



SPARK questions about **agriculture** HISTORIES

project

AGRICULTURE

## Why learn about **food** and **farm** challenges?

Agriculture and the food system have responded to challenges over time.

### change can provide opportunities and challenges

What are some familiar sayings or expressions that you are aware of that describe agriculture and food? To what extent do you think these sayings or expressions reflect farming and food today?

“,”

The Dean of the University of Alberta called the following statements clichés. A **cliche** is an expression or saying that is used so much that it doesn't really mean anything. What do **you** think these statements mean? Do you agree with them?

- 🔥 “Agriculture is a **legacy industry**.” (An activity that's been around for a long time)
- 🔥 “We need to feed nine billion people by 2050.”
- 🔥 “Food security isn't a **production** issue, it is a **distribution** problem.” (How it's made compared to how it's supplied)
- 🔥 “We need to invest in the industries of the future, not the past.”
- 🔥 “Amazing industry, but I hope my kid doesn't choose that as a **career option**.”

The Dean also shared the following statement. Would you consider this statement to be a cliché as well? Why or why not?

- 🔥 **Everything you think you know about agriculture is changing.**



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

What examples of change and challenges in agriculture can be investigated further?

Blade, S. (March 26, 2020). Five key issues facing Canada's agri-food industry. University of Alberta Folio: Online. [www.ualberta.ca/folio/2020/03/commentary-five-key-issues-facing-canadas-agri-food-industry.html](http://www.ualberta.ca/folio/2020/03/commentary-five-key-issues-facing-canadas-agri-food-industry.html)

## food choices are influenced by changes in agriculture

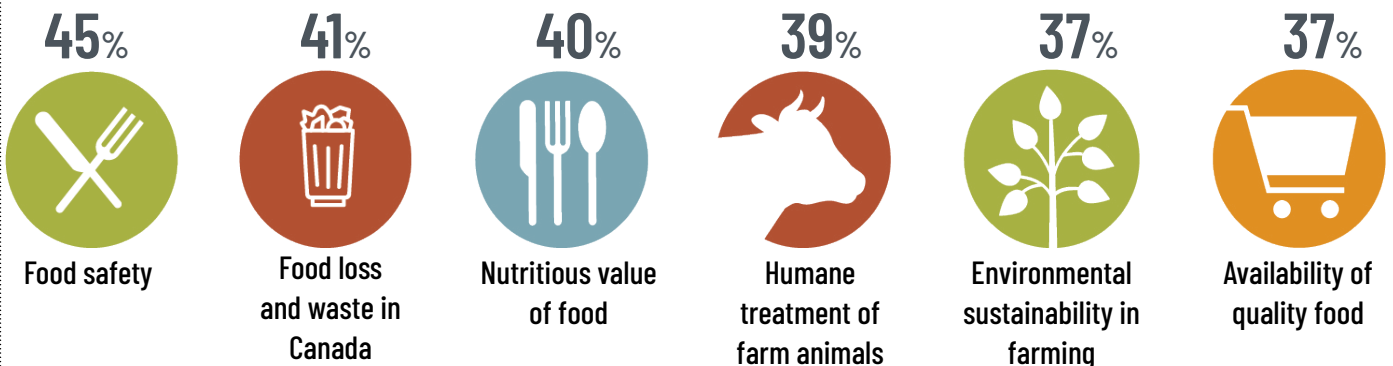
Canadians have been surveyed about what matters most to them in their food and about agriculture by the Canadian Centre for Food Integrity. The infographic that follows identifies what these surveys have found that Canadians are most concerned about when it comes to food – in addition to the cost of food, which was the biggest issue in 2020.



### INVESTIGATE FURTHER

How do images of agriculture from the past compare to images today? Why has agriculture changed over time?

## OTHER FARM AND FOOD ISSUES



Source: The Canadian Centre for Food Integrity (2020).

These concerns are part of what makes up our food system – the entire process involved in making food accessible to all people.

A **food system** includes how and where food is grown, and the inputs needed to grow the food.



**Inputs** refer to the many resources used in farming and food production – like seeds, livestock, soil and water, farm equipment and tools, irrigation systems, fertilizer and pesticides as well as human labour.

A food system also includes how food is processed and distributed and how it

is consumed. It also includes the waste that is created by all these activities.



### INVESTIGATE FURTHER

In what ways have perceptions about the food choices we have changed over time?



### INVESTIGATE FURTHER

What are the “roots” of our food system? Why do we choose to grow and produce the types of foods available today?

## urbanization over time affected the food system

**Urbanization** refers to the process in which more and more people come to live in cities as well as the expansion of urban boundaries to include areas that were previously rural. The percentage of people coming to live in cities compared to in rural areas continues to increase.

Agriculture was one of the most important factors when it came to the urbanization of Canada. As people made permanent settlements to grow crops and raise animals, communities formed. Some of these communities continued to grow into cities.

