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**Mechanized Agriculture and the Canadian Family Farm**

**Mechanized Agriculture**

* Mechanized agriculture is a form of intensive agriculture that relies on complex technologies and production practices rather than human power.
* While this form of agriculture seems more convenient and efficient, it presents its own challenges.
* Mechanization of the farm has resulted in an intensive use of fertilizers, insecticides and other chemicals to maximize yields. This is an added expense and consumes large amounts of energy while posing a large threat on the environmental damage through water pollution and pesticides and fertilizer run-off.
* In recent years, use of chemicals to genetically modify food has posed a possible health risk.
* In countries, such as Canada, government intervention has reduced mechanized agriculturalist’s autonomy by controlling taxation, quotas, land purchase, subsidization payments and production interfering with farming as a successful enterprise.

*The Canadian Family Farm*

* Over a century ago, immigrants came to the Canadian prairies with their families and agricultural expertise. Though farm size has increased and farming practices have changed, Canadian agriculture remains the family farm: strongly independent, family-owned and operated enterprises.
* Division on family labour farms tends to be gender-specific. Men operate farm equipment, ready the fields for seeding, care for livestock and take care of the harvest. Women manage household chores, prepare meals, and grow garden. If the need arises a women will occasionally help with “men’s duties”. Children begin helping at a young age by planting and weeding gardens.
* Through the mid seventies, family farms were thriving industries; however, recently, low commodity pricing, rising expenses, European and American subsidies, rising debt, fears of ecological disturbance and government unwillingness to provide meaningful assistance have created insurmountable obstacles for Canadian family farms and could lead to its demise.
* Statistics show that the number of Canadian farms has been decreasing. In 1976, Canada had 338, 552 farms but this number decreased to 276, 548 in 1996. If this trend continues, the loss of the family farm will be an incalculable loss for Canadian society.