Pulse crops

Pulse crops – dry peas, lentilms and chickpeas – are among the oldest cultivated plants, going back some 10,000 years. Pulses are a food staple in many parts of the world. Rich in protein, fiber and dietary fiber, pulses are also excellent animal feed, providing energy and protein. Members of the legume family, pulses are an excellent rotational crop since they fix nitrogen in the soil for future plantings.

Sugarbeets

Warm days and cool nights in North Dakota’s Red River and Yellowstone River Valleys are ideal for growing sugarbeets. This root crop grows from a seed the size of a grain of rice to a plant with a taproot six to eight feet in length. The average sugarbeet yields one pound of sugar.

The harveded sugarbeets are cleaned and sliced into needle-like strips. Juice is extracted from these strips, cleaned, filtered and boiled. Most of the sugar is precipitated out of the sugar syrup, but some is made into brown sugar, powdered sugar or sugar cubes. The used strips are dried and used for livestock feed.

Wheat

One of the world’s most important food grains, wheat leads North Dakota’s crops in acreage and is tied with corn in total value. Grown on approximately 8 million acres, it accounts for a quarter of our total land area and half of all crop acres. This production is spread across the state – all of North Dakota’s 53 counties typically grow at least one million bushels of wheat annually.

The value of North Dakota’s wheat production was $17.9 billion in 2013. In 2015, North Dakota led the nation in the production of spring wheat and durum wheat. Winter wheat is of lesser, but increasing importance.

Hard red spring wheat

Flour millers prize the “aromaticness of wheat,” for its gluten strength. They blend it with lower protein wheats to improve the quality of bread flours. One bushel of wheat makes about 42 (1.5-pound) loaves of bread.

Hard red spring wheat

Hard red spring wheat is the most easily harvested wheat. It has a short straw that is easy to thresh and dry. Hard red spring wheat is used as the state’s top cash crop. Cass County in central North Dakota is the number one soybean growing county in the nation.

Flax

Flax is known as a “misdemeanor” because of its many uses. Soybeans are a legume, related to clover, peas and alfalfa. Native to Asia, they first arrived in the United States as hulled in ships.

North Dakota Agriculture

Rank Crop Percent of US total
1st Spring wheat 53
2nd Durum wheat 51
3rd All wheat 44
4th Dry edible peas 44
1st Dry edible beans 29
1st Pinto beans 51
1st Barley 31
1st Canola 36
1st Hulled 92
1st Honey 25
2nd Navy beans 57
2nd Lentils 46
2nd Sunflowers, oil 37
1st Soybeans 86
1st Flaxseed 92
4th Oats 11
1st Potatoes 51
8th Soybeans 4
12th Corn for grain 4

North Dakota is #1

BY THE NUMBERS

industries

Dakota’s largest industry

People employed directly by

Number of farms and ranches

Average farm size

 Acres of farm and ranch land

$8.6 Billion – Cash receipts of North Dakota’s largest industry

30,000 – Number of farms and ranches

1,307 acres – Average farm size

39.2 Million – Acres of farm and ranch land

30,000 – Number of farms and ranches

18

Source: National Agricultural Statistics Service - 2015

The most easily harvested wheat.

A field of flowering, blue flax.

Honeybees are a food staple in many cultures. A farm is any enterprise engaged in raising animals or plants. North Dakota’s fields are apiaries – honeybee colonies. North Dakota produces over 42 million pounds of honey in 2014. Long summer days, plenty of alfalfa and other clovers, and a favorable summer climate all contribute to the state’s prominence in the honey industry.

Many beekeepers overwinter their bees in California, Florida and other warmer states, where the insects are valuable for pollinating fruit and nut trees.

Honeybees are a food staple in many cultures. A farm is any enterprise engaged in raising animals or plants. North Dakota’s fields are apiaries – honeybee colonies. North Dakota produces over 42 million pounds of honey in 2014. Long summer days, plenty of alfalfa and other clovers, and a favorable summer climate all contribute to the state’s prominence in the honey industry.

Many beekeepers overwinter their bees in California, Florida and other warmer states, where the insects are valuable for pollinating fruit and nut trees.

Honeybees are a food staple in many cultures. A farm is any enterprise engaged in raising animals or plants. North Dakota’s fields are apiaries – honeybee colonies. North Dakota produces over 42 million pounds of honey in 2014. Long summer days, plenty of alfalfa and other clovers, and a favorable summer climate all contribute to the state’s prominence in the honey industry.

