



Possibility grows here.

# Opportunities for Growth: Ontario Garlic

**In August and September, festivals are held across Ontario to celebrate our local garlic.** As demand for Ontario-grown garlic continues to grow, there are opportunities to get more of this wonderfully versatile—and pungent!—vegetable on Ontarians' plates.

## GARLIC PRODUCTION IN ONTARIO



400 farms across Ontario grow garlic: there are approximately six large-scale growers with more than 30 acres of garlic in production, and a number of smaller growers with five acres of garlic or less.



Over the past few years, Ontario growers have typically produced between around 600 to 800 tonnes of garlic in a year, supplying between 6 per cent to 11 per cent of local consumption.



There are two types of garlic grown in Ontario: hardneck and softneck. Most of Ontario's garlic production is the hardneck variety. While hardneck varieties produce a tall, flower stalk called a garlic 'scape' that needs to be removed, softneck varieties do not. Hardneck varieties are more winter hardy and produce larger cloves, but they have a shorter storage life than softneck varieties.

Garlic farmers plant a garlic clove in the fall and harvest the crop the following summer. Because garlic doesn't produce a true seed, growers use a clove from the garlic they harvested a few months earlier to propagate the crop. In the spring, growers need to remove the scapes, typically by hand, to direct the plant's energy to garlic bulb development. If the scape is left to grow, it competes for nutrients and results in a smaller and lower-quality bulb.

## GARLIC EXPANSION OPPORTUNITY

There is an opportunity to expand garlic production in Ontario to supply 20 per cent of annual provincial consumption. This would mean approximately 800 to 1,000 acres of additional garlic production—more than doubling the 750 acres used in 2018—depending on the average yields per acre. This higher level of production would generate another \$10 to \$15 million in farm gate revenue.

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## WHAT WILL ENABLE EXPANSION?

There are a few challenges facing production expansion of Ontario garlic. Most significantly, Ontario garlic must compete with garlic produced in China, which retails at a much lower cost. The increase in garlic imported from China is part of why Ontario garlic production had declined over the past few decades – prior to 1998, there were more than 4,000 acres of garlic grown in the province. Ontario garlic also competes with lower cost imports from the United States, Spain, and Mexico.

Growers, marketers, retailers, research and development institutions, and governments, as well as consumers, all have a role to play in expanding garlic production.

### **The following actions would enable expansion:**

- Establishing a dedicated garlic seed business. As garlic farmers currently must save around 20 per cent of their harvest to be able to plant for the next season, having growers who are solely dedicated to providing garlic seeds can help increase a reliable seed supply.
- Researching cultivars that are ideal for Ontario's growing conditions, produce higher yields, and produce more cloves per bulb. Currently, growers rely almost exclusively on one cultivar called 'Music,' which may not be most ideal for Ontario's growing conditions.
- Growers and marketers supplying a critical mass of Ontario garlic for major retailers. As expanding garlic production depends on access to the major retail market, growers or marketers need to have enough supply that meets the volume needs of a major retailer.
- Investing in controlled atmospheric storage so that garlic growers and marketers can supply retailers more reliably and consistently for a longer period of the year.
- Creating greater consumer awareness of the quality and attributes of local garlic to help differentiate Ontario garlic from all imported garlic through a broad-based Ontario garlic promotion campaign.

Read the full report by JRG Consulting Group: [www.greenbelt.ca/planting\\_seeds](http://www.greenbelt.ca/planting_seeds)