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The Wheat Situation in the Argentine

Ottawa, August 26, 1932. The Dominion Bureau of Statistics is in receipt of a cable from the International Institute of Agriculture showing the following acreages sown in the Argentine this year (with comparative figures for last year):

	1932	1931
Wheat	19,250,000 acres	17,295,000 acres
Flaxseed	7,290,000 "	8,640,000 "
Oats	3,509,000 "	3,470,000 "
Rye	1,532,000 "	1,378,000 "
Barley	1,409,000 "	1,439,000 "

The correspondent of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics in Buenos Aires has forwarded the following report, under date of August 1, 1932, dealing with the wheat situation in the Argentine:-

EXPORTS:

The quantity of Wheat exported during the month of July was 3,079,917 bushels.

The quantity still remaining in the country available for export is approximately 38,607,408 bushels, this figure being arrived at as follows:-

Official estimate of the crop .....	225,922,299 bushels
Carry-over of last crop .....	16,304,530 "
Total .....	242,226,829 bushels
Needed for Seed and Domestic Consumption.....	95,532,060 "
Balance for Export .....	146,694,769 "
Exported to July 31st .....	108,087,361 "
Balance still available .....	38,607,408 "

MOVEMENT OF CROP:

The exports of wheat from this country continue to decrease, and the figure shown above is a sharp drop from the total of 8,856,153 bushels exported during June and 13,003,016 bushels in the month of May.

The growers and local grain dealers in whose hands a good deal of the balance of the crop still remains are not satisfied with present price levels, and are therefore not shipping out their grain, nor are they likely to unless there is an improvement in prices or a reasonable assurance of a good yield in the new crop.

MARKETS:

Business throughout the month has been dull, especially in the export trade. With Canadian, Australian and North American wheats all offering at cheaper rates than Plate wheats, there have been very few transactions, farmers being disinclined to sell.

The sharp rise in prices which occurred during the last week of the month induced more offers, in which the local millers showed a good deal more interest than the exporters. They have in fact been the best buyers throughout the month.

With only 36,743,100 bushels now available for export, the Argentine is a very small factor in the making of prices, and the future course of the market lies entirely in other hands.



The condition of the new crop can still be described as generally very good. The tendency to excessive vegetation to which I referred in my last report, has been to some extent checked by a period of cooler and drier weather during the last two weeks, and the light frosts which have been experienced have assisted in checking the growth without injuring the plants. In many districts also, especially in the province of Buenos Aires, the farmers have put in useful work rolling and harrowing the fields, and others have turned in live-stock to pasture on the grain.

In the northern part of the province of Santa Fé the condition is worst in respect of excessive growth, and there it is estimated that about 30 per cent of the wheat is already in stalk. But this is one of the districts suffering from the invasion of locusts, and the early wheat fields have actually benefitted from the stripping of the plants by these insects. In the northern part of Entre Ríos the same thing has happened.

In the rest of these two provinces the condition is good, although there has been so much rain in Entre Ríos that the area sown to wheat has been somewhat restricted in comparison with what had been hoped for.

In Buenos Aires the condition is very good, but in the district of Tres Arroyos in the south, where an excellent grade of hard wheat is usually produced, there are complaints of worm damage already.

Córdoba is good. So is San Luis. Santiago del Estero is generally very good, but in the south eastern portion it is said that more moisture would be welcome.

Probably the section which is in relatively the best condition of all is the Pampa, where it is reported that the state of the crops is the best shown at this period for five years. This is normally a very dry district, and the unusually generous precipitation has produced a wonderful crop. But the critical period is still ahead. The soil is not such as will retain moisture for long periods, and lack of rain later on may easily reduce the crop to the usually light yield in the northern Pampa and even lighter in the south.

A notable increase in the use of pedigreed varieties of seed is reported this year, especially in the province of Buenos Aires. In Santa Fé and Córdoba also it will probably be found that there has been an increase, which may well be reflected in the volume and grade of the crop threshed.

The unusually severe locust invasion is still a menace, although there has been as yet little damage to the wheat fields. The movement south was checked by the colder weather and especially by the south winds, although some thousands of the insects reached as far south as the city of Buenos Aires. But with milder weather and northern winds the advance is likely to be resumed.

Meanwhile it is reported from northern Santa Fé that the egg-laying period has commenced. The worst damage is done by the young insects in the hopper stage, before they are able to fly. They then swarm over the fields in voracious hordes which clean up everything green that lies in their path.

Steps are being taken to actively cope with the danger. Congress has voted a million pesos for fighting the locusts, and the organization of the farmers in the threatened districts is being proceeded with.

No damage is as yet reported from the province of Buenos Aires. In Santa Fé the wheat fields have rather benefitted than otherwise, as also in Córdoba and Entre Ríos. In Santiago del Estero some areas have had to be re-seeded.

But, as pointed out, the period of greatest danger is probably still ahead.





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