



farming EXPERIENCES

Farmers have learned to improve their farming practices with innovation and developing technologies. However, some aspects of farming are still similar to what it was like over a hundred years ago. Farmers still grow crops and raise animals. They pay attention to the weather and depend on natural resources. Farming families still work together to run their farms.

Farming has also gone through many changes. **Inventions**, which are new and unique processes or items, have caused some of these changes.

In dairy farming, the invention of milking machines and different ways of transporting milk, including with large insulated tanks, had an important impact on the amount of milk that a farmer could produce.

The invention of pipelines allowed farmers to connect milking machines directly to their **bulk tanks** – large storage tanks. All of these inventions and improvements have led to the ability to farm with larger herds.



Hauling Milk



Milk is transported from the farm to the processing plant in special stainless steel insulated tankers (big trucks).

The person who operates the truck isn't just a driver. They are the first to make sure the milk is of the highest standard before they pick it up. They have to be a certified milk grader and will not pick up milk that doesn't meet these standards. Once they give the milk the thumbs up, they go into the barn and secure a hose to the tank where the milk is kept and pump it into the truck.



Farm School



Tsawwassen Farm School is an educational program that is a collaboration between Kwantlen Polytechnic University and Tsawwassen First Nation. It is provided on Tsawwassen First Nation land. The program combines sustainable agriculture with traditional indigenous foods.

This program teaches young people about small-scale agriculture. The farm has a traditional medicine garden, a mixed fruit orchard, a market garden and farm animals, including chickens and pigs. **Market farms** grow fruit, vegetable and grain crops that they usually sell directly to people. Students learn farming practices that do not depend on expensive technology.

Kwantlen Polytechnic University. Tsawwassen Farm School Program. www.kpu.ca/tfnfarm

Some farmers depend more and more on technology to make a living on their farms. Some focus on the use of sustainable, organic practices that allow them to work directly with the land.

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How do you think organic and low tech farming can support the demand for more food? Why do you think this?



Dairy Farming A “Great Way of Life”

Life on a dairy farm in Alberta means long days filled with hard work, but Adrian Haeni loves both the challenges and the rewards. “I can’t imagine doing anything else,” says Haeni. “I love watching things grow. That’s the beauty of farming.” Haeni, his wife Vreni and their four boys live and work together on a farm, one hour north of Calgary. They have Jersey cattle, and also grow barley and hay. In addition, they breed Canadian horses, some of which are now being used by the Calgary Police Service.

For the Haeni’s four sons – Michael, 16, Sam, 14, Jonas, 12 and Nils, 10 – doing their daily chores on the farm has taught them many skills and life lessons. From helping with the milking, cleaning out pens, **bedding the cattle** [preparing rest areas that are packed with sand, straw or other bedding material] and doing work in the fields, every member of the family plays an important role.



“The boys are learning a lot about responsibility,” says their father. “We’re very proud of them. They are very involved in the whole operation of our farm.” All four boys take part in the local 4-H club, which is a program for young people that focuses on science and agriculture.

A typical day for Adrian and Vreni Haeni starts at 5:30 a.m., when they head down to the barn. After school and supper, the boys pitch in and help, and the day’s work typically ends around 8 p.m. “It takes a lot of work for us farmers to make sure we are keeping up to all the regulations [rules for animal care and milk production],” says Haeni, “but I’m glad because it benefits all of us.”

“It would be wonderful if more children could have the chance to learn what farming is all about. It’s a great way of life.”

Adapted with permission from *Calgary Stampede Aggie Days*. *Calgary Herald: A special information supplement*, 2010: p. 9.

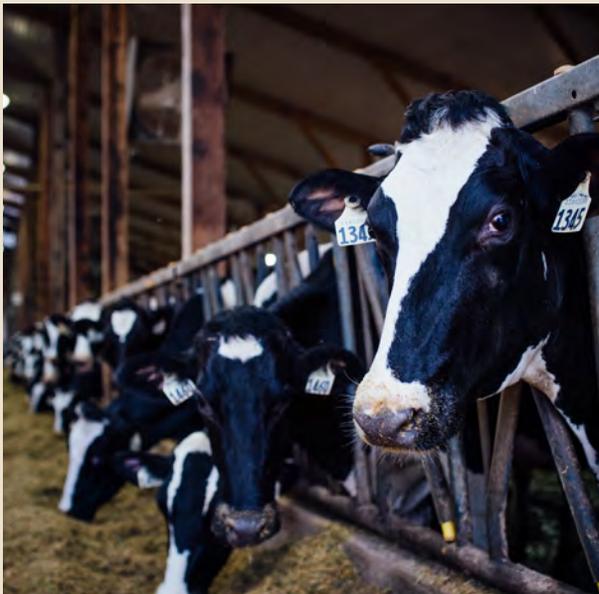


Farming in the Peace Country Has Its Challenges

When Phillippe and Emma Lavoie came to the Peace country from a small town in Quebec in 1953 with their nine children and seven Holsteins, they couldn't know the legacy [traditions handed down from one period of time to another] they had started to build.

