

Industry Sector Profile

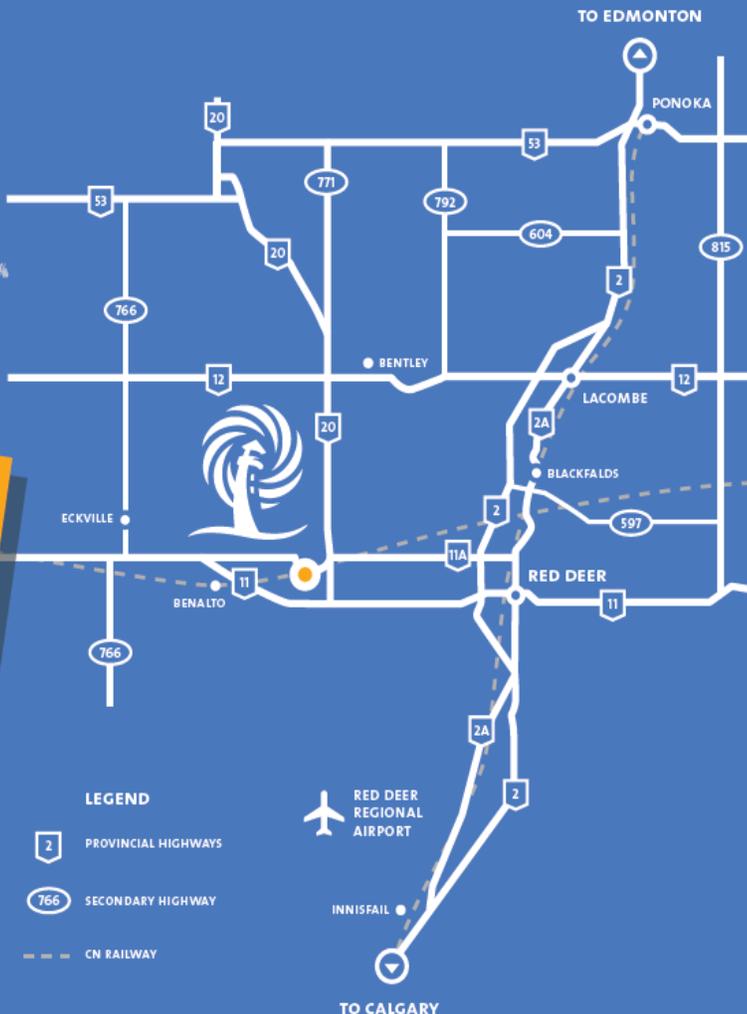
Value-Added
Agri-food





Snapshot of Sylvan Lake

The town of Sylvan Lake is situated on the southeast edge of Sylvan Lake, a 15-kilometre-long freshwater lake in Red Deer County. Sylvan Lake is more than just a picturesque destination; it's a thriving community that combines lakeside charm with vibrant economic opportunities.



Location

The town of Sylvan Lake is centrally located within the Calgary-Edmonton Corridor, just 18 km west of Red Deer, the third largest city in the province, with access to all major highways, rail lines and airports, connecting it with national and international markets. The town has easy access to an immediate trading area of over 313,000 people and because of its close proximity to the QEII highway, is positioned to access a market of over 2.7 million.

About the Sector

The agricultural value-added sector transforms, supports, and enhances primary agricultural production, including animal food manufacturing, grain and oilseed milling, dairy and meat product manufacturing, or the production of agricultural, construction, and mining machinery.

Within Sylvan Lake this sector encompasses manufacturing and processing alike, as local activities span the full agricultural supply chain connecting both “upstream” and “downstream” components of the industry.

Downstream manufacturers purchase raw materials (e.g., milk, meat, or grain) from local farms and process them into higher-value goods. This process of adding value increases the market worth of agricultural products. Conversely, upstream manufacturers produce goods and materials used directly in farming operations. These include the fabrication of agricultural machinery and equipment, animal feed, and other farm inputs, typically improving productivity and efficiency. Together, upstream and downstream activities form the foundation of the value-added agriculture sector.

