

Vancouver Island-Coast Region Agriculture Profile

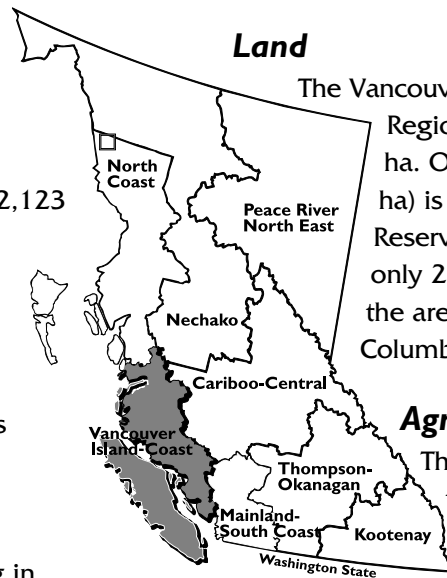
Key Features:

- Mild, moist climate-suitable for long-season specialty crops.
- Frost-free days: 158-201
- Annual precipitation (mm): 873-2,123
- Coastline is ideal for aquaculture
- Vegetables, berries, apples, and specialty crops such as kiwifruit are produced mainly for the local market.
- Livestock production-cattle, hogs and poultry.
- Dairy production dominates the region's farm-gate cash receipts.
- Aquaculture is rapidly expanding in value and scope.

Population	787,985
Number of Farms	3,089
Land in ALR	124,830 ha
Area of Farms	52,747 ha
Total Farm Capital	\$3.67 billion
Jobs	67,498 weeks paid labour annually
Gross Farm Receipts	\$170.1 million
Annual Farm Wages	\$39.1 million

The Vancouver Island-Coast Region

The Vancouver Island-Coast region is made up of all of Vancouver Island, numerous smaller islands and a section of the coastal mainland stretching from Powell River to Bella Coola. Rugged mountains predominate, except for a narrow coastal plain extending along the east coast of Vancouver Island. The region covers almost 10% of the total land area of the province, and accounts for about 18% of the population, or about 787,985 people.



Land

The Vancouver Island-Coast Development Region covers an area of 8,590,680 ha. Of this, only about 1.4% (117,222 ha) is within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). Although this represents only 2.6% of the province's total ALR, the area accounts for over 6% of British Columbia's total farm receipts.

Agriculture

The major agricultural areas within the region are the Alberni, Comox and Cowichan Valleys, the Saanich Peninsula, the Gulf Islands and the Powell River Lowlands.

Food production has long been an important part of the regional economy. There are about 3089 farms (most of them small) in the Vancouver Island-Coast region. Farming, first introduced in the 1840s, has become a very sophisticated business.

In many Island communities, where either forestry or tourism are the major employer, agriculture and fishing provide a stabilizing influence. They tend to carry on steadily while forestry or tourism may vary due to seasonal and economic conditions. Many areas of land with particularly good agricultural capability are not being farmed due to land ownership patterns within the region. More land with good agricultural potential is owned by forest companies, and by non-farming residents than by farmers. Overall, only about 25% of the produce consumed in the region is grown locally. Even dairy products, which are the largest commodity produced in the region (in terms of value), satisfy less than half of the local demand.

Island farmers face challenges in transporting basic needs like fuel and fertilizer from the mainland, and in shipping their commodities to mainland markets. The cost of transporting materials and products to and from these markets leads to high operating expenses in areas such as livestock production. Water availability can be a limiting factor in some areas. However, unique markets, excellent climate and soils, and the high cost for others to access Island markets, provide many opportunities for local farmers and businesses. The potential for direct marketing of local farm products to local consumers is high. Agriculture is being aggressively incorporated into tourism and local promotions by farmers, who sell products at the roadside to local consumers.

The climate, especially on the Island's east coast, from Nanaimo to Victoria is ideally suited to a wide range of crops. Blueberries and kiwifruit are grown on the Saanich Peninsula just north of Victoria and are becoming a popular Vancouver Island commodity in markets across the country.

Perhaps the greatest potential for Island farmers is in developing products that target local markets and tourists, and have a unique "Island" character. There are many commodities that could fit this character, with the traditionally strong dairy sector expected to continue to be prominent in these new markets.

Aquaculture

Aquaculture, or the farming of fish and shellfish, is a growing industry. Of all components of the food production industry in the Vancouver Island-Coast region, aquaculture has the highest potential for rapid growth.

Food Processing

Vancouver Island has a wide variety of food processing operations. The total value of shipments from food and beverage processors is about \$165 million each year. There are growth opportunities for cottage wineries, cottage breweries and services to the hotel and restaurant industries, for specialty meats, vegetables, fruits and flowers. There is also potential for encouraging interest in locally-processed farm products, direct sales and guided farm tours.

Selected Crop and Livestock Inventories (2006 Census)

Grains	1,077 ha
Corn for silage	870 ha
Hay and Pasture	33,000 ha
Sunflowers	8 ha
Alfalfa	1,532 ha
Hay	14,322 ha
Potatoes	254 ha
Fruits, Berries and Nuts	1,175 ha
Field Grown Vegetables	715 ha
Nursery Products	322 ha
Sod	72 ha
Greenhouses	205,375 m ²
Mushrooms	1,141 m ²
Christmas Trees	390 ha
Hens and Chickens	640,921
Cattle and Calves	23,269
Pigs	2,066
Sheep	14,807
Horses and Ponies	3,556
Rabbits	830
Goats	1,706

Estimated Gross Farm Receipts (2011 Census)

Community	Number of Farms	Gross Farm Receipts
Alberni Clayoquot Sound Regional District	93	\$5,500,709
Capital Regional District	1,093	\$50,874,004
Central Coast Regional District	27	\$285,822
Cowichan Valley Regional District	685	\$48,069,900
Regional District of Nanaimo	478	\$26,913,383
Powell River Regional District	94	\$1,348,646
Comox Valley Regional District	432	31,212,798
Strathcona Mount Waddington Regional District	98	4,344,725
Sunshine Coast Regional District	89	2,551,191