



Possibility grows here.

Opportunities for Growth: Ontario Pears

Every year Ontarians consume around 26,500 tonnes of pears, with approximately 12 per cent supplied by Ontario farmers. Five major varieties are grown here, including a popular favourite, Bartlett, as well as Clapp's Favourite, Anjou, Bosc and Flemish Beauty. Unlike most fruits, pears don't ripen on the tree – they are harvested early and ripen under controlled conditions. Pick-Your-Own varieties are available on many Ontario farms, but remember, these should be picked firm for final ripening at home.

PEAR PRODUCTION IN ONTARIO



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Pears are harvested in late August to early October and can be stored for four to six months depending on the variety. This relatively narrow window can limit the availability of local pears year-round. However, there are still opportunities to expand local pear production to increase supply.

PEAR EXPANSION OPPORTUNITY

Ontario production could expand to supply more than 75 per cent of Ontario's consumption requirements for at least one third of the year. This represents a 6,500 tonne opportunity for Ontario growers – a doubling of current volumes! With this volume increase, Ontario growers would be supplying just under 25 per cent of the Ontario market.

The extra 3,000 tonnes of pear production would provide an additional \$5 million in farm gate revenue for pear growers.



However, these metrics are based on consistent pear consumption throughout the year, but if Ontarians consume more pears during our harvest period, the opportunity could exceed this doubling and even displace most imports.

While much of the pear production takes place in the Niagara region, location should not be a limiting factor. For instance, the growing expertise of apple growers in the Norfolk area can be leveraged into pear production, representing an opportunity for apple growers to diversify their operations by adding acres for pear production.

WHAT WILL ENABLE EXPANSION?

Expanding Ontario's pear production will come up against a few challenges. It requires an investment by growers into high density pear production, as well as investments into pear varieties tolerant to fire blight, which affects the two most popular varieties grown in the province today, Bartlett and Bosc.

The following actions would enable expansion:

- Planting varieties with fire blight tolerance including Harrow Gold, Harrow Crisp, Cold Snap, and Harrow Sweet.
- An investment from growers in high-density pear orchards rather than the more traditional standard tree orchards.
- Expansion of pear production outside of the Niagara region.
- Investment in controlled atmospheric storage facilities to extend the marketing season for Ontario pears.
- Improving the appearance of Ontario pears to better compete with imports in retail settings.
- Ongoing retailer support of Ontario-grown pears, and continued promotion by Foodland Ontario.

Read the full report, *Plant the Seeds: Opportunities to Grow Southern Ontario's Fruit and Vegetable Sector* by JRG Consulting Group: www.greenbelt.ca/planting_seeds