Regional Approach

Central Alberta is home to a diverse and growing economy with a highly skilled workforce across a range of industries. With expertise in oil and gas, agriculture, manufacturing, and healthcare, the region’s talent pool brings technical proficiency, adaptability, and a strong work ethic.

The region offers a strong foundation for investors focused on stability, innovation, and success. This robust economic landscape draws businesses, supports job creation, and fosters steady population growth.



Local Competitive Advantage

Sylvan Lake is more than just a picturesque destination; it's a thriving community that combines lakeside charm with vibrant economic opportunities. Located in the heart of Alberta, Sylvan Lake provides businesses the opportunity to locate within a tight-knit rural community, with access to urban centres and services.

The municipality consistently ranks highly in terms of business friendliness, with local entrepreneurs noting a business-first mentality and ease of connection with municipal staff. Local businesses also rank available labour and their current labour force highly, suggesting the town is home to a highly skilled workforce.

Specific to the value-added agricultural sector, Sylvan Lake provides easy access to natural goods, a strong demand structure due to the abundance of agricultural land within the surrounding area and the volume of major processing and distribution centres in central Alberta. In addition, Sylvan Lake's position along the CANAMEX connects local producers to regional markets and processing facilities, positioning the community as a convenient location for small-scale agri-food or farm-to-market businesses.

Demographic Advantage

The town of Sylvan Lake is situated on the southeast edge of Sylvan Lake, a 15-kilometre-long freshwater lake in Red Deer County.

Sylvan Lake's economy is thriving, having experienced remarkable growth since the early 2000s, with growth rates of 21.1% (from 2006 to 2011), 19.9% (2011-2016) and 7.9% (2016-2021) over the previous three Census periods. More recently, the town has had a growth rate of 13.4% over the past five years, one of the highest rates in Alberta. This rapid growth supports a forward-looking economy, with a diverse population seeking employment across a host of sectors.

The quality of life in Sylvan Lake is unmatched along the Calgary-Edmonton Corridor. Whether you're looking to invest, grow your business, or enjoy lakeside living, Sylvan Lake is ready to welcome you.



Business Supports

Bringing your business to our community offers a unique opportunity to tap into a vibrant ecosystem of support, collaboration, and innovation.



**Sustainable Canadian
Agricultural Partnership**

[The Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership](#) is a federal-provincial partnership that delivers grant programs that generate sustainable economic growth in the agricultural and agri-food sector. This 5-year (2023-2028), \$3.5 billion investment includes \$1 billion in federal programs and activities and \$2.5 billion in cost-shared programs and activities by federal-provincial-territorial governments. The Sustainable CAP framework represents a cost-shared federal-provincial investment of \$508 million over 5 years towards strategic programs and services for the agriculture and agri-food industry in Alberta.



OLDS COLLEGE
OF AGRICULTURE & TECHNOLOGY

[Olds College Centre for Innovation \(OCCI\)](#) is the applied research division of Olds College of Agriculture & Technology, and focuses on practical, industry-driven applied research that can be easily implemented by the agriculture industry. Industry partners connect with OCCI for support in the development and testing of innovative products in the core areas of crop production, livestock production, environmental stewardship, cereal breeding and technology integration.

[The Olds College Smart Farm](#) is made up of more than 3,000 acres of land for crop and forage production including state-of-the-art equipment and technology, 1,000-head capacity feedlot, commercial cow/calf herd, Purebred Red Angus herd and sheep flock — as well as expertise and leadership in ag tech research and development. The Smart Farm also has access to greenhouses, labs, incubator space, a brewery, the National Meat Training Centre, plus additional infrastructure at Olds College of Agriculture & Technology.

Incentives & Programs

Sylvan Lake is committed to fostering a business-friendly climate through a range of programs and partnerships designed to support businesses, developers, and investors.

Invest Sylvan Lake

The **Non-Residential Tax Incentive Program** is aimed at stimulating economic growth and encouraging business development. Under this program, eligible properties may receive a 5-year municipal tax exemption on the increased assessed value resulting from new construction or significant expansion. During this period, a 75% reduction will be applied to the municipal portion of the tax bill. For more information, please email invest.sylvanlake.ca.



