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CANADIAN GOVERNMENT CROP REPORTING

SERVICE

Objects and Value

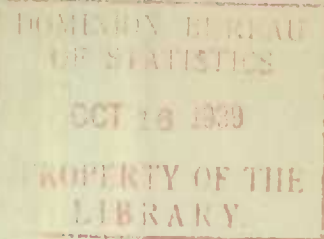
The crop-reporting service of the Dominion Government, which has been in operation since 1908, has for its object the issue of accurate, timely and independent reports on crop conditions throughout the Dominion in the interests of the general body of Canadian farmers and for the information and guidance of other interests allied to and dependent upon agriculture (interests represented by statesmen, economists, bankers, grain dealers, transportation agents, and others); it also furnishes reports to the International Institute of Agriculture at Rome (to which Canada is an adhering country) in return for reports on the production of other countries and of world totals.

Its Voluntary Character

The service is based upon the honorary and voluntary assistance of a corps of public-spirited crop correspondents. The correspondents work in the general interests of agriculture, since there are no federal funds available for their remuneration. At the same time, the Bureau does all in its power to recognize in a practical manner the value of the services rendered and to give any possible assistance to its correspondents. After a year's service, the Bureau gives an annual free subscription to a selected farm paper to each correspondent returning a reasonable number of schedules. The Monthly Bulletin of Agricultural Statistics, a publication of the Bureau which contains the reports of the correspondents as compiled, is mailed regularly to each correspondent desiring it. Publications of the Dominion Department of Agriculture are placed freely at the disposal of correspondents so far as copies may be available for distribution.

Nature and Scope of the Work

The crop-reporting season begins in the month of April with reports on the winter-killing and condition of fall wheat, fall rye and of hay and clover meadows and on the intended acreage of the principal field crops. Thereafter, reports are distributed and collected at the end of each month during the remainder of the year covering a wide range of agricultural subjects, such as average yields per acre, local values, stocks on hand, etc. The district organization of the correspondents varies considerably in the different provinces. In Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan and British Columbia, the Provincial Departments of Agriculture attend to the correspondents' mailing lists for the Bureau and have chosen the correspondents on a district basis. The provincial authorities in Alberta provided a complete list of correspondents in 1931 and more recently, similar lists have been provided for the Maritime Provinces. In the other provinces, the allocation of correspondents to definite reporting areas is not complete and each correspondent is expected at present to report for his immediate district without going too far out of his way to obtain special information over a wider field.



Intended Acreages of Principal Field Crops

In the years previous to 1931, it was the practice of the Bureau to ask the crop correspondents to estimate at the end of June the percentage increase or decrease in the areas sown to the principal field crops as compared with those of the previous year. These early estimates, however, were slightly late in appearing and were often confused with the acreages compiled from the Annual Survey published later in the year. For these main reasons, a change was made in 1931 and correspondents were asked to estimate at May 1 the intended acreages of wheat, oats, barley, rye, flaxseed and mixed grains planned by farmers for the new season. These 'intentions' are properly regarded as indications of what may be seeded, since the actual acreages sown may be changed by many later considerations, particularly by soil and weather conditions and price movements. The question has a dual basis--firstly, in asking for the intended percentage change in the acreage of the principal crops in the correspondent's district and secondly, in asking for the acreages seeded or to be seeded on the correspondent's own farm in the two years. For the main crops at least, the intended acreages have been close to the June survey acreages.

Condition of Field Crops During Growth

Another important part of the work of the crop correspondents of the Government is the return of reports on the condition of field crops at the end of each month during the season of growth. These reports give a general idea of the influence of the season upon the crops and the prospects of the yield at harvest time. They are made in the form of general remarks and are also expressed numerically by a method which permits comparison with previous months or years. Correspondents are asked to make a particular effort to relate their condition figures closely to the described base.

Numerical Expression of Condition

The method adopted for expressing numerically the condition of field crops is an adaptation of the method which is recommended by the International Institute of Agriculture to all adhering countries. This method consists in the use of a percentage scale in which the number 100 represents the provincial average yield per acre over a long series of years, and correspondents are asked to judge whether the appearance of the crops at a given date indicates the promise of a yield per acre equal to, greater or less than this average. For example, if the average yield per acre of wheat in the province of the correspondent is, say, 20 bushels, and the appearance of the crop on June 30 is above the average and warrants the expectation of a crop of 21 bushels to the acre, 20 bushels being represented by the number 100, 21 bushels will be represented

by 105 ($\frac{21 \times 100}{20} = 105$). Similarly, if the crop is below average and the yield is expected to be only 19 bushels, the percentage reported will be 95 ($\frac{19 \times 100}{20} = 95$).

