

Census Made Simple Release 4



2016 Census of Agriculture

Notes on Geography

The 2016 Census of Agriculture uses what it defines as “census agricultural regions” as its statistic boundaries when collecting data. Census agricultural regions are composed of groups of adjacent census divisions. This is unlike the 2016 Census which uses the traditional boundaries of “census metropolitan area,” “census division,” and “census sub-division.” For this release, Strathcona County’s agricultural region is comprised of the consolidated census sub-divisions of Strathcona County.

Data from the 2016 Census of Agriculture has been analyzed for the Strathcona County census agricultural region and Alberta and are presented below.

Declining Farms and Farmers (Total Number of Farms and Farm Operators)

The total number of farms and farm operators within the agricultural region of Strathcona County (the County) declined from 2011. In 2016, there was a total of 579 farms with 850 farm operators in the County. Since 2011, farms in the County have declined by 12.0% (down from 658), while farm operators have declined by 14.1% (down from 990). The decline in farms and farm operators in the County is more severe than the Province of Alberta as a whole (6.0% decline in farms; 7.2% decline in farm operators).

Farmers are Older and Retiring Faster than Alberta (Farm Operators by Age)

Farmers are slightly older in the County in 2016, where the average age of farm operators has increased from 56.3 in 2011 to 57.8 in 2016. This increase in average age is slightly greater than the average age increase of farm operators within all of Alberta. In 2016, 63% of all farm operators within the County were aged 55 years and over. While 31% were aged between 35 to 54 years old, and the other 6% were less than 35 years old. When compared to Alberta, the County has a higher percentage of its farm operators who are aged 55 years and older (63% vs. 56%) and a lower percentage of its farm operators who are under 35 years old (6% vs. 9%). Based on this data, farmers in the County are older and retiring sooner than those in Alberta as a whole. This census release highlights the growing concern that on average more than half of the farm operators in Alberta are expected to retire within the next ten years.

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Concerns Over Farm Succession (Farms and Succession Planning)

As farmers continue to age, it has become even more important for farms to have succession plans to ensure the future viability of operations. However, based on a new data indicator collected for the 2016 Census of Agriculture, farm succession planning has not been happening. In 2016, a total of 37 farms (6.4% of total farms) in the County reported that they have a current succession plan. 36 of these farms in the County indicated that the identified successor is a family member. Although only 6.4% of farms in the County have a succession plan, this is slightly lower than the province as a whole where 8.5% of farms in Alberta have a succession plan. Overall, with very few farms having succession plans while at the same time the average age of farm operators continues to rise, these concerns will need to be addressed to ensure the continued viability of farming operations in Alberta.

Farms Increasing in Size, But Still Characterized by Smaller Farms (Farms by Total Farm Area)

Similar to national trends, the 2016 Census of Agriculture shows that the overall agriculture industry continues to consolidate in the County and Alberta. Between 2011 and 2016, all farms 1,119 acres and under saw a decline in the County. While all farms with 1,120 or more acres remained unchanged or saw an increase in the number of those farms operating in the County. This again reiterates the trend of the declining number of farms, while at the same time the size of farms has been increasing. With that being said, farms with less than 10 acres in the County have decreased by 8.8% since 2011, while they have increased by 15.8% in Alberta since 2011. Overall in 2016, 54% of the farms in the County were less than 130 acres, 38% of farms were between 130 and 1,119 acres, and the remaining 8% of farms had more than 1,120 acres.

More Animal Farming and Production (Farms by NAICS Code)

Although the number of farms has declined in the County, there are some farming operations that have seen increases. Between 2011 and 2016, four farm types saw an increase in the number of farming operations in the County: Cattle ranching and farming (8.1%), Hog and pig farming (200%), Poultry and egg production (133.3%), and Vegetable and melon farming (50%). The increases experienced in these four farm types in the County outperformed the increases experienced in the same farm types for Alberta as a whole. The farm types that saw the greatest declines in the County were: Sheep and goat farming (-36.4%), Greenhouse,

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nursery, and floriculture production (-32.7%), fruit and tree nut farming (-25%), and other animal production (-24.4%). In each case, these decreases were greater in the County than they were in Alberta as a whole. Overall in 2016, 24% of farms were involved in other animal production, 23% were involved in other crop farming, 21% were involved in cattle ranching and farming, and 20% were involved in oilseed and grain farming.

