



## ALBERTA: THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT FOR AGRICULTURE

What are the ingredients in the recipe for growing great potatoes? Fertile land, abundant water, warm days, cool nights, lots of sunshine and minimal disease or pests. You will find all of these ingredients and more in Alberta; the place is the right environment for agriculture.



Southern Alberta, where some of our table and processed potatoes are grown, is warm, dry and blessed with some of the highest number of annual hours of sunshine in Canada. The dry climate eliminates many common disease risks, and with more than 1.6 million acres of irrigated land, there is abundant room to rotate crops for the 40,000 acres of potatoes grown each year.

Alberta's agriculture advantage is no secret in the potato industry, with acres doubling from 1997 to 2009 and room for more. The irrigation infrastructure in southern Alberta is impressive, with conveyance canals spanning more than 12,000 kilometres. The eastern slope watershed of the Rocky Mountains supplies 13 organized irrigation districts blanketing the south. With the irrigation districts' infrastructure valued at \$3.5 billion and the provincially-owned infrastructure valued at \$5.5 billion, we are fortunate to have reservoir capacity sufficient to support an entire growing season.

Southern Alberta has elevations greater than 3,000 feet in most growing areas, which ensures warm days and cool nights which encourages healthy potato growth and vigorous plants. This climate and environment produces high quality fresh and processing potatoes. The winters in Alberta deliver an extended "deep-freeze" that eliminates many soil borne diseases typically experienced in other growing regions.

On average, northern Alberta experiences 115 to 125 frost-free days, while southern Alberta experiences 125 to 145 frost-free days. Annual precipitation varies, but on average northern Alberta receives 475mm of annual precipitation with southern Alberta receiving 375mm. Only 60% of this moisture falls between the beginning of May and the end of August, providing for low humidity and bright sunshine that makes for low disease pressure, superb quality and the country's highest potato yields.

In northern Alberta, the planting season runs from late April to mid-May and is characterized by war, fry weather with some of the highest number of annual hours of sunshine in Canada. The harvest begins in late August and is typically completed by the end of September.

In southern Alberta, planting season runs between April and early May. Early potato varieties are harvested in early August with the main harvest of storage potatoes running from early September to mid-October.