

Industry Overview:

# Dairy



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

  
**Newfoundland  
Labrador**

Dairy is the most valuable agricultural commodity in Newfoundland and Labrador. Industry indicates the combined production and processing value to be worth \$125 million to the provincial economy employing over 1,200 people. Dairy farmers produce 50 million litres of milk annually, most of which is sold as fresh milk. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians drink 100,000 litres of milk each day. Smaller amounts are used to produce dairy products such as butter and cheese.

There are 25 dairy facilities in the province with the majority located in St. John's, Deer Lake and Clarenville areas. These farms house approximately 6,000 cows and 2,200 calves and heifers. The average farm has 180 milk cows but farms range in size from 40 up to 1,000 milking cows.

Most cows in Newfoundland and Labrador are Holsteins, the familiar black and white cows usually associated with the dairy industry. Other breeds raised in the province include Jersey, Ayrshire and Brown Swiss. A mature cow will weigh over 700 kg (1,500 lbs.) when fully grown. Cows will have their first calf at around two years of age and will begin to produce milk at this time. An average milk cow will produce close to 30 litres of milk a day but some cows in peak production can produce as much as 70 litres each day. Milking cows will consume 50 kgs (110 lb.) of food and drink 115 litres of water each day.

The dairy industry operates under the national supply management system, whereby dairy farmers are issued set quotas for milk production. The Dairy Farmers of Newfoundland and Labrador are responsible for managing the production and marketing of milk in the province.

All dairy farms in Newfoundland and Labrador participate in the proAction program. This program is organized by Dairy Farmers of Canada and sets guidelines for food safety, animal welfare, animal traceability, biosecurity and environmental protection. Guidelines set out by the program help farmers manage risks and design procedures to follow if problems arise. Farms participating in this program are audited annually by validators certified by the Dairy Farmers of Canada.

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The welfare of animals is very important to dairy farmers. Guidelines for animal welfare are set by the Animal Health and Protection Act and The National Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Dairy Cattle. These documents list recommendations and requirements on best management practices to use for housing, transporting, feeding or handling cattle and must be followed by all dairy farms. In addition, all dairy farms in Newfoundland and Labrador are visited regularly by provincially-certified veterinarians who advise farmers on proper animal health and safety protocols, and treat animals which require medical attention.

Milk produced in our province is processed by one of two processors: Agropur Cooperative or Saputo Dairy. All milk must be pasteurized before it can be sold. Pasteurization heats milk to a temperature which is high enough to kill pathogens which might be present but low enough that it does not damage the quality of milk. Milk is also homogenized which is the process of breaking down the fat molecules in milk so they stay integrated rather than separating as cream. Both pasteurization and homogenization extend the shelf life of milk and ensure each carton stays fresh longer.

In addition to the two larger dairies, there is also an artisan dairy, Five Brothers Cheese, which produces specialty cheeses. Surplus milk not used in our province is shipped to dairies on the mainland to be made into butter, cheese, yogurt and other dairy products.