Farms Continue to Consolidate (Farms by Total Farm Capital and Total Gross Farm Receipts)

Another indication of farm consolidation in the County is the growth of farms with total farm capital of \$3.5 million and over. In 2016, there was a total of 91 farms in the County that had a total farm capital of \$3.5 million and over. This was an increase of 12.3%, up from 81 farms in 2011. Alberta saw a much larger increase between 2011 and 2016 at 60.9%.

Overall total gross farm receipts in the County totalled \$122.4 million in 2016, up 34.7% from \$90.8 million in 2011. This increase was slightly below the total farm receipt growth in Alberta, which grew by 55% to \$17.7 billion in 2016. While there was growth for some farms with total gross farm receipts of \$499,999 or less, farms with total gross farm receipts of \$500,000 or more grew significantly. Farms with total gross farm receipts of \$2 million and more grew by 62.5% to a total of 13 farms in 2016 (up from 8 in 2011). This growth is similar to that of Alberta which saw its farms with total gross farm receipts of \$2 million or more grow by 70.2% between 2011 and 2016.

More Than Half of Farms Are Now Using Computers (Farms and Adoption of Technologies)

More than half of the farms in the County (53.5%) have used computers and/or laptops for farm management, while 41.1% have used smartphones and/or tablets for farm management. In both cases, this is lower than in Alberta (58.4% and 47% respectively). As well, 15.5% of farms in the County have used GPS technology while 12.3% have used automated steering and 3.3% have used GIS mapping. Overall, farms in the County have not adopted the use of technology in farm management at the same pace as Alberta as a whole.

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Renewable Energy Slowly Being Adopted (Farms and Renewable Energy Systems)

Similar to technologies, farms in the County have been slightly slower in the adoption of renewable energy systems when compared to Alberta. In 2016, 3.6% or 21 farms reported using renewable energy systems compared to 4.7% or 1,928 farms in Alberta. Of those farms that reported using renewable energy systems, 95.2% (20 farms) reported using solar panels and 9.5% (2 farms) reported using wind turbines. This data suggest that farms in the County are not introducing and using renewable energy systems at the same rate as Alberta as a whole.

Greater Concentration of Local Food Consumption (Products Sold Directly to Consumers)

In 2016, 8.8% of farms in the County reported selling their farm product directly to consumers. This is ahead of Alberta, where 5.1% of farms reported selling directly to consumers. 8.8% of farms in the County sold unprocessed agricultural products to consumers. This is compared to Alberta, where 4.9% of farms sold unprocessed agricultural products to consumers. Overall, for each method of selling product directly to consumers (with the exception of farms reporting value-added products sold), the County performed better than Alberta. This provides the indication there is a greater concentration of local food consumption within the County, compared to Alberta as a whole.

The State of Bees (Number of Bees)

The number of farms in the County reporting that they have colonies of honeybees has increased by 58.3% from 12 to 19 in 2011. This is less than the increase in Alberta, which saw an 83.4% increase in farms reporting colonies of honeybees. As the number of farms reporting honeybees has increased in the County, so too has the number of colonies. Between 2011 and 2016, the number of honeybee colonies in the County increased by 113.5% to 1,915 colonies, up from 897 in 2011. This increase is much greater than the 29.2% increase in the number of honeybee colonies in Alberta. This provides the indication that honeybee farms are larger on average in the County than in Alberta and there has been healthy growth of the bee population in the County over the past five years.

