

dairy, poultry and egg, and specialty crop production are major contributors to Saskatchewan's agriculture economy. Irrigation is increasing and assists forage and vegetable crops.

Alberta, second to Saskatchewan in wheat production, is the major producer of feed grains and beef cattle. Alberta is also a leading producer of hogs and sheep. In the 1986 Census of agriculture, Alberta farms reported about 12.5 million hectares under cultivation by approximately 58,000 farmers. About 22% of this land was in wheat, 21% in barley, 5% in oilseed crops and 25% in cultivated forage crops. About 400 000 ha were under irrigation. In the Peace River district, north of latitude 55°, about 8,000 farmers produce wheat, barley, canola, grass and legume seed plus about 4% of the provincial livestock.

**The Pacific region.** Only 2% of British Columbia's land area is agricultural. Farms, mostly small and highly productive, are concentrated in the river valleys, the southwestern mainland and southern Vancouver Island.

Dairying and livestock, in that order, account for most of the agricultural production. Beef cattle are raised on many farms, particularly in the central and southern interior areas. Dairying and poultry meat and egg production are mainly in the lower Fraser Valley where the population is concentrated. Mixed farming is scattered throughout British Columbia.

British Columbia is Canada's largest apple producer. The Okanagan Valley, where most apples are grown, is also noted for peaches, plums, apricots, cherries and grapes. Raspberries and strawberries are grown in the Fraser Valley and on Vancouver Island along with other horticultural crops such as tomatoes, sweet corn and potatoes. Vancouver Island's mild climate also permits the production of flowering bulbs.

**The northern region.** The agricultural area north of latitude 57° consists of parts of northern British Columbia, Yukon, and the Mackenzie River Valley in the Northwest Territories. Commercial agriculture is not well developed because of the harsh climate and distance to markets. Precipitation varies from light in the northern Yukon to heavy on the mountainous coast of British Columbia. Frosts can occur in any month, but some crops can be grown on well-drained, south-facing slopes. The North is estimated to have 1.3 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 small local markets.

### 9.2.2 Farm ownership and labour

Most farms are owned by the operating farmers but as 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 but experienced workers are often employed on dairy farms, and seasonal workers for harvests. In the West, combine operators often move their machinery with the harvest, starting in the United States and moving into Canada later in the season. Potato harvesters follow the same pattern in the East.

### 9.2.3 Transportation

On November 14, 1983, the Crow's Nest Pass Agreement was replaced by the Western Grain Transportation Act. The act took effect on January 1, 1984. Among its many provisions, the act sets a limit on the level of freight rates paid by producers. Through amendments in April 1985, a freight rate ceiling was established in the act which guaranteed Prairie grain producers that their freight rate in 1986-87 would not exceed the 1984-85 level. Freight rates are determined by the Canadian Transport Commission (CTC). Railways will undertake an investment program to expand western railway capacity and expenditures for adequate branch line maintenance. Railways have been the traditional means of transporting agricultural products to large markets and ports. Trains move wheat and livestock to Canadian markets and to elevators in Vancouver, Prince Rupert, Churchill and Thunder Bay for shipment abroad. Bulky products such as sugar beets are usually shipped by rail.

Railways are still the dominant means of transportation on the Prairies. Branch line abandonment has been slow and modest since most lines are guaranteed to the year 2000. As an alternative to the railways (especially for short hauls), many farmers utilize the truck mode to get their produce to market. Eggs, poultry, cream, fruits and vegetables go to local markets by road, and milk is generally collected at farms by tank trucks. Commercial farms and co-operatives use trucks for marketing and distributing agricultural products and in delivering supplies.

Water routes supplement these means. The Great Lakes have long been used to ship grain from Thunder Bay to Eastern Canada. Since the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1959, the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence system has facilitated the movement of bulk commodities by intermediate-sized vessels for eventual export by ocean-going vessels. Churchill is a seasonal port for Prairie grains; Vancouver and Halifax are year-round ports.