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Fruit and Vegetable Crop Report

Ottawa, May 31, 1939 - The Dominion Bureau of Statistics in co-operation with the Fruit Branch of the Department of Agriculture and the Provincial Departments of Agriculture, issues today 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 have been ideal for the orchards throughout the country. Rodent damage, which is especially severe in Quebec, is reported in all of the five Eastern Provinces. Mice caused the greatest amount of injury, but rabbits were also active in Eastern Ontario. Small fruit generally suffered no ill effects as a result of the past winter, but injury to strawberries and raspberries in scattered localities in New Brunswick may reduce the crops in that province. The orchards in British Columbia came through the cold weather in excellent condition with no damage whatever being reported. Small fruits also wintered well.

The spring has been very backward in Eastern Canada and development is reported to be ten days to three weeks behind last season. Although the early spring was cold in British Columbia, the weather warmed up rapidly and conditions at present are reported to be slightly ahead of last year.

Present indications point to a better than average crop of apples for the Dominion. It is early yet to properly estimate the crop in the Maritimes but judging from the bloom, Quebec and Ontario production should equal that of 1938. Spys, however, appear to be lighter than other varieties in Ontario. From present indications other tree fruits in that province should be equal to last year with the exception of sour cherries which are reported to be lighter than average east of Toronto.

Most British Columbia orchard fruits indicate the production of a crop as large as that of 1938. The cherry set is exceptionally heavy throughout the province, but peaches may not be as plentiful as usual due to the poor showing of the Rochesters.

Small fruits are still in the early stages of development in Eastern Canada. In British Columbia, loganberries and raspberries show an increase in prospects over last year and strawberries should produce moderately well.

With the retarded season both in Eastern Canada and on the Prairies, vegetables have progressed very slowly to date. Early harvesting will, therefore, be somewhat later than usual. Asparagus is already on the markets in Quebec and Ontario, while field lettuce and cauliflowers are just commencing to be offered in Ontario. Rhubarb, asparagus and lettuce are all being shipped in quantity in British Columbia.

Note:- Where condition figures are quoted in the following reports, the basis is as follows: 1-poor; 2-below average; 3-average; 4-above average; 5-exceptionally good.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

The weather during the past winter has been rather unusual. The first snow storm came in November, but this melted leaving a sheet of ice on the ground. The snowfall in January and February was below average but very heavy falls occurred in March and April. Temperatures during the winter were slightly higher than normal.

The orchards came through the winter in excellent condition with little or no damage. Rodent injury has been slight and was confined to a little barking by mice.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND (Concluded)

The small fruits also wintered well, plantations being in good condition at the present time, except for some slight evidence of heaving and killing-back which is not regarded as serious.

The spring weather has been cold and about ten days later than usual. With conditions so backward, it is difficult to estimate the crop prospects of the tree fruits but judging from the bud formation, production should be average or better. Spraying operations are just getting under way, most commercial orchardists made their first application on May 19.

It is thought that the strawberry crop will be adversely affected by the rather severe winter-killing in many plantations. Raspberries, on the other hand, look very promising and a good crop is expected, depending, of course, upon the extent of the late frost and weevil damage.

The cold backward spring has delayed the planting of vegetables considerably. Recent fine days, however, have permitted general seeding and early turnips and other vegetables are now being started.

NOVA SCOTIA

The past winter has been unusually mild and despite a limited amount of snow, no injury as a result of the weather has been so far reported. On the other hand, rodent damage has been widespread and in some cases severe. Pine and field mice have caused considerable injury in many orchards in widely scattered sections. The areas about Morristown, Port Williams, Gaspereaux, Canning, Berwick and Aylesford in Kings County, Falmouth, Hantsport and Avondale in Hants County and Bridgetown in Annapolis County were attacked the most seriously, while other districts in these counties report slight damage. Not only were young trees attacked but unprotected trees 15 and 20 years old were completely girdled. The infestation is stated to be probably the worst on record.

The strawberry and raspberry plants have wintered fairly well for the most part. Plantations located in low areas suffered considerable winter injury while those located on dried soils suffered more or less, according to their situation, from the deep penetration of frost and from an inadequate snow protection. In the Berwick section, the strawberry plants so far appear to have come through the winter in good condition. The Dunlaps may show some injury as the season advances due to the fact that they were badly affected by leaf spot late last fall. In the West River area, the strawberries seem to have come through the winter in fairly good condition.