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Data Tables

Total Number of Farms and Farm Operators

	Strathcona County			Alberta		
	2011	2016	% Change 2011-2016	2011	2016	% Change 2011-2016
Farms	658	579	-12.0%	43234	40638	-6.0%
Operators	990	850	-14.1%	62050	57605	-7.2%

Farm Operators by Age

	Strathcona County			Alberta		
	2011	2016	% Change 2011-2016	2011	2016	% Change 2011-2016
All ages	990	850	-14.1%	62050	57605	-7.2%
under 35 years	45	55	22.2%	4550	4910	7.9%
35 to 54 years	385	260	-32.5%	26720	20155	-24.6%
55 years and over	560	535	-4.5%	30785	32535	5.7%
Average age of farm operators	56.3	57.8	2.7%	54.5	55.7	2.2%

Farms and Succession Planning

	Strathcona County		Alberta	
	2016	% of Total Farms	2016	% of Total Farms
All farms reporting a succession plan	37	6.4%	3440	8.5%
Successor(s) - family member(s)	36	6.2%	3335	8.2%
Successor(s) - non-family member(s)	1	0.2%	112	0.3%

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Farms by Total Farm Area

	Strathcona County			Alberta		
	2011	2016	% Change 2011-2016	2011	2016	% Change 2011-2016
Total number of farms	658	579	-12.0%	43234	40638	-6.0%
Farms under 10 acres	34	31	-8.8%	879	1018	15.8%
Farms 10 to 69 acres	210	208	-1.0%	3638	3702	1.8%
Farms 70 to 129 acres	105	72	-31.4%	3030	2824	-6.8%
Farms 130 to 179 acres	91	77	-15.4%	6581	6045	-8.1%
Farms 180 to 239 acres	41	34	-17.1%	1336	1289	-3.5%
Farms 240 to 399 acres	66	56	-15.2%	5395	4918	-8.8%
Farms 400 to 559 acres	30	26	-13.3%	3653	3257	-10.8%
Farms 560 to 759 acres	22	15	-31.8%	3258	2947	-9.5%
Farms 760 to 1,119 acres	21	14	-33.3%	3997	3565	-10.8%
Farms 1,120 to 1,599 acres	13	19	46.2%	3335	3012	-9.7%
Farms 1,600 to 2,239 acres	12	12	0.0%	2694	2529	-6.1%
Farms 2,240 to 2,879 acres	2	3	50.0%	1575	1497	-5.0%
Farms 2,880 to 3,519 acres	1	2	100.0%	1025	1027	0.2%
Farms 3,520 acres and over	10	10	0.0%	2838	3008	6.0%

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Farms by NAICS Code

	Strathcona County			Alberta		
	2011	2016	% Change 2011-2016	2011	2016	% Change 2011-2016
Cattle ranching and farming	111	120	8.1%	12507	12693	1.5%
Hog and pig farming	0	2	200%	193	166	-14.0%
Poultry and egg production	6	14	133.3%	339	373	10.0%
Sheep and goat farming	11	7	-36.4%	490	399	-18.6%
Other animal production	182	138	-24.2%	6374	5101	-20.0%
Oilseed and grain farming	125	116	-7.2%	12692	13451	6.0%
Vegetable and melon farming	4	6	50.0%	277	299	7.9%
Fruit and tree nut farming	8	6	-25.0%	151	137	-9.3%
Greenhouse, nursery and floriculture production	52	35	-32.7%	826	605	-26.8%
Other crop farming	159	135	-15.1%	9385	7414	-21.0%

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Farms by Total Farm Capital

	Strathcona County			Alberta		
	2011	2016	% Change 2011-2016	2011	2016	% Change 2011-2016
Farms, under \$100,000	6	6	0.0%	361	417	15.5%
Farms, \$100,000 to \$199,999	14	12	-14.3%	1032	718	-30.4%
Farms, \$200,000 to \$349,999	38	23	-39.5%	3101	1780	-42.6%
Farms, \$350,000 to \$499,999	53	36	-32.1%	4203	2605	-38.0%
Farms, \$500,000 to \$999,999	244	216	-11.5%	11966	9461	-20.9%
Farms, \$1,000,000 to \$1,499,999	103	84	-18.4%	6459	5567	-13.8%
Farms, \$1,500,000 to \$1,999,999	49	52	6.1%	3762	3720	-1.1%
Farms, \$2,000,000 to \$3,499,999	70	59	-15.7%	5894	5981	1.5%
Farms, \$3,500,000 and over	81	91	12.3%	6456	10389	60.9%