Many beekeepers overwinter their bees in California, Florida and other warmer states, where the insects are valuable for pollinating fruit and nut trees.

Honeybees are a food staple in many cultures. A farm is any enterprise engaged in raising animals or plants. North Dakota’s fields are apiaries – honeybee colonies. North Dakota produces over 42 million pounds of honey in 2014. Long summer days, plenty of alfalfa and other clovers, and a favorable summer climate all contribute to the state’s prominence in the honey industry.

Many beekeepers overwinter their bees in California, Florida and other warmer states, where the insects are valuable for pollinating fruit and nut trees.

Honeybees are a food staple in many cultures. A farm is any enterprise engaged in raising animals or plants. North Dakota’s fields are apiaries – honeybee colonies. North Dakota produces over 42 million pounds of honey in 2014. Long summer days, plenty of alfalfa and other clovers, and a favorable summer climate all contribute to the state’s prominence in the honey industry.

Many beekeepers overwinter their bees in California, Florida and other warmer states, where the insects are valuable for pollinating fruit and nut trees.
Barley
Perhaps the oldest domesticated grain, barley has been cultivated for at least 10,000 years. Now it is grown in about 100 countries around the world. Two grades of barley are produced in North Dakota. The lower grade is used for high quality livestock feed. The higher grade malting barley is for human consumption; mainly for brewing beer. The barley is processed into malt; the same ingredient used in malted milk shakes. A 48-pound bushel of barley will produce about 525 12-ounce bottles of beer.

Pearled or hulled barley is an increasingly popular ingredient in cereals, soups, salads and desserts.

Specialty Crops
North Dakota soil ranges from thick black loam in the Red River Valley, some of the richest agricultural soil in the world located in the eastern portion of the state, to more porous, sandy soils in the west. This environment is ideal for growing an immense variety of crops. North Dakota farmers also grow buckwheat, oats, rye, millet, garbanzo beans, white wheat, black beans, Great Northern beans (native to ND), crambe, safflower, sorghum, mustard, niger, vegetables and fruits such as grapes, strawberries, raspberries and chokecherries.

Canola
Twenty-five years ago, canola was virtually unknown in North Dakota. Today, the state leads the nation in canola production. The distinctive, bright yellow fields can be seen across the state. After harvest, canola seeds are delivered to a processing plant where they are crushed, and the oil extracted. Leftover seed material is used for livestock feed. Canola is used to make shortening, margarine and salad oil, as well as ascorbic acid. Vegetable fluids and sunflower oil. Oil of the seed oil, it is the lowest in saturated fats, highest in monounsaturated fat and is a rich source of Vitamin E and essential fatty acids.

Potatoes
Potatoes are one of America’s favorite vegetables – the average consumer eats 142 pounds each year. North Dakota potatoes are shipped throughout North America, South America, the Pacific Rim and Asia. Potato production, long centered in Red River Valley, has expanded into central North Dakota where potatoes are grown under irrigation.

Corn
Corn production in North Dakota was once concentrated in the southeastern corner of the state, but is now statewide. This surge in production is the result of new higher-yielding, early maturing varieties, the need for crop diversification and the growth of the state’s ethanol industry. Most corn grown in the state is corn for grain, also known as “field corn,” used for livestock feed, swine and ethanol. Researchers continue to find and develop new uses for corn, such as fabrics, trees, cleaning products, fuels and oleochemicals. Corn is believed to be one of the first agricultural crops grown in North Dakota. More than 300 years ago, the women of agricultural tribes of Native Americans (Mandan, Arikara, and Hidatsa) raised corn along with beans, squash and tobacco in their gardens in the Upper Missouri Valley.

Livestock
Cattle outnumber people in North Dakota almost three to one. The beef cattle industry contributes more than $600 million annually to the state’s agricultural income. North Dakota beef cattle production is principally commercial cow-calf operations. Popular breeds include Black Angus, Red Angus, Herefords, Simmental, Charolais and Gelbvieh. The total number of swine in the state is about 140,000, while sheep and lambs total 73,000. North Dakota’s dairy cows produce about 352 million pounds of milk each year. Most dairy cattle in North Dakota are Holsteins. North Dakota raises about one million turkeys every year. Other livestock raised at North Dakota include horses, bison, farmed elk, goats and non-traditional livestock such as white-tail and fallow deer and furbearers.

North Dakota farmers & ranchers annually produce enough...