

AGRICULTURE, FARMING & FOOD PROCESSING

INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

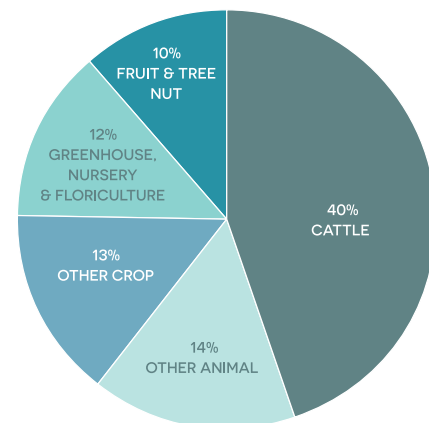
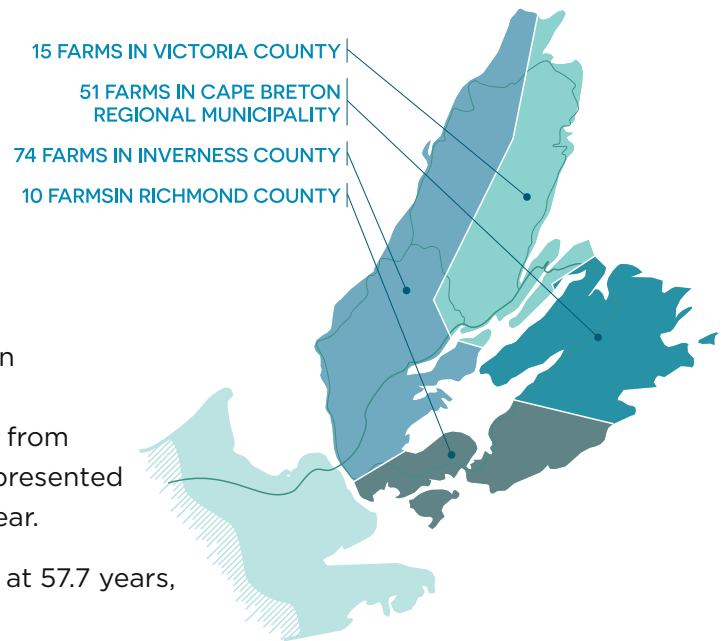


Revised: Apr 29, 2024

Unama'ki - Cape Breton is more recognized for its natural beauty, tourism attractions, fishing, and coal industries than it is as a major hub for agriculture and food production. However, agriculture, farming and food production do play a role in the Island's economy, although on a smaller scale compared to other regions in Nova Scotia. Given its temperate maritime climate and diverse range of soils and landscapes, Unama'ki - Cape Breton presents significant opportunities in this industry.

INDUSTRY FACT

- As of the 2021 [Statistics Canada Census of Agriculture](#), Unama'ki - Cape Breton accounted for 7% of Nova Scotia's total registered farms, with 176 out of 2,741 farms in the province. As of October 2023, there are 74 farms in Inverness County, 51 in Cape Breton Regional Municipality, 15 in Victoria County and 10 in Richmond County.
- There are 38,810 acres (15,706 hectares) of farmland on the Island, as of 2021. In 2021, Unama'ki - Cape Breton generated \$32 million from gross farm receipts, excluding forest products. This represented 5% of the total provincial gross farm receipts for the year.
- As of 2021, the average age of farm operators remains at 57.7 years, this is consistent with 2016 Census figures.
- In Unama'ki - Cape Breton, the leading five farm types include:
 - Cattle ranching (40%)
 - Other animal production (14%)
 - Other crop farming (13%)
 - Greenhouse, nursery & floriculture (12%)
 - Fruit & tree nut farming (10%)



- › In 2021, 57% of farms on Cape Breton Island reported gross farm receipts under \$25,000, compared to 51% in Nova Scotia. Meanwhile, only 17% of farms in the Island reported receipts of \$100,000 or more, which is lower than the 27% reported for this category across the entire province. This highlights the prominence of small-scale agricultural operations in Unama'ki - Cape Breton.

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

- › **Land Availability and Affordability:** When compared to the major agricultural areas of Canada, Unama'ki - Cape Breton has a relatively more affordable land price for agriculture uses.
- › **Tourism Synergies:** With its reputation as a world-class tourism destination, the Island provides the potential opportunity for farm operators to combine agricultural production with agritourism experiences. Experiences such as farm stays, pick-your-own farms, and culinary tourism focused on local products could not only attract new and returning visitors, but could help grow the agritourism industry on the Island.
- › **Ecological Food practices:** With small-scale farms being predominant, farmers can promote their production of fresh, healthy, locally-produced good quality food.
- › **Existing Infrastructures:**
 - Processing Facilities: [The Cape Breton Food Hub](#) in Bras d'Or (CBRM) has a well-equipped commercial kitchen and is available to rent 24 hours a day.
 - Farmers Markets in Cape Breton
 - [Cape Breton Farmers' Market](#) (Sydney, year-round)
 - [Isle Madame Public Market](#) (seasonal)
 - [Mabou Farmers' Market](#) (seasonal)
 - [Baddeck and Area Community Market](#) (seasonal)
 - [Louisburg Farmers' Market](#) (seasonal)

