

**H**istorically, the Czech Republic has always been self-sufficient in agricultural production. Recently, however, it has begun to import some agri-food products to offset production problems, seasonal

products, liquors, juice concentrates, wild rice or rice mixes, smoked salmon or other fish products — provided they are priced to compete with European or Asian imports. Nearly 50% of all agri-food imports come

# Agriculture in the Czech Republic

shortages or unavailability of specialty products. In 1999, agri-food products accounted for 5.8% of all Czech imports.

Major commodities purchased from abroad were fruit and nuts (12.3% of agri-food imports), various prepared foods (10%), pet food (8.8%), tobacco and tobacco products (6.7%), fruit and vegetable products (5.7%), and cereal products (5.7%).

## Canadian exports

Given their very high quality, some traditional Canadian agri-food products have won market shares in the Czech Republic, or could do so. Examples are live beef and dairy cattle for breeding (especially Holstein, Hereford, Aberdeen-Angus, Charolais), frozen bovine semen and bovine embryos, breeding swine (Landrace, Duroc, Yorkshire), pulses (especially lentils and beans), frozen sea fish, pork or poultry (if health certificates are renegotiated), turkey eggs for hatching, etc.

According to Czech statistics, in 1999 the country imported agri-food products from Canada worth a total of \$17.4 million (436 million Korunas). The most successful Canadian commodities were lentils (8,933 tonnes) and beans (1,220 tonnes), dog and cat food (6,436 tonnes), and prepared food (value approximately \$4 million).

In addition to its traditional imports from Canada, the Czech Republic is a promising market for other agri-food products, such as unique specialty

from the European Union, while 20% come from developing countries and 20% from Central Europe.

## Background

Czech agriculture concentrates on grain production, devoting some 50% of arable land to this purpose, with the main crops being winter wheat and barley. In 1999, Czech farmers harvested 6.9 million tonnes of grain, 1.1 million tonnes of oilseeds (mainly rapeseed), 1.4 million tonnes of potatoes and 2.7 million tonnes of sugar beet. Czech grain production is efficient and usually meets all domestic demand for human/animal consumption in terms of both quality and quantity.

Export opportunities are now opening up for the country's top-quality cereals: wheat for human consumption and malt barley. Most of the rapeseed crop is industrially processed but nearly half is exported, mainly to EU markets.

Since 1991, consumption of food, alcohol and tobacco has declined steadily, and consumption patterns have changed significantly. The past decade saw falling consumption levels of meat, milk products and animal fats, with fruit and vegetables being consumed in growing quantities. The decline has been particularly heavy in consumption of meat, especially beef, butter, and milk and milk products. In contrast, Czechs consumed increasing quantities of vegetable fats, tropical fruit, vegetables and poultry.

## Useful Web sites

- Ministry of Agriculture: [www.mze.cz](http://www.mze.cz)
- Ministry of Industry and Trade: [www.czpi.cz](http://www.czpi.cz)
- Czech Agricultural and Food Inspection: [www.czpi.cz](http://www.czpi.cz)
- Czech State Veterinary Authority: [www.svs.cz](http://www.svs.cz)
- Ministry of Finance: [www.mfcr.cz](http://www.mfcr.cz)
- Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic: [www.hkcr.cz](http://www.hkcr.cz)
- Commercial Register, Ministry of Justice: [www.justice.cz](http://www.justice.cz)
- Czech Statistical Office: [www.czso.cz](http://www.czso.cz)

For more information, contact Iлона Boldova, Commercial Officer, Canadian Embassy, Prague, tel.: (011-420-2) 7210-1864, fax: (011-420-2) 7210-1894, e-mail: [ilona.boldova@dfait-maeci.gc.ca](mailto:ilona.boldova@dfait-maeci.gc.ca) ★

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countries: "Never forget that you're not talking with Canadians. Each country has different values, different work ethics and different operational requirements; you have to adapt your way to their needs."

He recommends Latin America as a natural market for Canadian companies. "Canadian companies are very well perceived there, and the way Latin Americans do business is not that different from the way North Americans do."

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