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Statistics Canada

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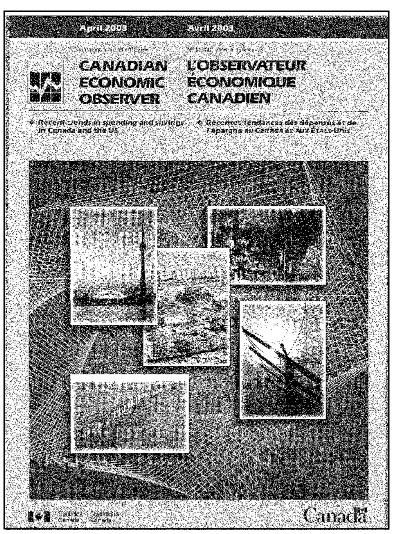
MAJOR RELEASES

(continued on page 2)



Canadian economic observer
April 2003

The April print issue of Statistics Canada's flagship publication for economic statistics, *Canadian economic observer*, analyses current economic conditions, summarizes the major economic events that occurred in March and presents a feature article on recent trends in spending and savings in Canada and the United States. A separate statistical summary contains a wide range of tables and graphs on the principal economic indicators for Canada, the provinces and the major industrial nations.

The April 2003 issue of *Canadian economic observer*, Vol. 16, no. 4 (11-010-XPB, $23/$227), is now available. See *How to order products*. Visit the *Canadian economic observer's* page on Statistics Canada's website (*www.statcan.ca*). From the *Canadian statistics* page, choose *Economic conditions*, and on that page see the banner ad for *Canadian economic observer*. From this page, by clicking on *Feature articles*, you can also read the April feature article, "Recent trends in spending and savings in Canada and the United States." For more information, contact Francine Roy (613-951-3627; *ceo@statcan.ca*), Current Economic Analysis Group.

OTHER RELEASES

MAJOR RELEASES

Principal field crops: Seeding intentions

March 31, 2003

After two years of difficult crop growing conditions, Canadian grain growers appear to be returning to proven planting formulas, as times remain uncertain in the agricultural grains sector.

Data from the March Intentions Survey of 12,200 farmers, conducted during the last week of the month, showed growers expect to plant less oats, barley and lentils in 2003, and move back into wheat, canola and flaxseed.

The largest increase anticipated in any crop is a 13.8% gain in canola acreage. Farmers are anticipated to plant more than 10.9 million acres of canola nationally, up from the 9.6 million acres planted in June 2002. In Saskatchewan alone, the canola acreage is expected to jump 19.5% or 850,000 acres to 5.2 million.

Total wheat acreage is expected to increase a marginal 0.4% to 26.4 million. However, most of the increase is in winter wheat. Acreages are expected to decline for spring wheat, the major cash crop on the Prairies, and durum wheat, which is used to make pasta.

Seeding intentions of major grains and oilseeds

Crop	2002	2003	2002 to 2003
	Thousands of acres		% change
Total wheat	26,291	26,405	0.4
Spring wheat	19,156	18,976	-0.9
Barley	12,719	12,590	-1.0
Summerfallow	10,290	10,040	-2.4
Canola	9,614	10,942	13.8
Durum wheat	6,150	5,865	-4.6
Oats	5,927	5,420	-8.6
Corn for Grain	3,211	3,228	0.5
Dry Field Peas	3,205	3,200	-0.2
Soybeans	2,546	2,389	-6.2
Flaxseed	1,710	1,825	6.7

The commodity markets did not make farmers' planting choices easy. As the survey was being conducted, prices for most grains and oilseeds were depressed, and were expected to stay that way well into the new crop year. Potential competition from other grain-producing nations was also creating an uncertain market.

In addition, farmers in Alberta and Saskatchewan were grappling with fears of a third year of drought conditions. Concerns were also being expressed over the availability and quality of seed for planting, rising input costs for fuel and fertilizer and a threat to crops from insects, reported to be high this year in some parts of the country.

These results reflect conditions as of March 31, 2003. Since then, indications are that the soil moisture content on the Prairies has improved substantially following a snowfall that blanketed most of the western growing region.

Note to readers

The March Intentions Survey of 12,200 farm operators was conducted by telephone interviews during the last week of March. This report contains producers' seeding intentions for field crops in the coming 2003/04 crop-year. Since these seeding intentions reflect producers' plans in March, they may differ from what will actually be seeded later in the year. Changes in market outlook, expected prices and spring weather conditions, as well as the published seeding intentions themselves, may alter prospective cropping patterns. Estimates of actual seeded areas will be released on June 26.