The couple had worked in the dairy industry back east and settled near the hamlet [small village] of St. Isidore in northwestern Alberta. Son Richard Lavoie said the family had been drawn west by an organization promoting agricultural opportunities."

The family's dairy and grain operation expanded too and by 1994, the family was seriously considering construction of a new dairy complex. "The existing site had capacity for only 200 cows per day," recalls Lavoie. "We had reached capacity."



A year later, a new milking barn, seven kilometres from the original site, was underway. The new facility, with capacity for 500 cows a day, was completed by late 1995. "We did our first milking in the new facility in November, and were up to 250 cows per day that year," Lavoie says.

In 1999, the combination dairy and grain operation was separated, and the dairy operation is now known as Entreprises Lavoie 1999.

"A successful dairy producer has to maintain new technologies, such as computerized operations that include software programs to manage the herd," he says.

One of the challenges that dairy producers have is their distance to a market, a place where goods and services are bought and sold. "Our operation isn't close to the main area of Alberta dairy producers," says Lavoie. "We do a lot of marketing, or selling, of cows so if we were closer to market things would be a bit easier. But that's the way it is and we manage just fine."

On the positive side, the cost of land is an advantage in the Peace Country. But with the absence of irrigation systems in northern Alberta, Peace Country producers are much more weather dependent. "It's more of a challenge here when it's a dry year," Lavoie says. Entreprises Lavoie operates on a section of land and buys most of its feed. It works closely with the Lavoie grain company run by his brother.

Adapted with permission from Rebecca Dika, *Dairy Farming in the Peace Country Has Its Challenges*, 2010. AGCanada.com website at www.agcanada.com/Article.aspx?ID=25850.



Dairy Farming is a Cool Job

Jeff Nonay from Lakeside Dairy is a third-generation farmer near Edmonton. “The coolest thing about my job, and farming across the board, is that the same people that are making executive decisions in the morning and wearing the suits and ties are the same guys that are out in the afternoon with their sleeves rolled up and up to their eyeballs in manure or grease . . .”, says Jeff.

Technology on the Farm

Technology has impacted a lot on the farm. In fact, there are a lot of dairy farmers that check their cows from their phone!

“ . . . Technology allows us to do more with less,” Nonay explains. Lakeside takes technology one step further to make use out of what most would consider garbage and helps the environment out too. The farm uses drywall scraps and composts them on the farm.

Jobs that Help on the Farm

Most dairy farms have an animal **nutritionist**, **agronomist** and **veterinarian** that helps them make decisions on their farm. (These jobs are associated with many types of farms. An animal nutritionist is an expert on food and nutrition for animals. An agronomist is a scientist who works on ways to protect the soil and grow better crops. A veterinarian is an animal doctor.)

Family Farming, Local Products and Feeding the World

A common misconception is that the farms in Alberta and across Canada are a dying breed. This is false. Family farms are thriving, despite the farms getting bigger. On dairy farms, the average herd size in Alberta is about 125 cows.

A lot of what keeps the family farms flourishing in our nation derives from our marketing system, called supply management. **Supply management** means that milk – and other food products like chicken, eggs and turkeys – come from local farms across Canada. Farms only produce what Canadians need.



Consumers have a high impact on decision making on the farm. Many farms, like Lakeside, reach out into the community to welcome visitors to learn more about why they have a really cool job. As only 2 per cent of the population works in farming, Jeff values the relationship between those that make food and those that consume it; trust is very important.

Through the dairy, potatoes and meat operation on his farm, Lakeside Dairy farm is able to help feed the world.

“[Last year] our farm was able to feed about 13 000 people.”

A lot of the food that comes off his farm is feeding local people. The milk from his farm goes to Edmonton, less than an hour away to be processed and hits local shelves for Edmontonians to enjoy. Additionally, you can find meat from his farm at Darcy Meats in Edmonton as well. He goes on to say that even the french fries from McDonalds could have started from his potato operation.

“I think with farming, it’s in your blood,” says Jeff.

Find out more from Jeff in the **Being a Third Generation Dairy Farmer** video, found on the **Alberta Milk** website at <https://albertamilk.com/news/2017/01/video-third-generation-dairy-farmer/>.

Story originally from Alberta Milk. Infographic used with permission from Agriculture More Than Ever. www.agriculturemorethanever.ca/resources/



What is one way you think the jobs of the farmers in these stories may change ten years into the future? Why do you think this?

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