Published by Authority of the HON. W. D. EULER, M.P.,
Minister of Trade and Commerce

DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND COMMERCE
DOMINION BUREAU OF STATISTICS - CANADA
AGRICULTURAL BRANCH

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Fruit and Vegetable Crop Report

Ottawa, May 21, 1937 - The Dominion Bureau of Statistics in co-operation with the Fruit Branch of the Department of Agriculture and the Provincial Departments of Agriculture, issues to-day a report showing the condition of fruit and vegetable crops in the main producing areas as at the middle of May.

SUMMARY

Weather conditions during the past winter were favourable for fruit trees and bushes and in all parts of the country they have come through without injury. In British Columbia the winter was cold but heavy snowfall prevented serious damage to fruit plants and trees. The mild, open winter which prevailed throughout the eastern provinces was accompanied by some injury to strawberries which were blanketed by ice but on the whole the damage was slight. Tree and small fruits in Ontario have made a remarkable recovery from the setback resulting from last summer's drought and the outlook is encouraging for all crops, barring the possibility of frost during the blossoming period. In Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, winter losses were negligible. All tree fruits show indications of good to heavy bloom with the exception of some varieties of biennial habit which fruited heavily last year. Spring has been backward throughout the country with weather cold and wet during much of April except in the Maritime Provinces where precipitation was light. Since May 1, growth has responded to warmer weather with rains fairly general and the present moisture outlook highly satisfactory. Spraying is well in hand and for the most part it has been done under good conditions so that foliage is well protected. Demand for nursery stock has been active and considerable new planting and replacement has been done this spring. Present indications point to good crops of all kinds of fruit with probable increases in all the producing areas. Vegetable growing operations have been delayed somewhat by the backward weather. Substantial increases in canning factory crops, particularly tomatoes, are in prospect in Ontario and other provinces indicate larger plantings of market vegetables.

NOVA SCOTIA

Practically all fruit trees in Nova Scotia came through the winter without injury. In a few cases trees continued to show the effects of the 1933-34 winter, but little or no recent damage is apparent. Where strawberries were well mulched they suffered no injury of any consequence during the winter. Poorly covered patches show some heaving and loss of plants but in no case is the damage extensive. Raspberries came through in excellent condition with little evidence of die-back, tip injury or cane breakage. Other small fruits survived the winter in good shape.

April weather was cold and dry with precipitation below normal. Conditions during the first week of May were almost ideal for spraying and more and better spraying was done during the period than ever before. Considerable oil is being applied to control red mite and oyster shell scale, but aphis and bud moth have not been sufficiently abundant to warrant the use of nicotine in the first sprays. With few exceptions orchards were well protected with fungicidal sprays before the rains of May 8 and 9 so that scab control should not be difficult to maintain throughout the season. While sharp frosts occurred during late April, growth was not sufficiently advanced at that time to suffer any injury. No spring frost damage has yet been experienced. Warm weather in early May brought growth along rapidly and the season is now about normal. At present, however, cool weather is holding back the bloom although early varieties are entering the pink stage. Many growers had completed their second sprays before the middle of the month, but rains and high winds during the past week have made conditions unfavourable for spraying and there is some foliage unprotected at present.

There has been some new planting of apple trees although poor returns from last year's crop have deterred growers from making extensive additions to their orchards. Replacement of old and dead trees has been substantial and there has also been a good deal of activity in top-working of odd and undesirable varieties. Such kinds as Stark, Blenheim, Ontario and Wolfe River together with numerous odd sorts, are being worked over

to McIntosh, Golden Russet, Red Spy, Delicious and its sports, Wagener, Cortland and the red strains of Gravenstein and Rome.

Regarding the bloom prospects, correspondents in all sections of the Annapolis Valley report conditions as good. Well informed observers are estimating that for the whole area, bloom will be 80 to 85 per cent full. Most orchards show heavy bud on all varieties with the exception of some biennial bearing sorts which fruited heavily last year. In the districts which suffered frost injury a year ago, bloom on all varieties will likely be heavy. Those growers who last year had light crops of Gravenstein, Baldwin, Stark and Wagener report trees full of buds this season, while the reverse is the case in orchards which bore crops of these varieties in 1936. Golden Russet is generally reported as in full bud while other varieties are variable with Spy frequently mentioned as showing poor prospects. More specifically, the bloom prospects in Annapolis County are mostly very good except with certain varieties which bore heavily last year. In King's County, bloom indications are generally satisfactory with a heavy showing in the frost areas of last year. Early cherries were in full bloom over the past weekend. Apple varieties showing light bloom are mostly Blenheim, Baldwin, Stark and Gravenstein which bore heavily last year. In Hants County the bloom will be heavier than average and is now in the pink stage. Golden Russet, Spy and Ben Davis are reported as lighter in some cases. Spraying began on April 29 and most orchards have now been well covered twice. Insect pests are not abnormally active.

