



## HISTORY OF TURKEY INDUSTRY IN ONTARIO

Following the end of the Second World War, agriculture underwent great changes in technology. The poultry industry was one of the leaders. The beginning of the turkey industry consisted of small New York dress operations until the mid 50's when mass evisceration and cryovac was introduced. As more capital became available for agricultural use, research was expanded, breeds improved, and mass production vis a vis the Model T Ford came into use.

This led to rapid expansion both in the United States and Canada. The U.S. turkey industry started in California and Texas, while the provinces of Ontario and Quebec were the leaders in Canada but always with an eye on what was happening throughout the United States. In the USA the pattern was similar to a boom and bust with frozen cryovac product moving to Canada. Through the 1950s and 60s, this made production planning in Canada extremely difficult.

In those years, Ontario had a very active turkey growers' association called the Ontario Turkey Association. Some other provinces had similar associations and together, the provinces formed the Canadian Turkey Association (CTA). The CTA met several times per year and voluntarily set production targets that seemed within reach for Canadian growers to sell their product and get a return on their investment. Despite all this planning, it was usually impossible to predetermine the size of the U.S. crop for the succeeding year. It, therefore, meant that during the U.S. boom cycle, Canada was subjected to large import volumes, hence a drastic lowering of Canadian prices which resulted in the number of producers dropping dramatically.

In an attempt to blunt the effects of these unwanted imports, lobbies were mounted in Ottawa in an attempt to control the imports, so that they would not permanently damage the industry. At one such lobby efforts in 1962, it was revealed that the GATT (General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade) had a clause (Article XI) that would stop imports if provincial marketing boards were formed to place quotas on individual growers. Hence, the first-ever turkey marketing board was formed in British Columbia with the Prairie provinces following suit. Ontario formed its board, the Ontario Turkey Producers' Marketing Board (now known as Turkey Farmers of Ontario) in June of 1965. However, the OTPMB was formed at that time without quotas. In 1969, over 66% of the Ontario producers voted in favour of establishing a plan for a marketing system with quota controls.

From 1969 to 1973, individual provincial boards operated under a voluntary umbrella of their own, which was called The National Turkey Co-ordinating Committee. This was simply an extension of the old CTF and its main function was to coordinate provincial production to try to achieve a balance between supply and demand. In actual fact, Canadian turkey prices in the years 1965 to 1973 inclusive, were simply the Ohio live price, plus freight and duty. Many Ontario growers went out of business.

Just to give you some indication of the dramatic drops of the turkey growers – in the late 1950s, there were 1,500 producers. By the early 1960s, only one half of this number remained. By the time the marketing board was formed, 450 turkey producers were registered.

As this situation seemed likely to eventually kill our Canadian industry, pressure on Ottawa eventually produced federal legislative Bill C176, which would implement Article XI of the GATT agreement. This legislation provided the basis for the inception of the Canadian Egg Marketing Agency (CEMA) which rescued Canadian egg producers from a similar situation.

Following the formation of CEMA, the Canadian Turkey Marketing Agency (now known as Turkey Farmers of Canada) was formed in February 1974 with 7 provinces at that time joining to establish a national plan. Since then, New Brunswick has joined the plan resulting in 8 provinces working together to enhance the value of the plan to producers in their provinces.

After several years of trade negotiations, in 1993, the resolution of the long and drawn out GATT negotiations was the loss of Article XI. This new General Agreement on Tariffs & Trades was implemented on January 1, 1995, and Article XI was replaced with tariffs.

Today, there continue to be 8 provinces as well as 2 Primary Processors and 1 Further Processor comprising the Turkey Farmers of Canada. Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island are not members of TFC.

For more information on the Turkey Farmers of Canada, you can visit [www.turkeyfarmersofcanada.ca](http://www.turkeyfarmersofcanada.ca).