



SPARK questions about **agriculture** HISTORIES

project

**AGRICULTURE**

## How has **food** and **farming** changed over time?

Changes like urbanization and the growth of communities have influenced the way food is produced.

### the past influences the future

Past societies all around the world depended largely on hunting and gathering for food. Why did some people start to leave a hunting and gathering-based way of life for one that depended on farming? There are different factors that influenced changes in the way that food was obtained and produced. Some of these include:

- 🔥 Changes in climate in the past may have made it too cold or too dry to rely only on wild plants and animals as sources of food.
- 🔥 Growth in population may have created a higher demand for food than could be hunted and gathered. Farming could help provide more abundant food supplies and support denser populations. Farming also tied people to their land. Small settlements grew into towns and towns grew into cities.
- 🔥 Changing technology helped to make farming more efficient and resulted in increased food supplies.
- 🔥 Overhunting or extinction of animals took away some of the traditional foods that people relied on. In some cases, this was caused by factors like colonization, such as in the case of the bison of the western prairies. The establishment of reserves prevented traditional hunting as people could not migrate with the animals.



I will use information and **INVESTIGATE FURTHER** questions to help me identify a project question I want to investigate for an **agriculture HISTORIES** project.

I will identify what I need to know more about.



### INVESTIGATE FURTHER

Some people believe that hunting, gathering and farming can complement one another to provide a more varied and abundant food supply. What evidence of traditional and modern food production practices can be seen today? How can traditional food practices be combined with modern agriculture?

## farm demographics and identities have shifted

On May 10, 2017, Statistics Canada shared information about farms and farmers from the 2016 Census of Agriculture for Canada and the provinces. The chart provides statistics that showed increases and those that showed decreases for Alberta farm types.



### INVESTIGATE FURTHER

What factors influence changes that agriculture is going through today? How do these compare to factors that changed agriculture in the past?

Increases	Decreases	Summarize two of these statistics to describe a change and/or a challenge
In 2016, Alberta had the highest amount of cattle ranching farms in Canada with 12 693 farms, up 1.5 percent from 2011.	Alberta had 40 638 census farms in 2016, a 6 percent decline from 2011. Despite the decline, the province continued to rank second behind Ontario.	
The number of oilseed and grain farms increased 6 percent in 2016 to 13 451 farms, up from 12 692 farms in 2011.	However, oilseed (except soybean) farms decreased 28.8 per cent to 3,735.	
There are fewer farms, but farms are larger. The average area per farm increased from 779 acres in 2011 to 820 acres in 2016. The area dedicated to cropland rose 6.9 percent from 2011 to 2016.	Nationally, farm numbers fell 5.9 percent to 193 492. Farm numbers were down for all provinces. Alberta continued to account for 21 percent of farms in Canada.	
Alberta wheat farms increased 38.9 percent in 2016 to 2,894 farms. Alberta continued to rank second, behind Saskatchewan.	Alberta hay farms decreased 21.9 percent in 2016, from 7 799 farms in 2011 to 6 094 farms in 2016.	
Other grain farms in Alberta increased 19.7 percent to 6 211 in 2016, up from 5 191 in 2011. Other grain farming excludes wheat, corn, rice (except wild) and sweet corn.		

## More oilseed and grain increases

Oilseed and grain farms have been on the rise since 2006, and continued to represent the highest proportion of farms in Alberta. Alberta has the third most oilseed and grain farms in Canada, behind Saskatchewan and Ontario.

Alberta reported 2 894 wheat farms in 2016, a 38.9 percent increase from 2011 (2 083 farms). Alberta continued to record the second highest amount of wheat farms in Canada, behind Saskatchewan.

Other grain farms in Alberta increased 19.7 percent to 6 211 in 2016, up from 5 191 in 2011. Other grain farming includes:

- Feed grain
- Buckwheat
- Broomcorn
- Milo
- Oilseed and grain combination
- Other grain for fodder

However, “other grain” farming excludes:

- Wheat
- Corn
- Rice (except wild)
- Sweet corn

Dry pea and bean farms recorded the largest increase, with a 259.3 percent increase from 2011 (162 farms) to 2016 (582 farms).



### INVESTIGATE FURTHER

Statistics can sometimes be easier to interpret if they are put into a graph. Choose at least four of these statistics and create a bar graph that compares an increase or decrease between 2011 and 2016.

What understandings of change and challenges do statistics about farms and farming over time indicate?

Statistics from Government of Alberta (March, 2018). Census of Agriculture: Provincial Farm Types - Highlights. <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/8b3e6f0a-5faf-4873-a224-c7446029adcc/resource/e049ffdd-1bbe-4c25-a677-965291dc0633/download/alberta-farm-types-report.pdf>

## images of agriculture change over time

What do you picture when you think about farms and farmers? What about the food system? Farmers, hunters and gatherers are all involved in producing the food that everyone depends upon. They are part of the food system. The food system depends on the environment. That hasn't changed. However, the practices that farmers use and the challenges that they face has resulted in change.

