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Le Cultivateur | The Cultivator



Louis Hébert sowing near Québec ("Louis Hébert semant", 1918 print by Georges Latour, Library and Archives Canada, MIKAN No 3775954).

The *cultivateur*, or cultivator, was a person who cultivated and exploited the land in order to get a crop.

He may have been the proprietor of his own parcel(s) of land. He could, depending on the land size, have employed other agricultural workers. If he didn't own the land, he was called a tenant farmer.

Most of our ancestors were farmers, peasants who lived off the land. The techniques, tools and procedures they used were rudimentary. First and foremost, they cultivated the land to serve the needs of their family. Any meagre surpluses could be sold at the market. In the garden, the farmer and his wife grew vegetables and tobacco. Sometimes they had a few fruit trees. In the fields, wheat took up two thirds of the land while peas, barley and oats were planted in the rest. There was also space for animals and a wooded section.

Once developed, the land met the family's basic needs: food, clothing, a house and firewood for the winter, plus some excess to sell or barter with at the market. With 20 cultivated arpents, the couple would not have any surpluses. With 40, they would have a little, which was the case for most farming families. It was a simple life, but also a hard one involving manual labour from sunrise to sunset.

Synonyms: [farmer](#), [ploughman](#).

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Sources:

- André Lachance, *Vivre, aimer et mourir en Nouvelle-France; Juger et punir en Nouvelle-France: la vie quotidienne aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Montréal, Québec: Éditions Libre Expression, 2004), 133-134.
- "Cultivateur, trice", Portail lexique du *Centre national de ressources textuelles et lexicales*, <https://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/cultivateur>.

