

2011 Census of Agriculture

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Thursday, May 10, 2012

The trend to consolidation and adaptation in the Canadian agricultural sector continued between 2006 and 2011 as the number of census farms declined and many farms expanded and consolidated their operations. The 2011 Census of Agriculture showed a shift away from livestock-based farms to crop-based farms. A full analysis is available in the analytical report, "A snapshot of Canadian agriculture."

The 2011 Census of Agriculture counted 205,730 census farms, a decline of 23,643 or 10.3% from 2006. At the same time, the number of farm operators fell by 33,135 or 10.1% to 293,925.

Farm numbers have been declining steadily since 1941. Between 2006 and 2011, the number fell in every province except Nova Scotia, where it rose 2.9%. The number of operators was down everywhere in Canada except Nova Scotia, where it increased 2.5%, and British Columbia, where it was up marginally.

Between 2006 and 2011, the average size of Canadian farms increased 6.9% from 728 acres to 778 acres. In Saskatchewan, the average farm size increased 15.1% to 1,668 acres, the largest increase in the country.

Production shifted as well. Crop production and beef farming have long been the backbone of Canadian agriculture, but the gap between the two has widened. In 2006, oilseed and grain farms accounted for 26.9% of all farms and beef farms accounted for 26.6%. By 2011, the share of oilseed and grain farms had increased to 30.0%, while the share of beef farms had declined to 18.2%.

Farm operators

Farm operators are getting older, an indication of the impact of the baby boom generation on agriculture. For the first time, operators in the 55 and over age group represented the largest share of total operators. They accounted for 48.3% in 2011 compared with 40.7% in 2006 and with 32.1% in 1991.

Farm operators under 35 represented 8.2% of the total in 2011, a decrease from 9.1% in 2006 and less than half the proportion of 19.9% two decades earlier. Those aged 35 to 54 accounted for 43.5% in 2011, down from 50.2% in 2006.

Financial snapshot

In 2010, the year prior to the census, gross farm receipts amounted to \$51.1 billion, up 3.9% (at 2010 constant prices) from 2005. This growth occurred primarily on larger farms.

For every dollar of receipts in 2010, Canadian farmers had an average of 83 cents in expenses (excluding depreciation), about 3 cents less than in 2005.

Farms with \$500,000 and over in gross farm receipts in 2010 accounted for 11.5% of all farms and 67.9% of the total gross farm receipts in Canada. In 2006, they represented 8.6% of farms and 60.1% of gross farm receipts.

In 2011, Canada had 9,602 farms that reported \$1 million or more in gross farm receipts, a 31.2% increase from 2006. These farms accounted for 4.7% of all farms and 49.1% of receipts, up from 3.2% and 42.8% respectively five years earlier.

Overall, the main farm type was oilseed and grain farms, which reported \$18.2 billion in gross farm receipts in 2010, up 49.5% from 2005. This farm type accounted for 35.7% of total receipts in 2010.

Beef farms came second with \$7.3 billion in gross farm receipts in 2010, 14.3% of the total.



Paid labour

For the first time, the Census of Agriculture asked operators for the number of paid employees working on their farms.

Just over one-third (34.0%) of farms reported paid labour. The 2011 Census of Agriculture counted 297,683 paid employees, of whom 37.6% or 112,059 worked year-round in a full or part-time capacity. A total of 185,624 or 62.4% were seasonal or temporary employees.

Work on and off the farm

Most farm operators continued to work more than 40 hours a week on the farm, although the proportion declined. In 2010, 4 out of 10 operators, or 40.1%, worked more than 40 hours a week on their farm operations, down from 46.7% in 2005.

Female operators were more likely to work part-time on the farm; 62.3% reported fewer than 30 hours a week on the farm, compared with 40.4% of male operators.

On the other hand, the majority of operators did not work off the farm; this was consistent for both males and females. In 2010, 46.9% of operators worked off the farm, down from 48.4% in 2005.

Agriculture: A quick glance at other trends

In 2011, canola area surpassed that of spring wheat, which lost its position as Canada's number one field crop. It was the fourth consecutive census in which spring wheat area fell. The area of canola reported was 19.4 million acres, a 55.9% increase from 2006, while spring wheat area fell by 10.0% to 16.9 million acres.

The number of certified organic operations increased 4.4% from 2006 to 3,713. They represented 1.8% of all farms in Canada, compared with 1.5% in 2006 and 0.9% in 2001.

For the first time, no-till practices accounted for more than half of all area prepared for seeding across the country. This shift was the result of a 23.8% increase in the area of land seeded using no-till practices. Overall, 17.1% more farms reported using this practice than in 2006.

The percentage of farms that were using the Internet for farm business increased from 34.9% in 2006 to 55.6% in 2011. In 2011, 44.8% of all farms reported having access to high-speed Internet.

Note to readers

For the purpose of the Census of Agriculture, a census farm (agricultural operation) is any operation that produces agricultural products with the intention of selling them.

This includes a variety of farms, from those operated by people who choose farming for lifestyle reasons, to those who farm for economic reasons, with or without off-farm work.

All data on farm receipts are for the year preceding the census. In the case of the 2011 Census, these data refer to 2010. All dollar figures are expressed in terms of their value in 2010. This is referred to in this release as "2010 constant prices."

This is the first data release from the 2011 Census of Agriculture. Selected historical farm and operator data will be released in December 2012. The Agriculture-National Household Survey linkage, scheduled for release in November 2013, provides a socio-economic profile of Canada's farm population, operators and their families.

Statistics Canada would like to thank the Canadian farming community for their participation and assistance in the 2011 Census of Agriculture.

Table 1
Number of farms, farm area, and average farm size by province, with percentage change since 2006, Canada and the provinces, 2011

	Farms		Area		Average farm size	
	2011	2006 to 2011	2011	2006 to 2011	2011	2006 to 2011
	number	% change	acres	% change	acres	% change
Canada	205,730	-10.3	160,155,748	-4.1	778	6.9
Newfoundland and Labrador	510	-8.6	77,349	-13.5	152	-5.0
Prince Edward Island	1,495	-12.1	594,324	-4.1	398	9.0
Nova Scotia	3,905	2.9	1,018,075	2.2	261	-0.4
New Brunswick	2,611	-5.9	937,829	-4.0	359	2.0
Quebec	29,437	-4.0	8,256,614	-3.5	280	0.4
Ontario	51,950	-9.2	12,668,236	-4.8	244	4.7
Manitoba	15,877	-16.7	18,023,472	-5.5	1,135	13.4
Saskatchewan	36,952	-16.6	61,628,148	-4.1	1,668	15.1
Alberta	43,234	-12.5	50,498,834	-3.1	1,168	10.7
British Columbia	19,759	-0.4	6,452,867	-7.9	327	-7.4

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 3438.

The analytical report, "[A snapshot of Canadian agriculture](#)" as well as [provincial highlights](#) are now available online.

The *Census Agricultural Regions Boundary File: Reference Guide*, 2011 Census of Agriculture (92-637-G, free), and the *Census Agricultural Regions Boundary File*, 2011 Census of Agriculture (92-637-X, free), are also available from the *Key resource* module of our website under *Publications*.

The *Farm and Farm Operator Data*, 2011 Census of Agriculture (95-640-X, free), is also available. It contains all farm and farm operator variables for 2011, where users can search data both by geography and by variable at the national, provincial and sub-provincial levels.

For more information, contact Statistics Canada's National Contact Centre (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 613-951-8116; infostats@statcan.gc.ca).

To enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Rosemary Villani (613-951-2889), Agriculture Division.