Indigenous farmers today face a number of challenges. The land on reserves may not be suitable for farming because of its small size, poor soil conditions and the supply and quality of water. Like other farmers, they also must deal with the effects of climate change on the environment. Many of these challenges grew from the policies of the past, which established reserve land and restricted the types of crops that could be grown as well as the tools used to harvest them.



### INVESTIGATE FURTHER

How can changing roles and images in food and farming be connected to current issues and challenges?



### Indigenous Agriculture Goals and Challenges

Indigenous farmers today are involved in activities related to traditional practices like harvesting of berries, herbs, rice and plants and other non-timber forest products, tapping trees for maple syrup production and combining plants for traditional medicine, as well as fishing, hunting and trapping.

Ranching and farming that were adopted by some Indigenous farmers during the establishment of the treaties have expanded from early cattle ranching to bison and beekeeping.

Some Indigenous people are combining agriculture and agri-foods with tourism through farm-to-table businesses. They are setting up farm education attractions with interpretive sites and restaurants – such as Métis Crossing in Alberta – to ‘tell the story through food.’ Some also produce and package food products like gourmet maple syrups and wild rice.



Information and story from Canadian Agricultural Human Resources Council. Growing Security: Summary of Indigenous Agriculture and Agri-Foods Zoom Webinar Discussions May 19-22, 2020: p. 5. [https://cahrc-ccrha.ca/sites/default/files/REPORT-CAHRC%20Indigenous%20Agriculture%20and%20Agri%202020-June\\_ENG\\_FNL.pdf](https://cahrc-ccrha.ca/sites/default/files/REPORT-CAHRC%20Indigenous%20Agriculture%20and%20Agri%202020-June_ENG_FNL.pdf)



## Changing roles

The roles that farmers have on farms have also changed. For example, in 1996, women accounted for just over 25 percent of farmers. By 2016, that increased to almost 29 percent.

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### Remembering Ontario Farmerettes

When Canada went to war in 1914 and 1939, the loss of young men from farms and cities created widespread labour shortages even as the need for food and commodities increased to support Canada's population, troops and allies. Women had no problem stepping up to fill the gap.

In Ontario, the provincial government established the Farm Service Corps for girls 16 and older to provide farm labour; the corps existed 1914 – 1918. Their work, explained in a Department of Public Works brochure, included “picking, packing, and shipping, weeding, hoeing, cultivating, gathering vegetables, pruning, spraying and tying up vines.” The young workers were called “Farmerettes.”

In the Second World War, the Ontario Farm Service Force initiated the farmerette program in 1941 and invited girls to “lend a hand”; the program continued until 1953. Like the earlier program, girls were hired to work on farms from spring planting to the fall harvest. They lived in camps established by the YWCA, supervised by a camp mother. Some locations had tents, but others used high schools or empty motels. The girls were driven to and from the fields in whatever transportation was available—trucks, wagons or even makeshift car-truck combos.

The farmerettes worked up to 10 hours a day, earning 25 cents an hour. If they were picking fruit, they made 25 cents per six-quart basket, or if pruning tomatoes, 50 cents per 250-plant row. Room and board cost \$4.50 per week. In addition, tasks like weeding large plots of crop land, picking fields of corn and stooking wheat, they helped with meals and did their laundry by hand.



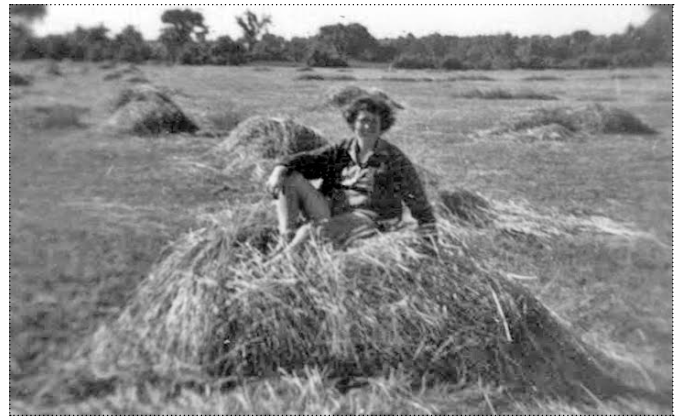
### INVESTIGATE FURTHER

What events have had the most impact on farming and food in Alberta and Canada over time?



Excerpted with permission from Remembering Ontario Farmerettes (November 2, 2021): Good in Every Grain: Online. <https://goodineverygrain.ca/2021/11/02/remembering-ontario-farmerettes/>

Today, long after those wars, women play a vital role in agriculture. They still do the work they've always done—working fields, birthing livestock, keeping the books and taking an active role in farm management. But they also produce and market products, raise livestock and apply the technology and mechanization that have made farm work less physical.



