

Industry Overview:

# Fruit



**Our Food. Our Future.**  
Growing Opportunities in Agriculture

 Newfoundland  
Labrador

The fruit crop industry in Newfoundland and Labrador has ample opportunity for growth. Fruit crops that are grown in large quantities in the province include strawberries, lowbush blueberries, and raspberries. Fruit trees, currants, and most recently grapes, are also grown in smaller quantities, but in microclimates that support them. As of 2018 Statistics Canada reported the following land area of fruit crops in production on commercial farms in the province: 390 acres of blueberries, 111 acres of cranberries, 52 acres of strawberries, 15 acres of raspberries, and 6 acres of apples.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, fruit farmers do not have mono-crop farms. Farmers grow many different fruit crops or fruit crops with vegetable crops to ensure that they have produce present throughout the growing season. So instead of being marketed as a fruit farm, they are referred to as a mixed-commodity farm. For this reason, it is difficult to obtain accurate acreages for each specific fruit crop, as numbers are transient from year to year as acreages are always in flux from crop to crop.

Currently, fruit in the province is either sold at the farm market or exported as frozen fruit to a single source. Strawberries, apples, raspberries, and other small fruit are largely sold at farm markets. Cranberries and wild lowbush blueberries are sold in large quantities for export.

Traditionally, wild lowbush blueberries were the main commodity for fruit production in the province because very few pesticides were sprayed on the crop and the province is free from the blueberry maggot that has been known to wreak havoc in the Maritime Provinces and Maine. Due to harvesting troubles and lack of labour, the focus has now changed to farming half-high (cultivated) blueberries. Both plasticulture and matted rows are used in

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strawberry production in the province and farmers choose to plant early and mid-season varieties as well as to ever-bearing varieties. Summer-bearing raspberries varieties are preferred to fall-bearing varieties in raspberry production in the province.

Preliminary research into scab-resistant apple varieties and orchard development has recently commenced. Producers are interested to see which varieties will mature within the provincial climate and are awaiting grafted apple whips for orchard development.

Most recently, commercial vineyards have been established in the province to explore the possibility of successful cold-hardy wine grape maturation and a viticulture sector in the province. The industry started with three commercial vineyards led by the province, which have shown huge success and promising varieties. From these vineyards, growers have chosen to plant these successful varieties on their own accord to expand the viticulture sector in the province. Currently Newfoundland and Labrador has eight vineyards across the province situated in microclimates suitable for grapevine production.

While there is much opportunity for growth in the fruit sector of the Province, it does not come without challenges. Fruit farming is a time-consuming venture and, as with other perennial crops, will take multiple years to provide any return on investment, unlike a typical annual crop such as potatoes. The product is highly-perishable and seasonal in nature, therefore appropriate storage is required, and a reliable market must be established. These factors may explain the small scale of fruit production currently seen in the Province; however there is high demand for local fruit, and opportunity for domestic growth in this sector is enormous. Besides domestic demand, there is also ample opportunity to export primary and secondary locally-grown fruit and fruit products.

