Agriculture—one word that incorporates so many industries. One word that brings so many thoughts to my mind: food, farming, animals and so much more. Three words that come to mind as I ponder agriculture are: prospering, innovative and persevering. While digging deep into the different aspects of agriculture and examining the success of the various industries within it, one can see this rings true for all aspects of agriculture. One industry that comes to my mind immediately when I contemplate the prospering, innovative and persevering industry of agriculture is the dairy industry. The dairy industry is a testimony to the wonderful agricultural industry in Canada by confirming the truth behind these three words. The dairy industry illustrates and confirms the truth of what agriculture really is and ultimately testifies to the importance of agriculture to Canada.

Firstly, the dairy industry impacts my understanding of agriculture by demonstrating the industry is prospering. This is shown through statistics that prove dairy farming has a promising future. From 2006 to 2016, there was a rise in the number of dairy farmers under the age of 35 years old—from 14.3 to 18.1 per cent. Also, from 2015 to 2016, there was a 3.6 per cent rise in milk production, resulting in 8,470,492 kiloliters of milk being produced in Canada. In addition, statistics show from retailing dairy products, the Canadian economy makes around $10 million. All these facts attest to how the dairy industry is thriving. The Canadian dairy industry is also thriving and supporting many individuals by providing countless people with work, as nutritionists, artificial inseminators, truckers, researchers, veterinarians and industry partners are sustained by the work the industry provides. Overall, the dairy industry validly exposes how agriculture prospers.

Secondly, the dairy industry impacts how I perceive agriculture by establishing the fact that agriculture is innovative. Technology-use is on the rise in agriculture and this is evident by looking at the dairy industry. Robotic feeding and milking systems are changing dairy farmers’ work, offering the opportunity for farmers to better manage their herds and maximize how large a herd can be. This technological innovation allows dairy farming to change with the times and implement new strategies. For example, farmers can now monitor their cows through their phones, as technology allows them to receive alerts to keep them updated on happenings on the farm while they are absent. However, technology is not the only thing that permits dairy to be innovative. Research is constantly increasing farmers’ understanding of breeding, herd health and genetics. Research is relentlessly being published to make farmers aware of new findings relating to animal care, feeding, breeding and production. The dairy industry is a strong indication of how the agriculture industry is innovative.

Finally, dairy illustrates the fact that agriculture is a persevering industry. Over the years, the dairy industry has experienced strife. It has been challenged by threats on supply management, misconceptions from consumers, as well as challenged by the decision to take dairy out of Canada’s Food Guide. Despite all of the troubles dairy has faced, the industry still stands strong and works together to combat these challenges. National and provincial representatives work to represent the true dairy industry while facing these challenges, providing a voice for the farmers in the midst of crises. These representatives also organize defenses, such as campaigns, against opposition to uphold the dairy industry’s point of view. In addition, in order to combat the misconceptions consumers have about the dairy industry, procedures have been taken in advertising in defence of dairy. This communicates to consumers the truth about the dairy products they consume. It publicizes the legitimacy of information, for instance, how all milk is antibiotic-free. This makes consumers aware of the truth behind their food and discredits any false information they may have received, fighting back against misconceptions. All in all, the dairy industry is just one of the many examples of how agriculture is a persevering industry through the trials it faces.

In conclusion, the dairy industry is a very relevant indicator as to how I see agriculture. It illustrates what I think of when I hear the word agriculture. The dairy industry paints a picture in my mind as to what agriculture really is in Canada. It is a testimony of how Canadian agriculture is a prospering, innovative and persevering industry. As Canadians, it is very important we celebrate the priceless industry of agriculture in Canada by looking back at the founders of this industry and celebrating their work, by looking forward at the endless possibilities and hopeful future of agriculture and by looking around us and remembering how blessed we are to have the agriculture industry we have. The dairy industry is just one key example of how Canadian agriculture is thriving and that is why “there are plenty of reasons to cry over spilled milk.”