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**Alberta farmer's podcast on women in ag attracts a global audience**

Meet an Alberta farmer who started farming in 2016 and started a podcast called “The Rural Woman.”

[Katelyn] Duban...works with her husband's family on their certified organic grain, pulse and oilseed farm 20 minutes outside her hometown of Lethbridge. She started sharing her farming life on a blog (at [wildrosefarmer.com](http://wildrosefarmer.com)) before focusing mainly on “The Rural Woman” podcast and on Instagram (@wildrosefarmer).



She found guests by asking for suggestions from other women in agriculture, both ones she knew locally and ones she had met online.

“I just started from there, interviewing people that I knew and sharing their stories,” she said. “And then word of mouth got around that this was a podcast that was out and that was happening, and I started to reach out to people I found online.”

As her network grew, she began interviewing women from across the province, then around the continent and even overseas. The show has featured women working in different agricultural roles, including agronomists, soil scientists, ranchers, homesteaders and business people.

Duban also tries to highlight the varied jobs that exist in the agricultural industry.

“There are so many different opportunities out there in agriculture, besides being a farmer or a rancher,” she said. “I feel especially that the people from outside agriculture might not know all the opportunities that there are.



**INVESTIGATE FURTHER**

How have changes in communication and technology over time affected images and roles connected with farming and the food system?

Kienlen, A. (April 23, 2021) Alberta farmer's podcast on women in ag attracts a global audience: Alberta Farmer Express online. [www.albertafarmexpress.ca/heartland/alberta-farmers-podcast-on-women-in-ag-attracts-a-global-audience/](http://www.albertafarmexpress.ca/heartland/alberta-farmers-podcast-on-women-in-ag-attracts-a-global-audience/)

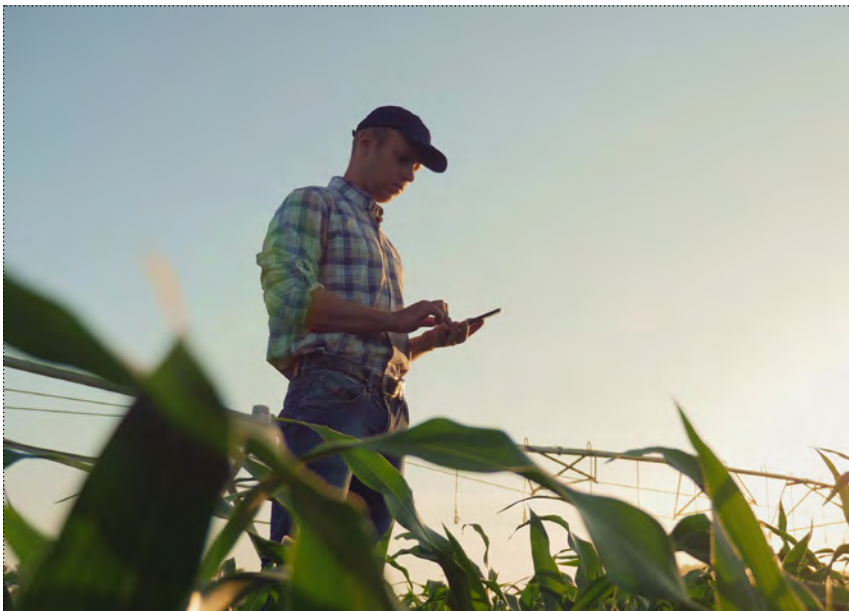
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## Zoom calls and online shopping: Life on Canadian farms in 2020

The pandemic has sped up the adoption of technology in the agricultural industry as farmers spend more time with digital tools and programs and less time having face-to-face meetings.

Just as most people have turned to online shopping this year because of the pandemic lockdown and spent much more of their work day on video calls, the same trends are happening on the farm.

[Tom] Senko, who grows grain and oilseeds on about 4,000 hectares, ordered much of his seed and other supplies online this year, for the first time, and he also started using Zoom and other video conferencing programs to communicate with experts if he has a problem with a particular weed or pest.



Farmers can now collect a variety of data about their crops on tablets and smartphones, including how much water is being used, the temperature and humidity levels and how well the crop is growing.

Bakx, K. (October 9, 2020). Zoom calls and online shopping: Life on Canadian farms in 2020: CBC online. [www.cbc.ca/news/business/ag-digital-tools-covid-1.5755738](http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/ag-digital-tools-covid-1.5755738)



### INVESTIGATE FURTHER

Some farms today sell their products directly to people. Gold Forest Grains, found online at [www.goldforestgrains.com](http://www.goldforestgrains.com), is an Alberta example. Farmers today also use social media - like Twitter - to connect more directly with each other.

How are the connections today between farmers and the people who depend on their products similar and different from the past?