The outlook for strawberries is promising in all producing areas. In the Yarmouth district, patches came through the winter well and promise a fine crop. Throughout the Valley areas there has been some increase in acreage and with winter-killing an almost negligible factor, crop prospects are encouraging. In the Masstown section of Cumberland County, strawberries survived the winter with little loss. While white grub injury was apparent last season the stand of plants is better than normal. In Cape Breton there are no complaints of winter injury although the land remains dry and cold with the season later than last year.

Commercial vegetable plantings are now getting under way. Some early cabbage plants have been set and potatoes planted in the vicinity of Truro. In the Yarmouth area cauliflower and lettuce are being grown on an increased acreage this year. Recent rainfall has been helpful as fields were becoming dry.

NEW BRUNSWICK

Apple trees came through the winter in good condition with little injury apparent. Growth is farther advanced than usual at this season and the first spray was applied beginning about the third of May. Early varieties are now showing bloom which is about the earliest date on record. McIntosh and other winter sorts are farther advanced han usual at this season. The second spray was begun about the middle of the month under favourable conditions. Present indications are for a good crop with plenty of buds to make a heavy bloom.

QUEBEC

In the face of backward weather conditions, it has been difficult to appraise the extent of winter injury to apple trees and small fruits. No appreciable damage has been noted so far however and trees appear to be carrying enough fruit buds for a full bloom. Cherry and plum trees in the Montreal district were in full bloom by the 10th of May. Early varieties of apples are now in bloom and the later sorts are at the pink stage. The blossom promises to be heavy. In the vicinity of Quebec fruit buds are beginning to expand. Both strawberries and raspberries came through the winter well and the former are now starting to bloom with present indications pointing to a good crop. Provided the trees escape a severe frost while the blossom is on and subsequent conditions remain favourable, a good crop of tree fruits should be produced. Some growers are looking for increased production of both strawberries and raspberries although the growth is not well enough advanced to estimate the amount of bloom.

In the market garden areas adjacent to Montreal, considerable progress has been made in the planting of early crops. Fine warm weather is needed however, to stimulate growth and enable the completion of crop planting, which is being held up to some extent by rains.

ONTARIO

In the western section of the province, all fruit trees came through the winter without injury. In the Niagara district tender tree fruits suffered injury from the 1936 drought in certain areas and parts of orchards. Strawberry plants are generally in healthy condition but many plantations show a patchy stand and are thin in the rows. Due to drought, the bearing acreage will be approximately 25% below last year. Raspberries are generally in good condition except where weakened by the 1936 drought. In Georgian Bay district and localized areas in the Niagara Peninsula, older stands of raspberries are in better condition than new plantings. Grape vines are generally in good condition with evidence of unexpected recovery from last year's spring frost and later drought. In some vineyards losses are heavy, but as a whole considerably less than anticipated.

Spraying and spring growth were delayed by excessive rain and cool weather, but in general all recommended orchard spray operations have been carried out satisfactorily, although approximately one week later than usual. Growth is now normal.

Extensive new orchard planting has taken place this season, particularly in Elgin, Oxford, Middlesex, Norfolk and Georgian Bay districts. In the Georgian Bay district, old trees are not being replaced but new orchards are being set out in more favourable locations. New plantings of peaches have been heavy in Essex, Elgin, Norfolk and Niagara, while a considerable number of pear trees have been set out in Elgin and Niagara. There has been little planting of other tender fruit trees. Less top grafting of apples than usual was done this spring, being confined chiefly to the top working of Spy, McIntosh, and Delicious for pollination purposes in Norfolk, and some McIntosh and Spy scions in Georgian Bay and central areas. In the Niagara district there has been some working over of unremunerative varieties of plum trees to prunes and some less favoured varieties of pears to Bartletts.

Bloom prospects for apples are generally good to medium for all varieties in western Ontario, although Spy is light in Essex, Kent and Middlesex; Snow light in Middlesex; Wealthy poor in the Elgin-Oxford area; and Gravenstein poor in Brant County. In the Niagara Peninsula peaches, plums, sour cherries and sweet cherries all have a full bloom and pears have a medium to good blossom except in the Stoney Creek section where some orchards are light. Strawberries are in blossom and although acreage has been reduced the crop will be considerably larger than the small crop of last year, if favourable weather conditions prevail. Moisture supplies are the best in some years and with warmer weather development will be rapid.