The weather this spring has been unusually cool in consequence of which blossoms will be much later than average. It is doubtful if there will be any bloom prior to the first of June and may be even later than that. This being the case, most correspondents consider that the spring frosts have done little or no damage. There is some apprehension, however, in the middle of the Valley that the heavy frosts on May 15 and 16 may have done some damage but the amount will not be determined until growth is more advanced. A report from Berwick states that due to the late spring, growth of the strawberry plants has been very slow and the plants have not attained the size normal for this time of year. Picking, as a result, will not commence as early as usual.

The backward season has assisted considerably with spraying operations. The dormant oils were put on in some orchards during the latter part of April and the first of May, while general application of the regular delayed dormant spray commenced mostly on May 11 to 13. Many orchardists began spray number two, the pre-pink spray, on May 22. The initial infestation of aphids was severe but it is hoped that the early sprays were sufficiently adequate to give control. No other insect has so far been reported.

The general condition of the fruit trees and plants on May 24 indicates that all crops should be better than average. The compiled reports of correspondents located in the producing areas show the condition of fruit to be as follows: Apples 3.4; Pears 3.3; Plums 3.1; Strawberries 3.2; Raspberries 3.3.

NEW BRUNSWICK

The orchards came through the winter in excellent condition, no injury having yet been reported as a result of the cold weather. Mice, however, were very active in some sections. The damage varies from slight to extremely severe, depending on the locality. The injury was not confined to young trees only, some 15 to 20 years old were also attacked.

Winter-killing of the small fruits was reported but the amount varied from one district to another. Exposed strawberry beds were badly damaged while raspberry canes were broken where the snow was deep. As a result of the winter injury, the condition of both crops is reported to be below average.

The spring has been very backward, but the tree and small fruits have not shown any ill affects so far. With the season ten days to two weeks later than usual and the buds in the early stages of development, it is felt that the late frosts have done little or no damage.

The condition of the fruit crops, as shown by the compiled returns sent in by crop correspondents located in the producing areas, is as follows: Apples 3.9; Strawberries 2.7; Raspberries 2.7.

QUEBEC

The snowfall was 199 inches during the winter of 1938-39 as compared with 107 inches in 1937-38. The temperatures were about the same as last year. With the thick bed of snow, ice was not formed in the orchards.

The orchards are at present in good condition. Damage from field mice in the Montreal and Rouville districts is reported to be very serious, but in other sections of the province losses are not more than ordinary.

The strawberry and raspberry plantations came through the winter without any damage, and the plants are at present in good condition. As a result of the cold spring, the tree and small fruits as well as the pastures and field crops are three weeks behind last year in their development.

From the present condition of the apple, plum and cherry trees, it is foreseen that these crops will be larger than last year. The same applies to strawberries and raspberries unless other factors reduce the prospects during the summer.

The transplanting of vegetables is two to three weeks late. In many sections this work has not started yet. Asparagus began to make its appearance on the markets during the third week in May, but late frosts reduced the early cuttings.

ONTARIO

Western Ontario

Fruit: Although the season is somewhat later than last year, general weather conditions have been favourable for promotion of growth and for the carrying out of orchard and spray practices. A welcome rain fell on May 21, but precipitation is now required in some areas. Warm bright days have been accompanied by cool nights, but frost damage has been negligible.

Apples: Trees generally wintered well and the only damage reported is from rodent injury to young trees in a few areas. The bloom is reported as average to good in practically all varieties, with the exception of Spys which are irregular and which show average to good in Norfolk County and in Georgian Bay area, but light in other districts. Considerable replacement planting has taken place and there is also a slight increase in new acreage planted. The season to date has been good for proper development and orchard practice, with no frost damage reported.

Pears: After wintering well all varieties have shown good to heavy bloom. There is an anticipated increase in new acreage plantings in all main-producing areas.

Plums: The trees are in good condition with blossom showing average to very good. Plantings have consisted mostly of replacements, except in the case of Prunes which show a slight increase in new acreage.

ONTARIO (Continued)

Peaches: Trees are in healthy condition and have blossomed well. Replacements have been well maintained and slight increase in new acreage is reported.

Cherries: Heavy bloom on practically all varieties, but as yet it is impossible to state what the final set will be. Conditions, however, appear favourable at the present time.

Grapes: Vines are in a more healthy and hardy condition than for some seasons past, While there is a good showing of buds it is too early to determine whether there will be a one, two or three-bunch set.

Strawberries: In practically all areas plantations are in excellent condition with crop prospects promising. In Norfolk area, however, due to dry weather, grub, and other injury last season, bearing plants will show approximately 30 per cent decrease as compared with last year. Harvesting in the earliest-producing districts is expected to begin during the first week of June.

