

Alberta's electric power grid reaches all but the most remote areas of the province. Operated by private utility companies and municipalities, the grid transports electricity generated by hydro plants and by plants fuelled by coal and natural gas. The hydroelectric component of this grid is provided by several power plants on major Alberta rivers in the Rocky Mountains and Foot-hills.

While petroleum and natural gas have dominated Alberta energy for 25 years, the province's vast coal resources are once more the subject of intensive exploration and development. Extending under much of the southern and central plains region of the province and west into the Rocky Mountains, Alberta's coal deposits provide an abundant source of primary energy or, alternatively, a feedstock for synthetic fuels and petrochemicals.

Alberta's coal production exceeds 11 million tonnes a year, of which approximately 60 per cent is sub-bituminous coal used largely for thermal power generation, and 40 per cent high grade metallurgical coal for export, mainly to Japan. The remaining recoverable reserves of Alberta coal are conservatively estimated at 10 billion tonnes.

Among other mineral resources in Alberta are various construction minerals (limestone, clay, sand and gravel), salt, sulphur and iron ore.

Agriculture

Land is another of Alberta's important natural resources. Over 20 million hectares are used in crop and livestock production with approximately one-half classified as cultivated. It is estimated that another nine million hectares could be added to farmland inventory.

With this much prime agricultural land, it is not surprising that Alberta has developed a very productive agricultural economy, and the province produces 20 per cent of the total Canadian agricultural output. Export marketing of Alberta's agricultural products is of major importance because of the province's relatively small population.

To meet the challenges of world markets, Alberta farmers have been quick to diversify production. Rape-seed, for example, which was virtually unknown in Alberta 20 years ago, is now produced in excess of 20 million bushels.

Alberta-produced wheat, which is sold through the federal Canadian Wheat Board to more than 40 countries, is of the highest quality. Over two million hectares are devoted to wheat production, with total yield exceeding 183 million bushels. Three-quarters of this is exported.

Several thousand head of dairy and beef cattle, as well as several million dollars worth of semen, have been sold in many parts of the world by Alberta cattle producers. Alberta-