

Tomato processing in Canada

An average of 543 000 metric tonnes of tomatoes for processing were grown in Canada over the last five years, which represents about 1.8 % of WPTC volume. 2005 crop has reached 590 000 MT., the same quantity that was processed in 2004, and the second largest volume ever.

Virtually all of the tomatoes grown in Canada for processing are produced in Ontario. The main growing area in South western Ontario is located in the Kent and Essex Counties, where a unique combination of climate and soils has created an area suitable to the production of processing tomatoes.



In 1998, there were 31,490 acres of tomatoes in production. Tomato acreage has steadily declined due to dramatic improvements in yield performance. The yield in 1988 was 18.1 tons per acre (40.7 tons per hectare) compared to 37.0 tons (83 tons per hectare) in 1998 and 39.6 tons per acre (88.7 tons per hectare) in 2004 and 2005. The maximum price paid for fresh tomatoes in 2005 was 95 Canadian Dollars (about 78 US \$) per ton ex field.

Year	Growers	Measures	Contract	Harvest	Average	Average
		Acres	Short Tons	Short Tons	yield	yield
					sT / acre	mT / ha
1988	533	31 490	610 210	570 293	18,1	40,6
1989	477	29 182	602 009	572 734	19,6	43,9
1990	400	28 295	613 935	626 734	22,1	49,5
1991	264	20 680	475 853	458 289	22,1	49,5
1992	289	17 240	429 860	419 141	24,3	54,5
1993	260	19 200	495 416	514 192	26,7	59,8
1994	237	19 834	539 068	575 044	29,0	65,0
1995	228	18 578	506 000	578 584	31,1	69,7
1996	222	15 940	467 000	501 565	31,4	70,4
1997	192	14 800	464 671	496 838	33,4	74,9
1998	183	15 060	482 933	558 590	37,0	82,9
1999	187	16 866	573 159	539 523	32,0	71,7
2000	173	15 818	543 275	450 498	28,4	63,7
2001	173	16 821	564 609	533 446	31,6	70,8
2002	176	17 126	600 080	619 353	36,2	81,1
2003	173	14 863	543 500	540 927	36,4	81,6
2004	169	16 464	610 260	651 892	39,6	88,8
2005	156	16 428	616 240	650 424	39,6	88,7

All tomato acreage in Ontario is measured by an independent third party, which also provides independent third party grading to the industry each year. Ontario's greenhouses supply all the required seedlings for processing tomato growers. The Ontario industry utilizes 100% transplants for planting. There are close to 40 acres of greenhouses used for transplants producing approximately 200 million tomato seedlings for Ontario and U.S. growers.

The seedlings are normally transplanted in early May, as soon as the risk of night frost has disappeared. About 90/95 days are needed between transplanting and harvest for early varieties and 110/125 days for late varieties. Approximately 50% of the surface is irrigated. Generally spring and summer rains are sufficient to cover water needs, however, drought conditions in two of the past three years has resulted in a strong focus on drip irrigation with significant grower investment being made over the past several years. Harvest takes place between early August and mid-October, and is fully mechanized.

There are 11 tomato processing facilities in the province, the largest three H.J. Heinz Company of Canada Ltd., CanGro Foods Inc. (formerly Kraft Canada Inc.) and Sun-Brite Canning Ltd. process approximately 85 % of the total volume. The distribution of the tomato production is usually as follows :

- 70% of tomatoes are made into tomato paste, manufactured during harvest season and reprocessed internally to manufacture ketchup, soups and sauces.
- 20% made into whole peeled tomatoes.
- 10% made into juice from fresh tomatoes.

OPVG & OFPA

Within the WPTC, Canada is represented by both the Ontario Processing Vegetable Growers (OPVG) and the Ontario Food Processors Association (OFPA).

The Ontario Processing Vegetable Growers is a producer organization established in 1944 to bargain collectively for prices and terms and conditions of sale with Ontario processors for 12 processing crops, of which tomatoes are the largest. Each producer contracts directly with his own processor for quantities required, varieties to be grown and planting schedules to be utilised. The board funds and co-ordinates research relating to processing vegetable production. In 1998 the Ontario Processing Vegetable Growers and the Ontario Food Processors Association joined together to form the Ontario Tomato Research Institute which funds research relating to all aspects of processing tomatoes. They also jointly organise the Ontario Processing Vegetable Industry Conference each January, a great event to visit!

The Ontario tomato processing industry will organize the 2008 World Processing Tomato Congress scheduled to take place in Toronto.