Raspberries: There is another slight decrease in the planted acreage and some reduction in cane population in the Niagara District. Otherwise, cane growth and development look very promising.

Vegetables

Onions: Reports from the main-producing area in south-western counties indicate that onion plantings will show little change from last year with the exception of some increase in Reds and Spanish types. A slight increase in acreage of onions is indicated in the Bradford and Toronto areas.

Asparagus: While cool nights have somewhat retarded production in most areas, the quality has been exceptionally good with a minimum of beetle injury to date. First volume shipments took place the first week of May, with deliveries to processors commencing on May 9. On account of the bulk of the available supplies going to processors, the quantity sold on the fresh market has been somewhat limited.

Celery: A considerable increase in plantings of early crop is reported from Essex County, and slight increase by York-Peel, with other areas, however, practically the same as last year. Present development is satisfactory.

Cabbage, Cauliflower and Head Lettuce: Plantings are up slightly over last year. Growing conditions while backward at first are now satisfactory. In Essex County the harvesting of cauliflower began May 22, head lettuce on May 27, and cabbage expected first week in June, with other early areas following within about one week.

Beets: Early transplanted beets are expected on the market during the first week in June.

Green Beans: Owing to favourable weather conditions and lack of frost, good development is apparent.

Cantaloupes: Plants are now being set out in early-producing areas. A 15 per cent increased acreage is anticipated in the south-western counties with other area plantings normal.

Eastern Ontario

Fruit: The orchards and small fruits came through the winter with practically no winter-killing, although mice and rabbits caused considerable injury to young apple plantings. Cold, dry weather has delayed development, but there has been no frost damage and bloom prospects generally are very good.

Spys show a fairly good bloom after the heavy crop last season with other late or winter varieties showing an average blossom. Other late varieties range from medium to moderately heavy. The blossom indicates that sour cherries will be considerably lighter than during the past two or three years, while plums and pears, particularly the Bartlett variety, have good prospects for a heavy bloom. All varieties of applies, pears, and cherries were in full bloom on May 29, and weather conditions were very favourable for good pollination.

Strawberry plantations look very good this spring with no losses from winter-killing. Raspberry canes came through in excellent shape in many sections, but some few growers report considerable winter injury in Prince Edward and Eastern Counties. Prospects generally indicate there will be a good blossom.

ONTARIO (Concluded)

Vegetables: Asparagus has been definitely slowed up due to the present cool weather. Limited supplies of asparagus cuttings were available during the past week.

Vegetable planting is from ten days to two weeks later than a year ago and growth is slow on account of the continued cool weather.

MANITOBA

Up to the end of January the winter of 1938-39 was fine and rather mild. February had some quite severe weather with low temperatures continuing almost unbroken throughout the month. Considerable snow fell during February. The snow continued well into March. On March 21 the snow was melting rather rapidly, but many large snowbanks remained, though the bare ground was showing in many places. The coming of spring in April was about normal.

Though the soil was very dry last autumn the condition as to moisture has been considerably improved. There was at least normal snowfall, though it was rather unequally piled over the soil surface, due to drifting. The spring witnessed only a very light run-off into the rivers, most of the water penetrating the soil. There have been generous rains in some parts of the province, with some rain everywhere.

The spring opened up earlier than normal and the latter half of April and the first week of May were unusually warm. This was followed by three weeks of rather cool weather. Approximately eight degrees of frost were registered in many parts of Manitoba on May 10 and 11.

Although rainfall has been nearly normal over most sections of the province, moisture conditions have generally been rather dry due to the lack of any reserve in the soil. The cool, dry weather and frost do not appear to have injured the vegetable gardens to any extent. However, these conditions have tended to check the growth of garden crops. Moisture conditions have been much improved by good general rains over most of Manitoba during the week of May 21 to 27.

Early fruits suffered more damage from frost than did the vegetables. It is impossible to estimate the extent of frost injury to the early blossoms at this time. Apricots, plums and early cherries have suffered some injury, mainly destruction of the pistils. The blossoms of most flowering shrubs were not far enough advanced to be damaged.

