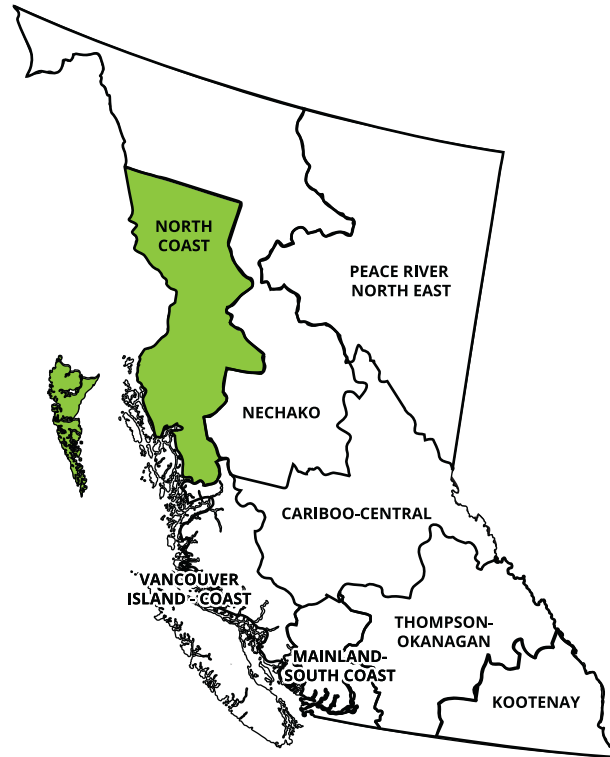


NORTH COAST REGION: AGRICULTURE PROFILE



Key Features

- The terrain of the North Coast region is characterized by rugged mountains and river valleys, the latter being where most of the farmland is located.
- An active commercial fishing industry represents a significant percentage of the total salmon and halibut landings for the province.
- Fish processing dominates the food processing industry.
- Both climate and rainfall vary considerably within the North Coast region, and the growing season is relatively short.
- In general, the region experiences a short frost-free period and relatively low average growing season temperatures.

2016 Census of Agriculture	
Population	55,500
Land in the Agriculture Land Reserve (ALR)	109,187 ha
Total Farmland Area	9,052 ha
Number of Farms	116
Total Salaries/Wages *	\$549,960
Gross Farm Receipts	\$5.1 million
Total Farm Capital	\$86.7 million

**Source: 2016, Census of Agriculture and Tax Linkage, Statistics Canada*

The North Coast Region

Bordering the Pacific Ocean and the Alaska Panhandle, the North Coast region is an area of forests, mountains, and rugged coastline. It includes Haida Gwaii, also known as the Queen Charlotte Islands — the largest of which are Graham Island and Moresby Island. It is the fourth largest of the eight regions, covering 13.5% of the province's land area, with only 1.2% of its population. Most of the population is concentrated in the communities of Prince Rupert, Terrace, Kitimat, Stewart, and New Hazelton.

Rugged mountains and deep-cut river valleys characterize the diverse topography of the region. Communities are linked between Highway 16, which runs east-west, and Highway 37, which runs north-south. Transport to this remote region is also available through CN Rail, as well as through air service that links Haida Gwaii, Prince Rupert, Terrace, and Kitimat to centres in the south of the province. Prince Rupert, which has the largest harbour and terminal, Kitimat, and Stewart all have deep sea shipping capabilities.

The economy of the region is as diverse as its topography and includes forestry, fishing, tourism, and transportation. The coastal communities rely heavily on commercial fishing and fish processing, and there is logging on Haida Gwaii and in the southern two-thirds of the mainland portion of the region, with sawmills located in Terrace, Kitwanga, and Hazelton. Mining and forestry are the primary economic activities in the Stewart area.

Prince Rupert and Terrace are the leading administrative and service centres for the region. Kitimat was established in the early 1950's to house Alcan's aluminum smelter complex, and in 2015, a modernization project was completed to replace the original smelter. The plant reached full capacity in 2016, bringing major economic benefits to Kitimat and the surrounding region. In 2018, a Shell/LNG consortium announced a major liquified natural gas project in Kitimat that will contribute significantly to the economy in years to come. Tourism also provides new opportunities in much of the region.

Land

The North Coast region covers an area of 12,424,002 hectares, and approximately 0.9% (109,187 hectares) of the land is within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). This represents about 2.4% of the total ALR in the province. Much of the region has a short, frost-free period and relatively low average growing season temperatures. Coastal areas experience extremely high annual rainfall, limiting the types of crops that can be grown there. Dense forest cover and remote locations with limited access make clearing and breaking land for agricultural activities uneconomical in most cases.



Photo courtesy of the BC Ministry of Agriculture — hay bales

Agriculture

There are about 9,052 hectares of farmland in the North Coast region, which generated farm gate sales of around \$5.1 million in 2016. Agriculture in the region is dominated by diversified small-lot farming — including poultry/eggs, market garden operations, berries, fruit, small livestock, and greenhouses — which service local markets. Other commodities produced in the region include hay and other forage crops, as well as beef, small sheep, and hog operations. The area imports high-quality alfalfa hay from the Nechako region to the east.

The Terrace area enjoys a relatively mild climate and better agriculture soil capability than other parts of the region, as well as proximity to the markets of Smithers, Kitimat, and Prince Rupert. Fruit orchards (apples, pears, cherries) were first planted in the Terrace area in the 1950's, and today, farmers also grow raspberries, blueberries, and haskap (blue-berried honeysuckle). The Skeena Valley Farmers' Market, which began in 1982, is a major market hub for the area. The higher wages earned by people living in Terrace and Kitimat also provide a market for high-value agriculture products.

Given the remoteness of the region, the high cost of transporting commodities to larger urban markets is not economical. However, this same remoteness has also inspired a growing interest in improving food security and a desire to strengthen the local food economy. [The Northwest BC Food Action Network](#) connects people to build a more resilient food system and works to support the development of opportunities to increase agriculture knowledge, skills, and infrastructure, as well as programs to encourage new food-related ventures.

Aquaculture

Seafood processing is the top manufacturing industry in the North Coast region, representing 71% of its manufacturing sector. The region comprises:

- 5% of BC's marine finfish aquaculture operations, and
- 2% of BC's marine shellfish operations.

There is a positive outlook for future aquaculture activities in the region, due to the abundance of cool, clean water (both fresh and marine) and the availability of space.

Commercial Fishing

The North Coast region supports a large commercial fishery. The harvest includes a variety of species, including salmon, herring, halibut, many groundfish, and shellfish. Three principal methods are used in coastal commercial fishing: seining, gillnetting, and trolling. Seiners account for about one-half of salmon landings, with the remainder divided equally between gillnetters and trollers. Current annual harvests of salmon, herring, and most shellfish species are considered to be at or near maximum allowable catch, and this is not expected to increase without significant investment in resource enhancement. There are, however, opportunities to harvest substantial quantities of some currently underutilized species of groundfish and shellfish, including Pacific hake and offshore flying squid. These species are underutilized because of harvest and processing technological difficulties, environmental concerns, and underdeveloped market demand. Some government programs, such as the [Salmonid Enhancement Program \(SEP\)](#), are working to increase the total stocks of salmon available for harvest. Fish processing is also a significant industry in the region.

Selected Crop and Livestock Inventories (2016 Census)

For detailed statistics for the North Coast region, see the [Agriculture in Brief](#) tables from the BC Ministry of Agriculture.

Sub-region Agriculture Statistics

[Regional District of Skeena-Queen Charlotte](#)

[Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine](#)