

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 the Rocky Mountain foothills. Cattle-feeding operations are expanding and Alberta is a leading producer of swine 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 sector. 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 British Columbia's agricultural production. Swine 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 the province.

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. 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. The North is estimated to have 1.2 million hectares of potentially arable land and large expanses of grazing land. The number of commercial farms found here is low, however, their activity is centered on dairy products, beef cattle, forage crops, feed grains and vegetables.

The Challenge of the Future

Agriculture in Canada is facing its greatest challenge ever. The 20th century has seen more change in agriculture than any other period in history. During the first half of this century, mechanical technology significantly altered our methods of farming. From the early 1950s to the mid-80s, the use of chemical fertilizers and crop protectants brought even greater changes to agriculture. We are currently witnessing the beginning of the era of biotechnology. This period, which will continue into the next century, will have an unprecedented significance and effect on agriculture. As in the past, Canada continues to take a leadership role in the development of agriculture and agriculture-related industries. ■