[The Agri-Processing Investment Tax Credit \(APITC\) program](#) provides a 12% non-refundable, non-transferable tax credit when businesses invest \$10 million or more in a project to build or expand a value-added agri-processing facility in Alberta. The program is open to any food manufacturers and bioprocessors that add value to commodities like grains or meat, or turn agricultural by-products into new consumer or industrial goods. Up to \$175 million in tax credits is available for each project. Eligible agri-processors have 10 years to claim the tax credit against their provincial income tax.

Industry Data

Sylvan Lake Business Counts

	1-9 Employees	10-49	50+	Sole Proprietor	Total
Dec 2013	7	0	1	20	28
Dec 2024	3	1	0	33	37

Sylvan Lake Exports and Sales*



* Export and sales figures represent the sum of all subsector activity within this field. Exports are community-based; they reflect any dollars spent from outside Sylvan Lake. All economic impact data is from Lightcast Analyst 2024.3.

Wages

Average Value-Added Agriculture Wages

Alberta
\$56,103

Sylvan Lake
\$55,212

¹ Sylvan Lake, Red Deer, Red Deer County, Lacombe, Lacombe County.

² A location quotient (LQ) measures how concentrated an industry or activity is in a region compared to a larger reference area (like a province or country). An LQ above 1.0 means the industry is more concentrated locally (a local strength or specialization), while below 1.0 means it's less concentrated.

Job Counts

152

Sylvan Lake Job Count
(-2% growth in the last decade)

5,794

Labour Recruitment Area Job Count¹



Labour Recruitment Area Location Quotient²

1.89



Value Proposition

Sylvan Lake offers a unique blend of strategic advantages that make it an ideal location for value-added agriculture. The region provides excellent access to key transportation routes, ensuring efficient distribution for local products. Sylvan Lake's proximity to a skilled and diverse workforce also helps support a wide range of agri-processing operations.

The community is further surrounded by productive grain, oilseed, and livestock farms, which provide raw materials for regional processors and create opportunities for small-scale food producers and agri-business startups. While most large-scale processing currently occurs elsewhere in Central Alberta, Sylvan Lake has the potential to capture some of this market while maintaining support for smaller-scale farm-to-table enterprises, direct-to-consumer markets, and small-scale food production that leverage local supply.

With respect to support farm-to-table enterprises or direct-to-consumer markets, another growing avenue is agri-tourism, which provides business growth opportunities while also allowing producers the opportunity to showcase locally produced products to a large consumer base through visitor experiences that capitalize on the community's already existing tourism sector.

Businesses also benefit from the region's strong agricultural foundation, with access to high-quality local inputs such as dairy, grains, and specialty crops. Beyond business logistics, Sylvan Lake offers an exceptional quality of life, with natural beauty, recreational opportunities, and vibrant community amenities that help attract and retain employees.



Financial Data

Nationally, the agricultural value-added sector has experienced growth driven by rising demand, though this has occurred alongside ongoing cost volatility and uncertain market conditions. Input costs represent the largest share of production expenses and remain highly variable, creating challenges for stable pricing.

Downstream processing and product development have also faced pressure. Over the last decade, profit margins have narrowed due to difficult growing conditions, increasing market power among consolidated retail buyers, and the impacts of international tariffs. As many agricultural value-added industries are globally integrated and rely on cross-border trade, near-term market conditions remain uncertain. At the same time, expanding global meat consumption, most notably in developing economies, has supported demand for Canadian agricultural exports.

The sector is considered capital intensive, requiring substantial up-front investment in facilities, equipment, and ongoing input costs. As a result, agricultural value-added production reflects characteristics of both traditional resource-based industries (large physical infrastructure requirements with relatively modest immediate returns) and more modern investment-driven industries (where capital outlays support greater output efficiency and longer-term value creation).