Canola: Saskatchewan growers behind the expected gains

The acreage planted in canola is expected to increase by 1.3 million acres distributed over the three western provinces. If their plans come to fruition, Saskatchewan farmers will be responsible for about two-thirds of this increase.

In Saskatchewan alone, the canola acreage is expected to jump by 850,000 acres to 5.2 million acres. The anticipated gain in Alberta is 250,000 acres, and in Manitoba, 200,000 acres.

While the current price for canola is low, growers are probably looking at the tight carry-in of world canola stocks and anticipating a price rally in the new crop year.

Spring wheat: Major decline in Alberta

Farmers are expected to plant just under 19.0 million acres of spring wheat in 2003, down about 180,000 acres from June's 2002 level. It would also be slightly less than the five-year average of 19.7 million acres.

The decline is attributable to farmers in Alberta, who expect to plant 399,000 fewer acres in spring wheat than they did in June 2002. Their anticipated total acreage would fall to less than 5.3 million acres, the lowest level since 1994.

Again, prices and soil moisture conditions are playing a major role in Alberta farmers' decision-making this year. In addition, feed quality wheat cannot compete against cheap, high-quality corn for feed being imported from the United States.

Manitoba growers anticipate a marginal decline in spring wheat. Those in Saskatchewan anticipate growing 220,000 more acres of spring wheat, increasing their total to 10.2 million and surpassing the province's five-year average.

Durum wheat acreage likely to slip below five-year average

Canada's durum wheat acreage is expected to slip 4.6% to less than 5.9 million acres this year, which will be just below the five-year average.

The main reason is the switch to spring wheat by Saskatchewan growers, who reported they will be planting 250,000 fewer acres of durum. Durum and spring wheat areas have followed a familiar pattern from year to year: when one goes up, the other goes down.

Saskatchewan growers account for 80% of Canada's durum wheat crop. This year an estimated 4.8 million acres are anticipated to be planted, well below the five-year average.

In Saskatchewan, the movement out of durum and into spring wheat may be attributed to lower prices and a good durum crop in North Africa, increasing competition for potential durum markets this year. Farmers may also believe that they have less chances of losing money on spring wheat because of lower input costs compared with other crop choices.

Other crops: Farmers moving out of oats, dry field peas, barley, lentils

Farmers reported potential substantial declines in the seeded acreage for oats and lentils, as well as somewhat smaller drops in dry field peas and barley.

At the same time, they are expected to increase the acreage in rye, flaxseed and sunflowers.

Nationally, farmers intend to plant just over 5.4 million acres of oats, down 8.6% or 507,000 acres from June 2002. Again, the biggest decline will be in Saskatchewan, where the acreage in oats will fall by 500,000 acres. This is likely due again to a combination of prices and moisture conditions. Unless farmers can capture a price premium for high quality oats, it does not pay to grow feed oats in a market of depressed feed prices.

Farmers anticipate a lentil crop of less than 1.3 million acres, down 15.8% or 235,000 acres. Virtually the entire lentil crop is grown in Saskatchewan. The decline is probably a reaction to the poor prices and markets in 2002, combined with agronomic difficulties of growing quality lentils in the province, which include a threat from grasshoppers this year.

Nationally, the acreage in barley is expected to decline 1.0% or almost 130,000 acres to about 12.6 million. Alberta farmers will account for the decline. For them, the price of feed barley is being depressed with the availability of cheap high-quality American grain corn for animal feed. As in oats, unless farmers can produce malting quality barley and capture that price premium, the downside risk of producing feed barley is too great.

The acreage of dry field peas is expected to decline marginally to 3.2 million acres, still well above the five-year average.

Flaxseed acreage is anticipated to increase 6.7% or 115,000 acres to just over 1.8 million acres, solely the result of increased acreage in Saskatchewan. Farmers there are likely trying to take advantage of the recent good prices for flaxseed.

Decline in soybeans, but grain corn remains at record levels

Farmers anticipate a substantial 6.2% decline in soybean acreage, but another record planting of grain corn, according to the survey. The vast majority of both crops are planted in eastern Canada.

Nationally, farmers intend to seed almost 3.2 million acres of grain corn, up 0.5% from 2002's record level. Of this, Quebec farmers expect to plant just over 1.1 million acres, and Ontario farmers 1.9 million acres.

The popularity of grain corn is based on its use as the primary ration ingredient for livestock feed in Ontario and Quebec, as well as in the expanding ethanol fuel industry.

