

RR-01

Soybeans in Canada

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Since soybean's introduction to Canada in 1893, the area and production of soybean has grown to more than 2.2 million hectares in 2016, most of which being in the provinces of Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba with smaller areas in Saskatchewan and the Maritimes. The majority of soybean production is represented by genetically modified (GM) herbicide tolerant crop, especially in Manitoba. However, in contrast to some of the largest soybean producing countries in North and South America, a significant area, ranging from 25 to 30%, in Ontario and Quebec, is planted to non-GM soybean crop grown primarily as identity preserved (IP) food grade soybeans for export markets. A good marketing strategy and reputation built over a number of years in European and Asian markets, combined with higher protein content due to a cooler climate have ensured a continued demand for non-GM Canadian soybeans. Whereas private seed companies, with few exceptions, have focused on GM soybean cultivar development, Canadian public breeding programs have managed to retain their relevance by developing and releasing productive food grade non-GM soybean cultivars. Production and breeding objectives along with opportunities and challenges of the Canadian soybean industry will be discussed.