In practice, the calculations of the correspondent will be shorter than this. Having formed a clear idea of the average yield in his locality, he will be able from the appearance of the crop to judge within reasonable limits the percentage above or below the average and will report accordingly. To enable correspondents to judge the average yield of each crop in their respective districts, the average yields per acre of the principal field crops for each province, calculated from the data furnished by crop correspondents, are furnished to them annually.

Average Yields of Field Crops.

In the following table are given average yields per acre of field crops in Canada as calculated from the reports of crop correspondents over a long period of years. These provide the bases for correspondents' judgments of condition.

Average Annual Yields Per Acre of Field Crops, Canada, and by Provinces.

Crops	Canada	Prince Edward Island	Nova Scotia	New Brunswick	Quebec
	bushels per acre	bushels per acre	bushels per acre	bushels per acre	bushels per acre
Fall wheat.....	23.9	-	-	-	-
Spring wheat.....	16.8	17.9	19.1	17.5	16.4
All wheat.....	17.1	-	-	-	-
Oats.....	32.3	33.3	32.7	28.9	26.6
Barley.....	25.2	27.6	27.4	25.5	23.1
Fall rye.....	16.5	-	-	-	-
Spring rye.....	15.0	-	19.0	18.1	16.5
All rye.....	16.1	-	-	-	-
Peas.....	16.9	20.9	20.8	15.8	15.1
Beans.....	16.8	-	17.8	17.7	17.5
Buckwheat.....	22.4	25.9	23.5	24.1	22.7
Mixed grains.....	34.6	37.0	32.6	30.4	26.3
Flaxseed.....	8.8	-	-	-	10.4
Corn for husking (shelled)	49.3	-	-	-	27.6
	cwt.	cwt.	cwt.	cwt.	cwt.
Potatoes.....	89.0	105.9	108.0	114.8	91.6
Turnips, etc.....	189.0	252.1	218.2	188.3	157.1
	tons	tons	tons	tons	tons
Hay and clover.....	1.5	1.5	1.7	1.4	1.4
Fodder corn.....	9.0	9.0	8.3	8.3	8.5
Sugar beets.....	9.4	-	-	-	-
Alfalfa.....	2.4	-	-	-	2.2

Crops	Ontario	Manitoba	Saskatchewan	Alberta	British Columbia
	bushels per acre	bushels per acre	bushels per acre	bushels per acre	bushels per acre
Fall wheat.....	24.2	-	-	21.4	26.1
Spring wheat.....	18.5	16.8	16.3	17.9	23.5
All wheat.....	23.2	-	-	18.0	24.2
Oats.....	35.5	32.2	31.5	34.6	48.2
Barley.....	30.4	24.5	22.7	25.2	32.8
Fall rye.....	17.0	16.3	16.3	15.8	-
Spring rye.....	-	14.2	14.9	13.9	19.2
All rye.....	-	16.0	16.0	15.1	-
Peas.....	17.3	16.0	18.8	17.7	25.6
Beans.....	16.4	-	13.7	14.2	20.7
Buckwheat.....	21.8	14.3	-	-	-
Mixed grains.....	36.8	25.0	27.2	28.5	36.7
Flaxseed.....	11.6	10.1	8.7	8.7	13.4
Corn for husking (shelled)	52.5	-	-	-	-
	cwt.	cwt.	cwt.	cwt.	cwt.
Potatoes.....	70.2	84.8	81.7	89.9	112.6
Turnips, etc.....	200.4	118.9	113.1	118.2	204.8
	tons	tons	tons	tons	tons
Hay and clover.....	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.3	2.1
Fodder corn.....	9.6	5.8	4.3	4.0	10.8
Sugar beets.....	9.5	-	-	9.0	-
Alfalfa.....	2.4	2.2	2.0	2.3	3.0

Average Yields Per Acre

An important part of the duties entrusted to crop correspondents consists in the annual estimation of the yields per acre of all field crops in their respective districts. Three annual estimates of the production of the principal cereals are made as follows: (1) a first estimate on or about September 10, based upon reports collected at the end of August; (2) a second estimate on or about November 10, based upon reports collected at the end of October, and (3) a final estimate in January from reports collected in December. Because of the importance of these production estimates, an effort is made to increase the number of replies by sending schedules to bank managers, railway and elevator agents, rural postmasters, and other correspondents whose work and contacts enable them to form a judgment as to probable yields. In addition, an estimate of the production of fall wheat, fall rye, hay and clover and alfalfa is made on or about August 10, based upon reports of July 31; estimates of the production of root and fodder crops are made on or about October 10, based upon reports collected at the end of September and on November 15, based upon reports at the end of October. The average yields, as furnished by crop correspondents, are compiled into averages by districts or counties, by provinces and for Canada, and these averages, multiplied by the areas sown, give the estimates of total yields, as published by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics and mailed to the International Institute of Agriculture at Rome.