Farmers in both provinces anticipate large declines in soybean acreage. In Ontario, the forecast decline is 8.4% to 1.9 million acres, and in Quebec, a 3.7% drop to 321,200 acres.

Available on CANSIM: tables 001-0004, 001-0010 and 001-0017 to 001-0020.

Information on methods and data quality available in the Integrated Meta Data Base: survey number 3401.

March intentions of principal field crop areas, Canada, 2003, Field crop reporting series, Vol. 82, no. 2 (22-002-XIB, $11/$66; 22-002-XPB, $15/$88) is now available. See *How to order products*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Bill Parsons (613-951-8727; *bill.parsons@statcan.ca*) or Dave Roeske (613-951-0572; *david.roeske@statcan.ca*), Agriculture Division. ■

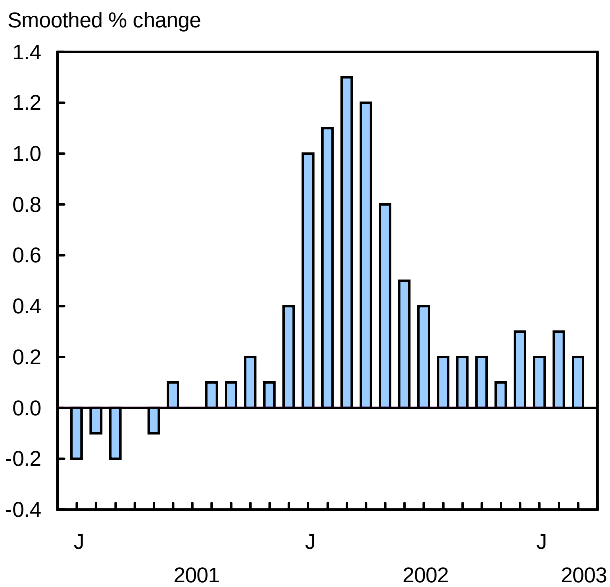
Leading indicators

March 2003

The composite leading index continued to grow at a steady pace, up 0.2% in March. Household demand remained the major source of growth. Overall, four components were up, one less than in February, as housing turned down. Four components fell and two were unchanged.

Housing starts eased from the very high level they hit in February. Still, they remained slightly above their average level in 2002, encouraged by rising incomes and low mortgage rates. Another measure of the strength of household demand was a strong advance in services employment. Partly offsetting these gains was an eighth decline in nine months for sales of durable goods, led by losses in the auto sector. The trend of stronger household demand for housing relative to durable goods began two years ago.

Composite index



Manufacturing was mixed. Slowing auto sales here and in the United States led to a fifth straight decline in new orders for durable goods, and the largest decline of any component. This drop contrasts with the strength of demand for energy products, which helped to lift the ratio of shipments to stocks for the first time in three months.

The US leading indicator continued to rise (+0.1%), but growth remained largely attributable to the financial market components.

Available on CANSIM: table 377-0003.

Information on methods and data quality available in the Integrated Meta Data Base: survey number 1601.

A more detailed analysis of the components is available on Statistics Canada's website (*www.statcan.ca*). From the *Canadian statistics* page, choose *Economic conditions*, then click on the banner ad for *Canadian economic observer*. From that page, choose *Issues of CEO*, then *Composite Index*. For more information on the economy, the April 2003 issue of *Canadian economic observer* (11-010-XPB, $23/$227) is now available. See *How to order products*.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Francine Roy (613-951-3627), Current Economic Analysis Group. □

Leading indicators

	October 2002	November 2002	December 2002	January 2003	February 2003	March 2003	Last month of data available
							% change
Composite leading indicator (1992=100)	**179.3**	**179.4**	**179.9**	**180.3**	**180.8**	**181.2**	**0.2**
Housing index (1992=100)[1]	127.1	128.6	128.6	128.2	130.9	129.6	-1.0
Business and personal services employment ('000)	2,554	2,566	2,585	2,599	2,613	2,627	0.5
S&P/TSX stock price index (1975=1,000)	6,558	6,443	6,445	6,437	6,512	6,530	0.3
Money supply, M1 ($ millions, 1992)[2]	111,141	111,438	110,974	111,054	110,533	110,030	-0.5
US composite leading indicator (1992=100)[3]	110.2	110.0	110.0	110.0	110.2	110.3	0.1
Manufacturing							
Average workweek (hours)	39.2	39.2	39.2	39.2	39.2	39.2	0.0
New orders, durables ($ millions, 1992)[4]	22,170	22,048	21,946	21,812	21,517	21,216	-1.4
Shipments/inventories of finished goods[4]	1.81	1.80	1.81	1.80	1.78	1.78	0.00[5]
Retail trade							
Furniture and appliance sales ($ millions, 1992)[4]	1,789	1,795	1,804	1,813	1,832	1,844	0.7
Other durable goods sales ($ millions, 1992)[4]	7,676	7,659	7,686	7,645	7,639	7,610	-0.4
Unsmoothed composite leading indicator	179.7	180.0	181.4	181.1	181.9	181.6	-0.2