Agriculture has also been greatly affected **by** urbanization. In the last 55 years, the population of Alberta has grown by almost four times. And since the 1950s, more and more land has been used by industries, towns and cities and the development of roads and services that are needed to support them.

Edmonton and Calgary – and the corridor between these two cities – have both grown and expanded. About 60 percent of urban expansion took place on agricultural land. Most of this land was highly suitable for farming. This resulted in land with poorer quality soils being the only choice for farming.



### INVESTIGATE FURTHER

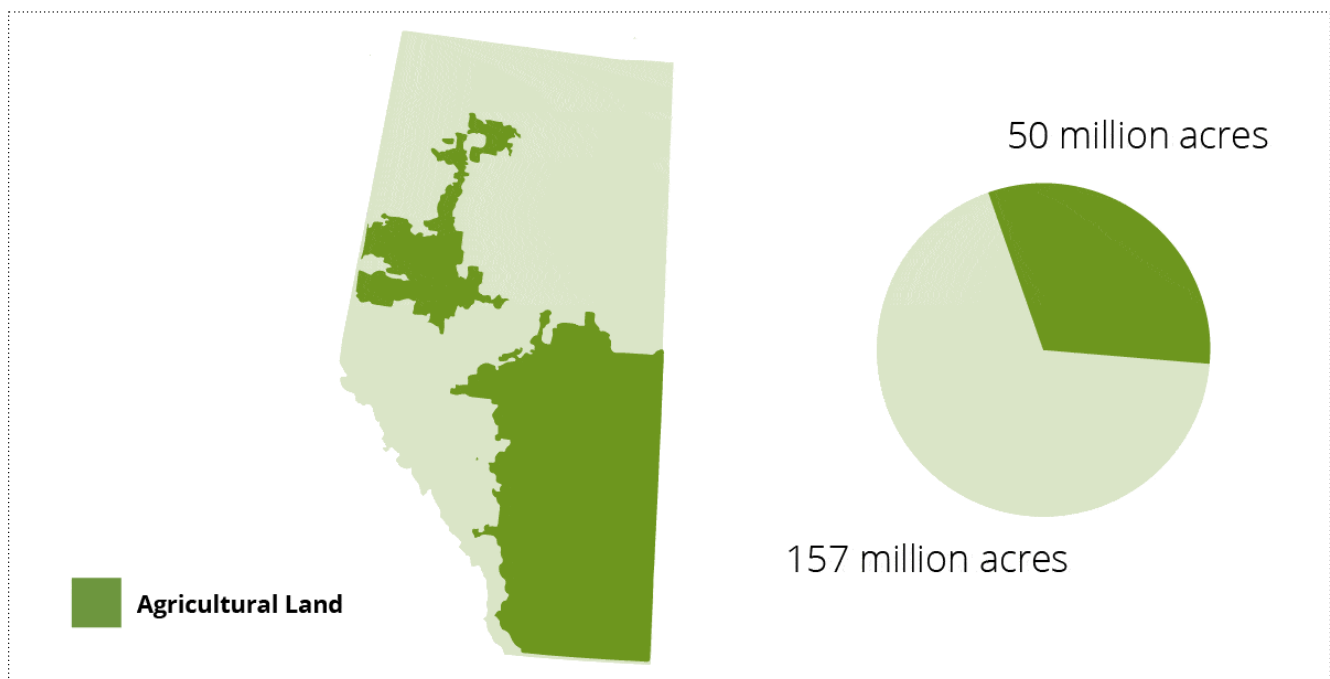
How were Indigenous peoples affected by the spread of agriculture and urbanization?



### INVESTIGATE FURTHER

What is a challenge you can think of that has impacted the food system because of urbanization?

How has urbanization, past and present, affected food choices?



A Land-use Framework, created by the provincial government over 10 years ago, stated that agricultural land is very important in order to support Albertans' quality of life. However, it also stated that it can be very difficult to find ways to increase the amount of land available to agriculture.



**While our population and number of activities on our landscape continue to grow, the size of our province does not. There are more and more people doing more and more activities on the same piece of land. We have reached a tipping point. What worked before will not work for our future. The time for change is now. We have the opportunity today to help shape the Alberta of tomorrow, but we must choose well.**

Alberta Land Use Planning Hub. From farm to garden - Applying regional land use planning to urban agriculture: Online. <https://landusehub.ca/urban-agriculture/#::~:~:text=Nearly%20a%20third%20of%20land,provincial%20agricultural%20production%20in%20Canada>



#### INVESTIGATE FURTHER

**How have land use decisions made in the past affected environmental issues today?**



#### INVESTIGATE FURTHER

**How should the uses of land in Canada's past provide insights into ways agricultural land should be protected in the future?**

