of all Canada's wheat and large quantities of other grains, aided by light spring rainfall and long sunny days. Rapeseed is a popular crop and irrigation assists vegetable and forage crops. Mixed farming is common in the north where rainfall is higher, and turkey farming as well as egg and broiler chicken production are increasing. Hogs and beef cattle are gaining in importance.

Alberta is second to Saskatchewan in grain production but has more beef cattle than any other province. These are concentrated in large ranches in the south and in the Rocky Mountain foothills. Cattle-feeding operations are expanding and Alberta is a leading producer of hogs and sheep. Irrigation in the south aids in producing canning crops, sugar beets and forage crops. Dairy and poultry products are prominent in the mixed-farm economy. In the northwest the Peace River district produces grain and livestock.

The Pacific region. The most westerly region, British Columbia, is covered largely by mountains and forests. Only 2% of the area is agricultural. There is no single regional climate: the Pacific Coast has mild temperatures and high rainfall; the interior has moderate temperatures with parts as dry as the Prairies; and the central interior, although a little cooler, has fairly high precipitation. Farms tend to be small and highly productive and are concentrated in the south-central mainland and southern Vancouver Island.

Livestock and dairying account for the greatest part of BC's agricultural production. Hogs and beef cattle are raised on many farms, beef particularly in the central and southern interior areas. Dairying and poultry meat and egg production are concentrated in the lower Fraser Valley where the population is large. Mixed farming is scattered throughout BC.

British Columbia is Canada's largest producer of apples. The Okanagan Valley is also noted for tree fruits such as peaches, plums and cherries. Raspberries and strawberries are grown in the Fraser Valley and on Vancouver Island along with other horticultural crops — apricots, grapes, tomatoes, sweet corn and potatoes. The processing industry is well developed. Vancouver Island's mild climate also produces flowering bulbs.

The northern region. The agricultural region north of latitude 55° consists of parts of northern British Columbia, Yukon, and the Mackenzie River Valley in the Northwest Territories. Agricultural settlement is not encouraged by the harsh climate and small population. Precipitation varies from light in the northern Yukon to heavy on the mountainous coast of BC. Frosts can occur in any month, but crops grown on northern slopes escape some damage. The North is estimated to have 1.2 million hectares of potentially arable land and large expanses of grazing land, but there are probably fewer than 30 commercial farms in the region. Dairy products, beef cattle, forage crops, feed grains and vegetables are produced for the small local market.

11.1.3 Farm ownership and labour

Most farms in Canada are owned by the farmers who operate them, but as individual farms increase in size more land is being rented. Payment is usually cash or a share of crops or receipts.

Farm families provide most of the labour required, but experienced workers are often employed on dairy farms and seasonal workers are needed for harvests. In the