1 *Composite index of housing starts (units) and house sales (multiple listing service).*
2 *Deflated by the Consumer Price Index for all items.*
3 *The figures in this row reflect data published in the month indicated, but the figures themselves refer to data for the month immediately preceding.*
4 *The figures in this row reflect data published in the month indicated, but the figures themselves refer to data for the second preceding month.*
5 *Difference from previous month.*

■

OTHER RELEASES

Stocks of frozen and chilled meat products

April 2003

Total frozen and chilled red meat in cold storage at the opening of the first business day of April amounted to 86 824 metric tonnes, virtually unchanged from 86 577 tonnes in March but up 5% from 82 453 tonnes in April 2002.

Available on CANSIM: tables 003-0005 and 003-0041.

Information on methods and data quality available in the Integrated Meta Data Base: survey number 3423.

The April 2003 issue of *Stocks of frozen and chilled meat products* (23-009-XIE, free) is now available on Statistics Canada's website (*www.statcan.ca*). From the *Our products and services* page, under *Browse our Internet publications*, choose *Free*, then *Agriculture*.

For general information, call 1-800-465-1991. To enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact Barbara McLaughlin (902-893-7251; *barbara.mclaughlin@statcan.ca*), Agriculture Division. ■

NEW PRODUCTS

Canadian economic observer, April 2003, Vol. 16, no. 4
Catalogue number 11-010-XPB ($23/$227).

March intentions of principal field crop areas, Canada, 2003, Field crop reporting series, Vol. 82, no. 2
Catalogue number 22-002-XIB ($11/$66).

March intentions of principal field crop areas, Canada, 2003, Field crop reporting series, Vol. 82, no. 2
Catalogue number 22-002-XPB ($15/$88).

Cereals and oilseeds review, February 2003, Vol. 26, no. 2
Catalogue number 22-007-XIB ($11/$112).

Cereals and oilseeds review, February 2003, Vol. 26, no. 2
Catalogue number 22-007-XPB ($15/$149).

Stocks of frozen and chilled meat products, April 2003
Catalogue number 23-009-XIE (free).

Retail trade, February 2003, Vol. 75, no. 2
Catalogue number 63-005-XIB ($16/$155).

All prices are in Canadian dollars and exclude sales tax. Additional shipping charges apply for delivery outside Canada.

Catalogue numbers with an -XIB or an -XIE extension are Internet versions; those with -XMB or -XME are microfiche; -XPB or -XPE are paper versions; -XDB are electronic versions on diskette and -XCB are electronic versions on compact disc.

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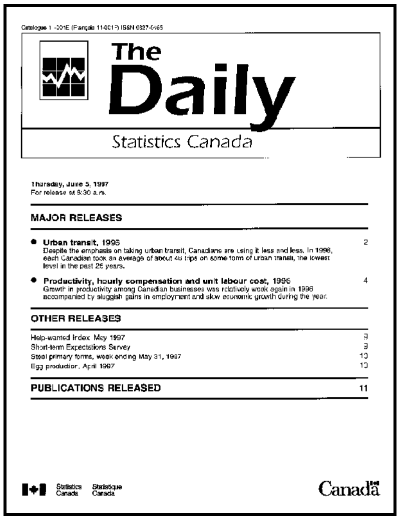
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The Daily

Statistics Canada

Thursday, June 5, 1997
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MAJOR RELEASES

- **Urban transit, 1996** 2
  Despite the emphasis on taking urban transit, Canadians are using it less and less. In 1996, each Canadian took an average of about 46 trips on some form of urban transit, the lowest level in the past 25 years.
- **Productivity, hourly compensation and unit labour cost, 1996** 4
  Growth in productivity among Canadian businesses was relatively weak again in 1996 accompanied by sluggish gains in employment and slow economic growth during the year.

OTHER RELEASES

Help-wanted Index, May 1997	9
Short-term Expectations Survey	9
Steel primary forms, week ending May 31, 1997	10
Egg production, April 1997	10

PUBLICATIONS RELEASED 11

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