Agricultural Values

In October, correspondents are requested to report on local farm values for grain, root and fodder crops; in December, for grain crops; and in January, for land, farm live stock, poultry, wool and farm help. Their reports are compiled into provincial and Dominion averages which are not only of interest and value in themselves, especially for comparative purposes, but also enable the Dominion Bureau of Statistics to calculate and publish total values of field crops and of live stock which are helpful to agricultural, banking and commercial interests.

Miscellaneous

Other reports furnished annually by the crop correspondents of the Bureau comprise those relating to the stocks of field crops in farmers' hands at December 31, March 31 and July 31; the proportions of the field crops of merchantable quality; amount of wheat fed to live stock and poultry; percentage of the potato crop lost through rot, frost, etc., during the winter; progress of spring sowing and planting; amount of winter-killing of fall-sown grains and hay and clover meadows; acreage of late-sown crops; percentage of seeded areas unproductive; extent of summer-fallowing and fall ploughing; and the acreage of fall wheat and rye.

Issue of Crop Reports

In view of the large volume now attained by Canadian agriculture, the leading position Canada occupies in respect of the world wheat production, and the speculative nature of some of the crops reported on, the dates and exact times for the issue of the crop reports are fixed definitely in advance, and published annually in a separate leaflet and in the Monthly Bulletin of Agricultural Statistics. The reports are also prepared under strict regulations, no one being allowed access to the compilation rooms at the Bureau except those actually engaged in the work.

Crop Reports of Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan and British Columbia.

As a result of an Interprovincial Conference on Agricultural Statistics, held on January 29-31, 1924, the work of crop-reporting in the provinces of Saskatchewan and British Columbia became a joint undertaking of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics and the Departments of Agriculture of the provinces concerned. The provinces of Quebec and Ontario entered into a similar agreement with the Bureau in 1931. The arrangements are as follows:--

(1) The Dominion and Provincial corps of crop correspondents to be amalgamated into one list for the joint use of both authorities; (2) the schedules to be printed by the Dominion Bureau in the joint names of the Dominion and Provincial Governments, as in the case of the annual cardboard schedules; (3) the blank forms to be issued to the crop correspondents from Ottawa under the departmental frank, with envelopes providing for the completed returns to be mailed free of postage to the Provincial Departments at Regina, Victoria, Quebec and Toronto under the franking regulations of the Postal Department now in force, (4) the returns to be compiled by the Provincial Departments, and the results, expressed numerically according to the scale recommended by the International Agricultural Institute, together with the number of returns, to be telegraphed in code to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics by the 9th of each month for incorporation with the returns from the rest of Canada in a report applicable to the whole Dominion.

The Dominion Bureau of Statistics is prepared to enter into similar arrangements with the other provinces as and when they may be willing to accept them.

Annual Crop-Reporting Program

The following, subject to revision if necessary, is the annual crop-reporting program now in force:--

January.--Values of farm and orchard land, wages of farm help and values of farm live stock, poultry and wool.

March.--Farm products on hand and percentages not of merchantable quality. Amount of wheat crop fed or to be fed to live stock and poultry. Percentage of the potato crop lost through rot, frost, etc., during the winter. Condition of live stock. Snow covering and soil moisture supplies.

April.--Intended acreage of principal crops at April 30. Progress of spring sowing and planting. Winter-killing and spring condition of fall wheat, fall rye and hay and clover meadows.

May.--Condition of wheat, oats, barley, rye, peas, mixed grains, hay and clover, alfalfa and pastures.

June.--Condition of principal grain crops. Acreage and condition of late-sown crops, hay and pasture.

July.--Preliminary estimate of the yield per acre of fall wheat, fall rye, ~~hay~~ and clover and alfalfa. Condition of spring wheat, oats, barley, spring rye, peas, beans, buckwheat, mixed grains, flaxseed, corn for husking, potatoes, turnips, mangolds, carrots, etc., corn for fodder, sugar beets and pastures. Stocks of wheat, oats, barley, rye and flaxseed in farmers' hands on July 31. Second estimate of the amount of the wheat crop fed on farms to live stock and poultry.

Annual Crop-Reporting Program - Concluded.

First
and hay and clover

August.--~~Preliminary~~ estimate of the yield per acre of spring wheat, spring rye, oats, barley, ~~and~~ flaxseed. Estimate of areas sown to these cereals that from any cause will not produce a crop. Condition of peas, beans, buckwheat, mixed grains, corn for husking, potatoes, turnips, mangolds, carrots, etc., alfalfa, corn for fodder, sugar beets and pasture.