Sources:
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By Kezia Romany

Agriculture is an advancing industry, striving to better sustain humans through an economic and health-oriented approach. By utilizing today’s state-of-the-art technology and research skills, agriculture is progressing toward becoming more sustainable and health-oriented. The dairy industry in particular has utilized technology and science to improve dairy cattle’s genetics, create a more sustainable milk production system, and further understand the link between dairy and Canadians’ health and well-being—all of which contribute to driving the industry toward a better future.

Canada’s dairy industry is a world-renowned industry because of its excellent quality and variety. Dairy Farmers of Canada (DFC) is a national lobbyist that oversees policies and promotions. It is run by farmers, for farmers. DFC is continuously publishing ways to improve the industry in all aspects—from animal welfare to human health. The sustainable milk production theme outlines the increase of dairy’s profitability in a sustainable way by utilizing knowledge and best practices. As of 2013, proAction built upon the successful recording of milk quality and safety. Dairy farmers are now required to record information pertaining to the care and traceability of their livestock. By understanding what is feeding the dairy industry, the general population can better understand the foods they choose to consume. It also allows scientists to examine and study connections between the care of dairy cattle and human health. By targeting animal health, welfare, environment and food safety, the dairy industry is becoming more sustainable. Canadians’ health, the environment and the economy all prosper from healthy dairy cattle.

Another emerging theme is the dairy genetics and genomic theme. It evaluates important traits affecting dairy cattle’s productivity, profitability and competitiveness. The future of dairy’s sustainability and profitability is through genetic qualities. Today, Canada is recognized for its herds’ superior genetic quality, with $155.2 billion in revenue from dairy genetics in 2016. Canada has more than a century of experience working with breeders and geneticists to improve cow health and treat diseases, such as mastitis, in order to reduce antibiotic use and improve milk quality. From 1970 to 2012, Canadian cows have increased their average milk production by 143 per cent due to genetic improvements. While this increase contributes to the economic aspect of agriculture, it also means more milk and better quality milk. The Canadian Multi-Breeds Classification Program accurately and consistently evaluates conformation characteristics of dairy cattle regardless of breed. It is a world-leading system with a focus on increasing the quality and longevity of cattle. About 540,000 cows across 11,000 herds contribute to the national genetic evaluation program. Contrary to common belief, genetic improvements in the dairy industry are to increase both quantity and quality of dairy products, causing no harm to the animals. Not only does the genetic and genomic theme provide a future of sustainability and profitability for agriculture as a whole, but also an emphasis on human health, which is vital for a strong future.

One of the most vital elements concerning the dairy industry is the human health and nutrition theme. By developing a better understanding of the link between dairy products, nutrition, health and wellness, it improves Canadians’ overall health. A healthy population contributes to the economy by lowering healthcare costs related to cardiovascular disease and Type 2 diabetes, as well as contributes to healthy weight and bone health. DFC’s Canadian Quality Milk program helps farmers monitor and prevent food safety risks. This sets a standard of good quality milk and milk products across the country, ensuring the population has access to nothing less than healthy milk. Dairy Nutrition and Dietitians of Canada claim the protein and vitamin D in dairy products contribute to greater skeletal muscle mass, greater total bone mass, increased bone mineral density, 25 per cent reduction in poor balance, higher functional capacity and nutrient and energy intake. This factors into preventing age-related muscle loss. Consuming dairy improves Canadians’ health, and this is a huge asset to agriculture since it emphasizes the importance of increasing Canadians’ quality of life.

The Canadian dairy industry has proven to be a strong and vital component of agriculture. It is the backbone of an industry that is a huge economic engine for Canada. The dairy industry is a diverse component of Canada’s agriculture because it fits many different essential needs—human health and nutrition emphasis, sustainable milk production, animal welfare, and dairy genetics and genomics. This industry is an excellent example of being at the forefront of innovation, while utilizing today’s technology and resources to produce a highly valued and nutritious product. It’s exactly what Canada’s agriculture industry stands for, and it continues to be among the best in the world.