In Eastern Ontario, all fruit trees and buds came through the mild winter in excellent condition but strawberries not well mulched suffered considerable winter killing from ice in the extreme Eastern counties. Rainy weather has given some grounds to fear a heavy scab infestation later on, although sprays are being applied in most orchards according to schedule. Moisture supplies are plentiful, and in fact excessive in low lying orchards. Planting of new apple orchards and replacements have been on an exceptionally heavy scale and nurseries have scarcely been able to keep pace with the demand. Varieties being planted run 35% McIntosh, 15% Spy, 10% Snow, 10% Delicious and the balance made up of Cortland, Gano, Golden Russet, Scarlet Pippin and LaSalle. Many new patches of strawberries are being set out.

Pears, plums, sour cherries and strawberries are showing a good to heavy bloom; McIntosh and Snow apples are well loaded with blossoms, except in orchards which bore very heavy crops in 1936. Delicious, Wealthy and Salome show medium and Tolman fairly good bloom. Spy orchards have a patchy showing of blossoms, with trees that were well loaded last year being entirely off this season. Present prospects are for a light crop of Spy in Eastern Ontario.

VEGETABLES - In Western Ontario variable cool wet weather, somewhat retarded preparation of soil and seeding, depending upon locality and drainage facilities. As a result, growth at the present time is a week to ten days later than normal but roots are developing well and given a few warm days, top growth would make rapid strides. Moisture conditions are excellent. There has been some light frost on low lands but no damage has been done. The acreage of canning tomatoes under contract shows an increase of 40%. The acreage of asparagus, early roots, early cabbage, lettuce and early potatoes is expected to show a slight gain over last year. Commercial table stock turnip acreage will show an estimated increase of 25% over 1936 as a result of the improvement in export demand. In Northern Ontario weather conditions are reported normal.

In Eastern Ontario seeding has generally been delayed by wet weather although in the Ottawa district most of the seeding intended up to the present time has been done. In Northumberland and Prince Edward Counties considerable seed was put in during four warm summer days at the beginning of May. On heavy soils along the lake front from Toronto

east, practically no seeding has been done. In Peel and York, weather conditions have been favourable for seeding on light land but frequent rains have prevented seeding on heavy and black soils. A large increase is reported in the acreage of canning crops such as tomatoes, peas, and corn, as there are quite a number of new canning factories opening in Eastern Ontario.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

In all fruit districts the winter was extremely cold but fortunately heavy falls of snow helped materially to prevent injury and all plant growth came through in very satisfactory condition. The weather during April and the first two weeks of May was mostly dull and cool with a few fine days interspersed. As a consequence, the spring is late and while early fruits are now in bloom, the season is not so far advanced as is usual at this time of year.

All tree fruits wintered well and present indications are that there will be a heavy crop of both apples and pears. Cherries and plums should yield satisfactory crops. Cherries however as well as apricots, still show the effects of the severe freeze of the preceding year. Should conditions continue favourable, the apricot crop will be a little better than in 1936. Strawberries in practically all districts have come through the winter in very satisfactory condition and it would now appear that the production will be somewhat heavier than last year. Raspberries show some winter injury, particularly in the case of Cuthbert variety. Despite this factor, prospects are for a better crop than in 1936. Loganberries show very little winter injury and at the present time the prospects are for a most satisfactory crop. Strawberries are coming into full bloom while raspberries and logans are just commencing to bloom.

While it is too early in the season to ascertain definitely what the vegetable acreage or tonnage will be, general indications are that with the prospect of increased prices, the acreage in practically all vegetable crops will be somewhat larger than last year.

UNITED STATES

According to the report of the United States Department of Agriculture issued May 10 and covering conditions to the first of the month, late frosts in the south severely damaged peaches and some strawberries and the supply of summer oranges and lemons will be light as a result of the freezing weather in California. In other commercial fruit areas crops appear to have escaped injury as yet and prospects for apples and most other fruits are becoming increasingly favourable. The chief changes in bearing acreage are the increase in southern citrus fruits and the continued removal of apple trees damaged two years ago in the northeast. Peach production is forecast at about 30 per cent less than 1936. Vegetable producers appear to be going ahead about as usual. At present only a moderate increase in the total acreage of commercial vegetables is expected. The late spring in some states normally shipping vegetables and new potatoes during May is likely to cause some overlapping of shipping seasons. Shipments of Canadian certified seed potatoes from December 1 to May 1 under the provisions of the trade agreement totaled 31,717,184 lb., which represented 70.5 per cent of the quota for the present season.