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- › **Agricultural Production:** Unama'ki - Cape Breton's abundant land can support various types of agricultural production, including vegetable farming, fruit orchards, and livestock farming. Opportunities exist for those interested in growing crops, raising livestock, or producing specialty products like honey or maple syrup.
- › **Specialty Crops and Niche Products:** Consider growing specialty crops, such as herbs, medicinal plants, or unique fruits, to cater to niche markets. These products can be sold locally or regionally.
- › **Agritourism:** There are opportunities to bring visitors to farms by offering farm tours, pick-your-own experiences, or other agritourism activities. This can attract visitors looking for authentic rural experiences.
- › **Food Processing:** Establish a food processing facility to transform locally grown or produced products into value-added items like jams, sauces, or frozen products. An investment in the Food Processing sector can help reduce food waste and provide food security for local residents and beyond.

- › **Farmers' Markets:** Unama'ki - Cape Breton has a strong tradition of farmers' markets in communities across the Island, where producers can interact with the community while selling their products.
- › **Greenhouse and Hydroponics:** The temperate maritime climate means that greenhouse and hydroponic farming is a method used to extend the growing season to produce a year-round yield of crops. This can be particularly appealing for fresh produce.
- › **Meat Processing:** There may be opportunities to establish a meat processing facility, providing services for local farmers and offering specialty meat products to consumers.
- › **Exporting Agricultural Products:** Unama'ki - Cape Breton's location is well-positioned for exporting agricultural products, particularly to international markets that value high-quality food products.
- › **Sustainable Practices:** Emphasizing sustainable and environmentally friendly agricultural methods can be a unique selling point and appeal to consumers looking for responsibility and ethically-sourced products.
- › **Agricultural Education and Workshops:** Offering agricultural education, workshops, and training can help build a skilled workforce and promote best practices in farming.

KEY RESOURCES

BUSINESS SUPPORT

- › **Cape Breton Partnership** is an Island-wide, private-sector led economic development organization in Unama'ki - Cape Breton. It is funded by the Government of Nova Scotia, the Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM), Victoria County, Inverness County, Richmond County, and the Town of Port Hawkesbury. Cape Breton Partnership administers two Regional Enterprise Networks (RENs), the Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM) Regional Enterprise Network, and the Cape Breton Regional Enterprise Network (CBREN), offering support and services for businesses of all sizes, entrepreneurs, and community organizations.
- › **Department of Agriculture of Nova Scotia** helps support and grow the agriculture and agri-food sectors throughout the province. The Department of Agriculture develops programs, services and policies to help farms be more competitive, sustainable and profitable, while working with farmers, community groups and partners to help increase Nova Scotia's food supply & security.

INDUSTRY SUPPORT

- › **Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture** serves as the provincial organization for various agricultural commodity groups, regional agricultural associations, and individual farmers in Nova Scotia. Its primary role and functions include: Advocacy and Representation, Information and Communication, Education and Training, Networking and Collaboration, Research and Innovation, Policy Development, Marketing and Promotion, Farm Safety and Health, Environmental Stewardship, Industry Development, Government Relations, and Insurance Programs.

- › **Island Food Network** promotes and supports local food and agriculture in Unama'ki - Cape Breton. They advocate for change in the food system, cultivate food knowledge, support initiatives around food, and connect leaders in the food industry.
- › **Food & Beverage Atlantic** is an industry association that provides training and marketing support to food and beverage businesses.
- › **Nova Scotia Farm Loan Board** provides financing support to Nova Scotian producers as an agriculture-focused lender.
- › **Local Real Estate Agents** have an inventory of available land listing and can help anyone looking for farmland.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

- › **Verschuren Centre** is a home for bioscience, with fermentation facilities offering the right size to bridge the gap between laboratory prototypes and industrial scale. The Verschuren Centre also works directly with companies on special projects.
- › **Perennia** is a provincial development agency with the mission to support growth, transformation and economic development in Nova Scotia's agriculture, seafood, and food and beverage sectors. They are Nova Scotia's only technical development agency focused solely on the food sector and maximizing its value.

WEB RESOURCES

- › [Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture](#)
- › [Find a local Agriculture Representative](#)
- › [Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture](#)
- › [Certification Maps - Food & Beverage Atlantic](#)
- › [Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture - Programs & Services](#)
- › [Nova Scotia Environmental Farm Plan](#)
- › [Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia](#)
- › [Nova Scotia Government - Agricultural Programs](#)
- › [Cape Breton-Richmond Federation of Agriculture](#)
- › [Inverness-Victoria Federation of Agriculture](#)

4 of 4

For more information, contact:

Cape Breton Partnership
285 Alexandra Street
Sydney, Nova Scotia B1S 2E8

Phone: 902-562-0122

Email: info@capebretonpartnership.com

