

# Crops add billions to our economy

A new CropLife Canada report says the use of biotechnology has been a major boon

BY ALEX BINKLEY  
Ontario Farmer

Ottawa - For all the controversy surrounding the use of pesticides, fertilizers and biotechnology, they add \$7.9 billion a year in value to the Canadian economy through increased production of crops, fruits, vegetables and potatoes, says a report prepared for CropLife Canada.

The breakdown is \$6.4 billion for the higher quantity and quality of field crops, \$358 million for fruit varieties, \$508 million for vegetables and \$614 million for potatoes, says the report.

The increased production "generates a further \$6.4 billion in economic off-farm activity and 97,121 jobs (full-

time equivalent)." Ontario is the big winner in off-farm benefits with \$1.75 billion in economic spin-offs and more than 22,000 jobs.

"About 65 per cent of Canada's \$10.4 billion food trade balance (food value exported minus food value imported) arises because of production efficiencies attained through the use of plant biotechnology/crop protection products," says the report, prepared by Mark Goodwin Consulting Ltd. All this activity translates into an additional \$385 million in taxes for government coffers.

Without the availability of pesticides, fertilizers and biotech, Canada would need another 37 million acres of cropland to produce the same amount of food. That is equivalent of the total annual cropped area of Saskatchewan, or four times that of Ontario.

The report says pesticide sales rose to \$1.42 billion in

2006 from \$1.27 billion in 2001 with herbicides accounting for 75 per cent of the sales. In 2010, there were nearly 22 million acres of biotech crops, primarily canola, in Canada.

The switch to reduced tillage made possible by improved herbicides and biotech crops has resulted in a 4.1 fold increase in carbon sequestration in cultivated land while 171 million less litres of diesel fuel are consumed in farming operations annually.

Consumers benefit as well, the report adds. "For domestically grown produce, on an annual basis, the average Canadian family saves 41 to 53 per cent on vegetables and 34 to 39 per cent on fruit due to the use of modern crop protection. Savings on any food that requires wheat flour or soy products, commonly used in processed foods, may be as high as 69 per cent.

In total, the Canadian farm and food industry sector generates more than \$70 billion in economic activity, 8.8 per cent of our GDP and accounts for one out of every eight jobs, employing two million people. With the decline of the automobile industry, it has been the biggest employer in Canada.

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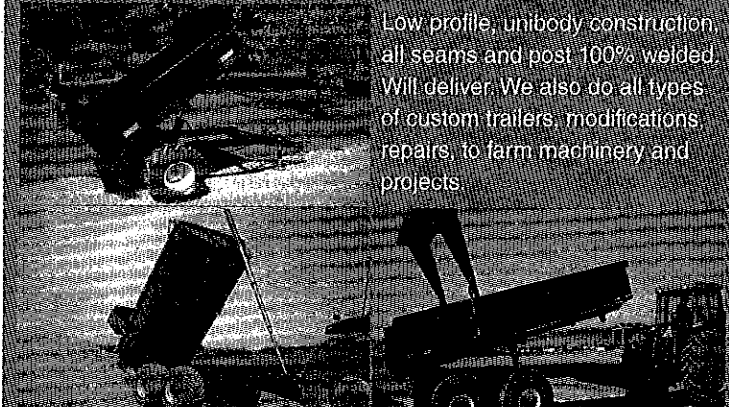
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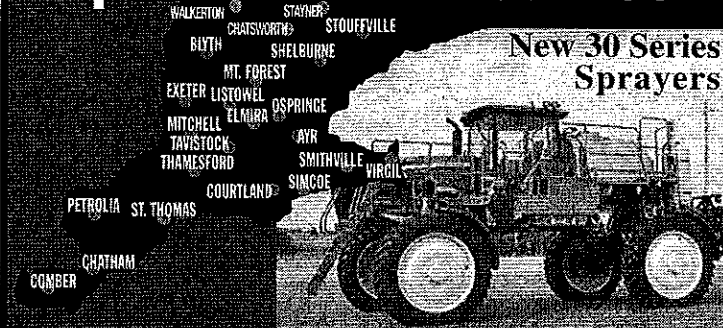
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