Fall sown spinach has made good growth. Where small irrigation projects are in operation this crop is nearly ready for use. The spring sown spinach is making good progress, with the second and third leaves well developed. All cool weather crops were sown early, and, in general, seeding was finished by May 1. Onions, beets, cabbage, parsnips, and radish are all up. Radish sown outdoors have made fair growth. In many sections of Winnipeg and vicinity the flea beetle is causing serious damage to radish, cabbage, cauliflower and beets. The germination of parsnips was very poor and in some cases second seedings were necessary. The early peas are showing third and fourth leaves. The first cabbage sown in the field was up nicely by May 25. Early onion sets are nearly ready for use. Cabbage, cauliflower, celery, lettuce, eggplants, peppers, tomatoes, onions, squash, cucumbers and watermelons intended for the early trade were being transplanted outdoors by May 20. The more tender kinds are being protected by hotcaps and special glazed paper till danger of frost is past. Some of the warm season crops, especially beans, were being planted by the middle of May and are now pretty well finished. Potato planting will be nearly finished by May 24.

SASKATCHEWAN

According to a report dated May 22, submitted by the Provincial Department of Agriculture, the weather during the early part of the winter was quite mild. Snowfall was light over most of the southern portion of the province but other districts received a good snow covering. Mild weather continued until the latter part of January when a particularly cold snap set in and lasted until some time in March. The spring thaw was rapid in the southern areas and farmers were able to get an early start. The season in the north, however, opened somewhat late.

SASKATCHEWAN (Concluded)

Except for some light showers, the weather was dry with high winds until the week-end of May 21, when beneficial rains fell in most portions of the southern and central districts. The rainfall was lighter, however, in the northern and extreme south-eastern section of the province.

A report from the Estevan-Weyburn district states that no vegetables have emerged in farmers' gardens to date because of dry soil conditions. Although 60 per cent of the potato crop is now planted, practically none of it is above ground. Most farm gardens are badly infested with grasshoppers and poison bait is being used liberally.

In the area south of Moose Jaw most growers have delayed early planting because of the abundance of early hatched grasshoppers. Early potatoes have been eaten off clean by this pest. Rains on May 19 and 20 have been very beneficial and activities should soon be renewed. In the south-western section of the province, farmers are enlarging their gardens as a result of an increase in available water supply. Dry weather and the abundance of early hatched grasshoppers have delayed seeding of the normal acreage of common vegetables in the area east of Regina. The rains on May 20 will, however, improve conditions materially. In the Swift Current-Leader section, seeding of vegetables has been delayed, in most cases, because of lack of adequate rainfall. A report from the district around Yorkton indicates that seeding and planting have just begun. Cabbage is the chief crop but as yet none has been set out.

Conditions north of Regina are much further advanced than usual for this time of year and growers are making extra efforts to extend the home gardens. A report from the Moose Jaw-Young district states that the potatoes are nearly all planted, the bulk being put in the week of May 15. Planting of onions is also nearly completed. Cabbage, cauliflower, celery and tomatoes are not generally planted yet but most growers expect to have them in the ground by May 31. Growth to date has been poor, due to lack of moisture but the recent rains have improved conditions and planting will be rushed as a result. In the Rosetown section farmers' gardens are now practically all planted. There are no market gardens in this district. Home gardens in the Kamsack-Canora area are all planted but due to cold weather growth has been slow. A report from the Saskatoon-Melfort district indicates that truck gardeners have completed early seeding. Potato planting is now in progress and early transplanting from greenhouses and hotbeds is being carried on. In the North Battleford-Medstead area seeding of vegetables is completed but transplanting from hotbeds has not yet begun. Growers in the Prince Albert-Melfort section got an early start thisspring but cool weather later delayed germination considerably.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

In a report dated May 29 the Provincial Department of Agriculture states that the early part of the spring was exceptionally dry in all districts. The days were warm but the nights have been cool. There have been some light frosts but no material damage has been reported. Rains were general last week and added much-needed moisture to the soil.

In all districts tree fruits have come through the winter in excellent condition. Apples show a heavy bloom and from present indications there will be as big a crop as last year. Plum, prune and apricot prospects are also equal to 1938. Cherries show an exceptional set and production should be heavy. Peaches, on the other hand, may be lighter, due to a poor set on the Rochester variety. Indications point to a medium crop of strawberries while raspberries and loganberries, which came through the winter in good condition, should produce average crops. The production of other small fruits is expected to be normal.

The season as a whole has been very satisfactory for the vegetable crops. The acreage of most vegetables will be about the same as last year with the exception of tomatoes which will probably be less due to unsatisfactory sales in 1938. Rhubarb has been moving in volume since April 14 and asparagus since May 1. Lettuce is now being shipped in quantity. Other vegetables are making satisfactory growth.