September.--~~Preliminary~~ estimate of the yield of potatoes, turnips, mangolds, carrots, etc., sugar beets, corn for fodder and alfalfa.

October.--~~Provisional~~ estimate of the yield per acre and price of wheat, oats, barley, rye, peas, beans, buckwheat, mixed grains, flaxseed and corn for husking. Yield per acre, quality and average price of potatoes, sugar beets, turnips, other roots (mangolds, carrots, etc.), hay and clover, fodder corn and alfalfa. Acreage sown to fall wheat and fall rye. Condition of fall wheat and fall rye. Percentage of fall ploughing completed.

December.--~~Final~~ estimates of yields per acre based upon reports of threshing results. Final average market prices of cereals. Stocks of wheat in farmers' hands, on December 31, (Prairie Provinces, only).

The blank schedules with complete instructions are usually mailed from Ottawa on or about the 15th of each month to be completed and mailed by correspondents on the last day of each month. For the correspondents living in districts where the mail service is infrequent, a special advance mailing list is provided.

Pointers for Crop Correspondents

1. In answering questions such as the percentage of wheat fed or the amount of winter-killing, it is a common practice to leave the column blank when there is no wheat fed or no winter-killing--however, the proper method is to state in the column 'Nil' or 'None'. When the column is blank, the compiler cannot be sure whether the correspondent has missed the question or whether to assume that 'None' should be inserted. Record all zeros just as you would positive quantities.

2. Particular attention is called to the fact that all estimates of condition or of average yield in bushels per acre are based on sown acreage, which in years of drought, insect or wind damage, etc., may differ greatly from the harvested acreage. For example, if 100 acres were sown, 50 acres of which were destroyed by cut-worms, the average yield per acre will be estimated on the basis of the total production to be received or already received from the full 100 acres.

3. In the compilation of each report, a dead-line is set and reports received after that date are of no use. Thus it is very important to mail reports on a date as close as possible to that indicated on the schedule. Many farmers living at some distance from a post office find it difficult to do this. If it would assist you to have reports arrive earlier, please advise us and your name will be placed on an advance mailing list.

4. When the correspondent wishes to communicate with the officers of the Bureau or of the Provincial Governments, such letters should be mailed in an envelope separate from the crop-reporting schedule; if enclosed with the crop report, the answer will be delayed. Communications addressed to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Ottawa, require no postage.

Telegraphic Crop Reports

A special staff of over 80 agriculturists has been selected throughout Canada for periodic telegraphic reports on the general state of the crops. For the Prairie Provinces, these reports are issued weekly from early June until early September, while for Eastern Canada and British Columbia, the reports are issued twice a month from mid-June until early September. The reporters are composed of technical agriculturists in the employ of the Dominion and Provincial Governments, aided by a number of special correspondents in the Prairie Provinces. An effort is made to secure reliable information on damage from insects, plant diseases and hail by direct reports from entomologists, plant pathologists and officers of hail insurance companies. Most of the telegraphic advices received in the Bureau from the men in charge of provincial statistics are in turn summaries of wires received from their own correspondents scattered over the provinces.

Prices Received by Farmers for Their Products

Card schedules asking for the listing of information on this subject are mailed monthly to correspondents. Only the most important agricultural products are covered and the prices requested are those actually received by farmers on the sale of their crops and live stock. This schedule was begun in June of 1930 and the object is to establish a series of prices of farm products which may be compared with existing series of prices paid by farmers for household necessities, implements of production, etc. The need of such a study will be apparent.

The determination of proper averages has caused some difficulty in setting prices for the grain crops where there is a wide variety of grades being sold. No set practice can be recommended in this regard other than that the correspondent should fix the average price with due regard for the number of grades being sold in the district.

Crop Reports and Prices

Letters are sometimes received in the Bureau from farmers who claim that the issue of crop reports has a bad effect on prices in providing information to dealers which they use to the detriment of the farmers. Such a belief can only come from those not fully conversant with present market and sales methods. The Bureau is an absolutely independent authority, with a policy of exact description of crop conditions. In the long run, the number of times prices move upward in response to Bureau reports just about offsets the times in which prices move downward. In recent years of drought and other crop damage, we have had numerous instances where Bureau reports have been cited as "bullish", with an upward reaction in price. The news of abundant harvests cannot be suppressed in a world where information is disseminated so rapidly. Large commercial firms maintain their own crop-reporting organizations and press agencies have efficient methods for picking up news. The duty of the Bureau is to ensure that the official crop estimates for this country are as accurate as possible and that crop reports are a faithful description of actual crop conditions. If such objects are attained, then government crop reports serve a useful purpose in keeping prices adjusted to supply and demand.

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