

same year, total agricultural bulk exports were \$11.9 billion, contributing in an important way to Canada's positive international trade balance.

Agriculture's main goal is the production of food for people. Given the growth of the world's population today, this goal has come to mean food security — assuring a safe and dependable food supply for all individuals, peoples, and nations. *Canada's Action Plan for Food Security* highlights the importance of agriculture in many of its priorities.

Canada's Action Plan for Food Security

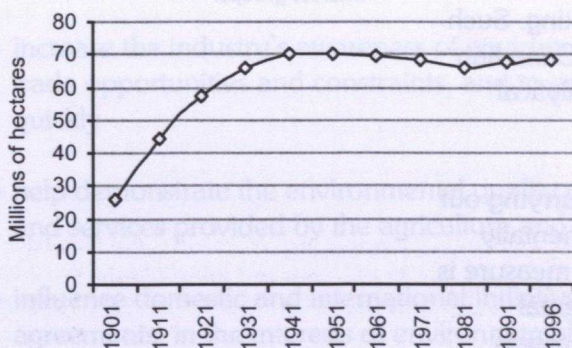
Canada's Action Plan for Food Security, prepared in response to the World Food Summit of 1996, has the following 10 priorities: the right to food, the reduction of poverty, promotion of access to safe and nutritious food, food safety, traditional food acquisition methods of Aboriginal and coastal communities, food production, emphasis on environmentally sustainable practices, fair trade, acknowledgement of peace as a precursor to food security, and a monitoring system for food security.

Working Toward Sustainable Agriculture

Canada is the second largest country in the world, but only 7 to 8 percent of its land base (about 68 million hectares) can be used for crop production. Only one-half of this area is considered prime agricultural land. During the past two decades, the total area of farmland (all land for crops, grazing and pasture, summerfallow, buildings and barnyards, bush, sloughs, marshes, etc., as defined by the Census of Agriculture) has remained relatively constant, while the area of cropland (land used to grow field crops, fruits, vegetables, nursery products, and sod) has increased. However, this seeming stability masks the continuing loss of prime farmland to urban development, which has encouraged the use of some environmentally sensitive lands for annual crop production.

With little prospect to develop new farmland, yet growing pressure to produce more food, it is essential that Canada carry out its agriculture sustainably. Taking an ecosystem approach to agriculture is the key to integrating the social, economic, and environmental components of

Area of farmland in Canada



Cultivated land as a share of total farmland in Canada