Within on-farm support services, rising technological complexity has shifted workforce needs. Automation and precision-agriculture tools have increased the requirement for technical skills, resulting in higher average wages even as overall employment numbers decline. Labour availability has become a persistent constraint, with shortages of trained workers limiting both growth and the pace of technology adoption.

Overall, the sector has seen considerable year-to-year revenue volatility due to changing consumer preferences and fluctuating commodity prices. Nonetheless, forecasts suggest steady, moderate growth through 2028. This outlook remains tempered by ongoing uncertainty in global trade relationships and supply chain dynamics.

“Sylvan lake is in the perfect location – along busy economic corridors, while remaining a small town with easy access to urban amenities.”



Living in Sylvan Lake

Sylvan Lake offers an exceptional quality of life, blending small-town charm with modern amenities and year-round outdoor recreation.

A Lifestyle That Balances Work and Play

In the heart of Central Alberta, Sylvan Lake glows with crisp skies, golden leaves, and plenty to explore. Stroll the trails, browse local shops, or cozy up on a patio, experience the small town charm, lakeside leisure and big-time adventures.

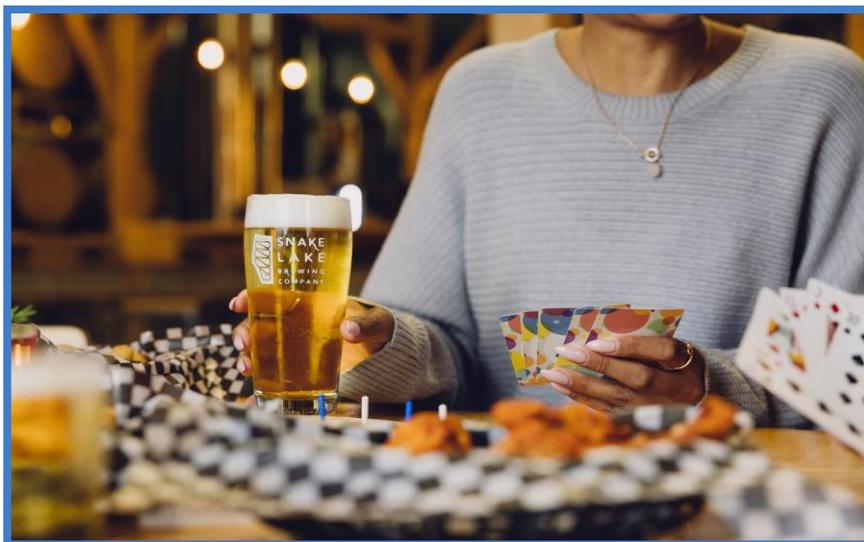
The NexSource Centre provides state-of-the-art facilities, including NHL-sized arenas, an aquatic center, and spaces for community events. The town features excellent healthcare services, strong public and Catholic schools, and a vibrant arts and culture scene. Residents and visitors enjoy summer activities like boating and paddleboarding, while winter brings ice fishing and hockey. The revitalized waterfront and affordable housing make Sylvan Lake a premier destination for living and recreation.



Local Spotlight

Sylvan Lake and the surrounding region is home to a growing value-added agriculture industry that combines local raw materials with innovative processing to create high-quality food and beverage products. Anchoring the scene is **Snake Lake Brewing Company**, which crafts premium beer using Alberta-grown barley and proudly represents Sylvan Lake's entrepreneurial spirit. Just outside town, **Sylvan Star Cheese** is internationally recognized for its award-winning Gouda, made using milk from local dairy farms and traditional Dutch techniques. Nearby, **Dairy Innovation West** (a state-of-the-art milk concentration facility in Lacombe County) is set to transform Alberta's dairy sector by reducing transportation needs and supplying concentrated milk components for further processing.

Further boosting the region's agri-processing footprint, **P&H Milling Group** is building a large-scale flour mill in Springbrook, expected to process 750 tonnes of wheat daily once operational. Together, these facilities illustrate how the Sylvan Lake area is emerging as a hub for sustainable, value-added agricultural production in central Alberta.



consider yourself
invited

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Invest
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