Works Cited


A good team is usually made up of a group of talented individuals who are able to work together to succeed. It doesn't take long to realize Canadian agriculture is a winning team. As the world's fifth largest agricultural exporter, the source of one in eight jobs and the contributor of $200 billion annually to Canada's gross domestic product, it's hard to find a team as strong as this. The group of strong industries that form this team is good, but what makes a team go from good to great? More often than not, out of that group of talented individuals there is one who stands out. This player becomes the franchise player. He or she is recognized for his or her talents and achievements, is able to endure change and difficulty and is always working to remain at the top of their game. The franchise player takes the team from good to great. In Canadian agriculture, the dairy industry is the franchise player, as it is recognized for its achievements, endures changes and difficulties and continually works to improve.

Firstly, the dairy industry is well recognized. Just like when one says the name Auston Matthews one thinks of the Toronto Maple Leafs, when one says the name of the Canadian dairy industry one thinks of Canadian agriculture. This recognition comes from the dairy industry's strengths and achievements—the unique supply management system, dairy farmers experience in Canada being one of the most noteworthy. This system protects dairy producers and Canadian consumers, who can enjoy a variety of products at a stable price without government assistance. Unlike other dairy industries across the globe, Canadian farmers can produce their product and receive a fair return. Other achievements dairy farmers are recognized for include their commitment to care for their animals and provide Canadians with natural healthy products.

The recognition the dairy industry receives is the first reason why it is Canadian agriculture's franchise player.

Secondly, the dairy industry is able to endure challenges and changes. As producers face challenges, such as declining consumption of dairy products, they develop new products and do more research to find ways to meet the needs of consumers. Some new products include smooth cottage cheese from Gay Lea Foods and niche market foods, such as grass-fed, lactose-free or omega-3 milk. Recently, as the government works to develop a new food guide, the dairy industry has been at the forefront providing science-based research as to why dairy products should remain in the food guide. The dairy industry demonstrated its ability to endure challenges again when it was experiencing difficulty with competing products taking away from Canadian dairy markets. This challenge resulted in the development of an ingredients strategy. This strategy allowed the industry to face this opposition and grow the market for Canadian milk and components, and continue to provide a stable quota system that supported producers. The ability of the dairy industry to remain strong through these and other challenges make it the franchise player of Canadian agriculture.

Finally, as Pittsburgh Penguins franchise player Sidney Crosby knows well, one needs to keep improving in order to stay at the top of one's game. The dairy industry similarly continues to work hard to improve. It does this by implementing strategies from other countries and experts, and continually updating and adjusting protocols to meet needs. The dairy industry has developed, implemented and continues to develop strategies that contribute to its success. Seventy five per cent of Canadian herds are part of milk recording programs that assist producers on the individual level to achieve better production and components. Producers have access to genetic evaluation programs through Holstein Canada and Semex. These programs help individual farms perform their best as they allow for genetic improvements, which lead to better cow health, longevity and production. The industry is always updating protocols on cow handling, traceability, and milk safety and quality through programs, such as the Canadian Quality Milk program and proAction. These updates allow producers to be sure they are meeting the standards they have set for their products. These high standards ensure the dairy industry stays at the top of its game. The dairy industry has also been able to use tools and products developed by other countries in order to improve. The integration of robotics into Canadian dairy farms has given producers the ability to focus on reproduction, somatic cell count and feeding instead of milking. Producers have also benefitted from activity detection collar technology. Another area the Canadian dairy industry is continually working to improve is sustainability. The industry hosted a successful sustainability symposium in Ottawa in November 2017 where members of the dairy industry were able to discuss the important role modern genetic and genomic technologies play in helping ensure a sustainable future for Canadian agriculture. The ability of the dairy industry to keep improving is another trait that makes it the franchise player.

Therefore, the dairy industry is the franchise player of Canadian agriculture since it is recognized for its great achievements, how it endures changes and challenges, and continually works to improve. Although Canadian agriculture achieves success as the industries within it work together, a franchise player with these qualities helps inspire the team to continue to succeed for years to come.