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Farms by Total Gross Farm Receipts

	Strathcona County			Alberta		
	2011	2016	% Change 2011- 2016	2011	2016	% Change 2011- 2016
Farms, under \$10,000	246	183	-25.6%	7707	5779	-25.0%
Farms, \$10,000 to \$24,999	155	121	-21.9%	7862	6009	-23.6%
Farms, \$25,000 to \$49,999	72	80	11.1%	6051	5165	-14.6%
Farms, \$50,000 to \$99,999	52	70	34.6%	5934	5516	-7.0%
Farms, \$100,000 to \$249,999	63	47	-25.4%	7015	7065	0.7%
Farms, \$250,000 to \$499,999	37	33	-10.8%	4211	4503	6.9%
Farms, \$500,000 to \$999,999	18	22	22.2%	2494	3356	34.6%
Farms, \$1,000,000 to \$1,999,999	7	10	42.9%	1175	1909	62.5%
Farms, \$2,000,000 and over	8	13	62.5%	785	1336	70.2%
Total gross farm receipts (excluding forest products sold) (dollars)	\$90,895,141	\$122,400,857	34.7%	\$11,436,180,505	\$17,729,972,192	55.0%

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Farms and Adoption of Technologies

	Strathcona County		Alberta	
	2016	% of Total Farms	2016	% of Total Farms
Computers/laptops for farm management	310	53.5%	23725	58.4%
Smartphones/tablets for farm management	238	41.1%	19093	47.0%
Automated steering (auto-steer)	71	12.3%	10462	25.7%
GPS technology	90	15.5%	13684	33.7%
GIS mapping (e.g., soil mapping)	19	3.3%	2589	6.4%
Greenhouse automation	6	1.0%	143	0.4%
Robotic milking	2	0.3%	62	0.2%
Automated environmental controls for animal housing	16	2.8%	680	1.7%
Automated animal feeding	16	2.8%	669	1.6%
Other technologies	3	0.5%	164	0.4%

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Farms and Renewable Energy Systems

	Strathcona County		Alberta	
	2016	% of Total Farms	2016	% of Total Farms
All farms reporting	21	3.6%	1928	4.7%
Solar panels	20	3.5%	1761	4.3%
Wind turbines	2	0.3%	258	0.6%
Anaerobic biodigester (biogas or methane)	0	0.0%	9	0.0%
Biodiesel production systems	0	0.0%	4	0.0%
Geothermal electric power generator	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Hydro electric power generator	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Other renewable energy producing systems	0	0.0%	44	0.1%

Products Sold Directly to Consumers

	Strathcona County		Alberta	
	2016	% of Total Farms	2016	% of Total Farms
All farms reporting	51	8.8%	2062	5.1%
Farms reporting unprocessed agricultural products sold	51	8.8%	1986	4.9%
Farms reporting value-added products sold	1	0.2%	197	0.5%
Farms reporting using farm gate sales, stands, kiosks, U-pick	43	7.4%	1761	4.3%
Farms reporting using farmers' markets	9	1.6%	425	1.0%
Farms reporting using Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)	2	0.3%	119	0.3%
Farms reporting using other methods	4	0.7%	94	0.2%

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Number of Bees

	Strathcona County			Alberta		
	2011	2016	% Change 2011-2016	2011	2016	% Change 2011-2016
Colonies of honeybees						
Number of farms reporting	12	19	58.3%	386	708	83.4%
Number	897	1915	113.5%	235,951	304,846	29.2%
Gallons of other pollinating bees						
Number of farms reporting	0	0	N/A	111	153	37.8%
Number	0	0	N/A	189,510	199,848	5.5%