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CONDITION OF FRUIT CROPS MAY 1957

SUMMARY

Fruit crop prospects during the latter part of May<sup>1/</sup> varied considerably in the different fruit growing areas of Canada. Orchards and small fruit plantations in the Maritime Provinces came through with very little winter injury and, partly because the season was retarded, escaped spring frost damage except for limited injury reported on strawberries in New Brunswick. In the Province of Quebec reports indicate substantial losses due to winter injury from very low temperatures in January of 1957. This was followed by frost injury to apple and strawberry bloom at the middle of May. In Ontario, in spite of some extremely high and low temperatures experienced last winter, fruits came through with little winter injury. This was attributed to conditions of well-established dormancy at the time. However, frosts during May are reported to have resulted in considerable killing of blossoms on all tree fruits and strawberries. British Columbia fruit crop prospects are good this year. Little or no winter injury occurred. Blossom was generally heavy and no spring frost damage was reported.

Strawberries - In Prince Edward Island prospects in May were for a 1957 strawberry crop somewhat below last year's considerably above average outturn. The reason for the expected decline in production this year is that new plantings were reduced in 1956 from 1955, and last summer the plants did not produce a normal number of runners. However, there was very little winter killing. It was expected that there will be an increase in new plantings in 1957. Growth so far this season has been very slow.

Reports from Nova Scotia indicate that new plantings this year have been fairly heavy. A small amount of winter injury is apparent on strawberry plantations, especially in the varieties Dunlap and Premier. Growth has been very slow due to cool weather up until the third week of May, but with higher temperatures it was expected that blossoms would be out slightly before the end of May. Spraying for root rot was being carried out during the second half of the month. Plantations of strawberries in New Brunswick came through the winter in good condition, with no winter injury apparent. Although there was some cool weather, growth during the month of May was good and the plants made a favourable start. Early bloom was out by May 24 but some frost damage was reported during the fourth week in the month. New plantings had been completed and some increase from the 1956 acreage was reported.

<sup>1/</sup> Material in this release is based on reports made on crop conditions during the latter part of May for all provinces except Ontario where the date of reporting was May 15. This report was prepared in the Agriculture Division of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics from information received from the various Provincial Departments of Agriculture and the Canada Department of Agriculture. The material for Ontario was submitted by the Ontario Committee of Fruit and Vegetable Statistics.

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Reports from Quebec indicate that there was no appreciable winter injury to strawberries in that province. Frost on May 16, however, did some damage with many blossoms subsequently showing black centres. During the third week in May, however, it was still too early to estimate the extent to which crop prospects had suffered. In eastern Ontario strawberries that were well covered came through the winter in good condition, although some instances of light plant population were reported. Frost on the night of May 15 severely damaged early blossoms. Strawberry plantations in western Ontario wintered well except where no mulch was used. However, the plant population was described as only moderately good. In all areas where the plants were in bloom during the first week of May, frost damage occurred on May 3 and 6. It was expected, however, that with favourable weather, subsequent blossoming will be sufficient to produce an adequate crop.

In the important strawberry growing section of the Lower Fraser Valley in British Columbia reports state that strawberries came through the winter in relatively good shape and crop prospects appeared good.

Raspberries - By the second half of May raspberry canes in Nova Scotia were just starting to show growth. No reports of winter killing had been received and it was felt that the canes had wintered well. In New Brunswick also, evidence of winter killing was absent with canes showing good growth by May 24. In eastern Ontario, on the other hand, a good many plantations sustained considerable winter injury. However, new growth started early with the warm weather in April and in general plantings looked fairly promising. In western Ontario raspberries were leafing out by the middle of May in most sections. Winter killing was light and overall crop prospects were good although difficulties with disease were reported in some sections.

In British Columbia raspberries in the Fraser Valley wintered well and a heavy yield was anticipated.

Soft Fruits - In Nova Scotia pear orchards wintered well with no damage reported. Recent heavy frosts, however, may have done some damage to fruit buds but until the trees blossom it will not be possible to ascertain the extent. Plums which are free of blackrot disease came through the winter well and show prospects of a good bloom.

Reports from eastern Ontario indicate that all varieties of pears were showing a light to patchy blossom. Bartletts were in full bloom by May 10. In western Ontario's pear orchards early varieties and Kieffers were in full bloom at May 5 in most areas and so suffered considerable frost damage on May 3 and 6. Bartletts which were not so advanced were less affected. The blossom was heavy on all varieties and this may compensate to some extent for frost damage. Petal-fall was complete in early areas by mid-May. Japanese plums were in full bloom, which was very heavy when hit by frosts early in May. By the middle of the month, although it was difficult to assess the extent of the damage, considerable losses were expected, particularly in the London District.

A heavy bloom was reported on peach trees in all producing areas of Ontario. Indications were that this crop was not greatly affected by the frost. Cool, wet weather delayed petal-fall considerably and by the middle of May it was not possible to establish how heavy a set had taken place. Sweet cherries sustained considerable frost damage with an almost total loss reported in the London area. In Essex County, on the other hand, a very heavy set was developing rapidly. An extremely heavy bloom on sour cherries was severely injured by frost in the London and Georgian Bay areas with lighter damage reported elsewhere.



Reports from the important soft fruit growing district of the Okanagan Valley in British Columbia indicated that all varieties came through the winter well with very little tree damage reported. In the case of peaches and apricots, however, some injury to fruit buds occurred in the colder sections of the Valley. All species blossomed heavily. Indications during the latter part of May were for a pear crop about 15 to 20 per cent heavier than 1956 and a prune crop about the same as that of last year. It was expected that with favourable conditions the cherry, peach and apricot crops would be very much larger than in 1956 when production was drastically reduced due to severe winter injury.

Apples - The prospects in Nova Scotia were for an excellent bloom in apple orchards. Practically no damage from recent frosts has been reported. Full bloom was expected during the week of June 3, given favourable weather, and first sprays were being applied by May 24 in commercial orchards. Little winter damage occurred. In New Brunswick trees generally came through the winter in good condition with no evidence of low temperature injury and only scattered mouse damage. It is expected that the blossom will be average or better. The buds were at the pink stage during the second half of May and full bloom was expected by the end of the month. Bud development, however, was retarded by cold, backward weather and it is possible that recent frosts may have damaged the fruit buds, but it was too early to assess the extent of any such injury.

In Quebec, January temperatures down to 30 or 40 degrees below zero damaged many apple trees. Almost all orchards on low land sustained some injury and it is not yet clear whether these orchards will die out or whether the trees will survive. The winter injury has shown up with the buds and leaves failing to develop beyond a certain size. The branches have sufficient sap to start growth but it is not being maintained. Low temperature damage was much less serious in orchards on mountain slopes. There was also a severe frost on May 16 which killed a considerable proportion of the blossoms. Injury was more serious in low-lying areas. As a result the condition of trees with respect to set of fruit was reported to be extremely variable. Blossoms appeared to be remaining on the trees longer than usual this year.

In eastern Ontario unseasonably high temperatures during the last two weeks of April advanced bud development to the pink stage by May 5 and early leafing varieties to full bloom by May 12. All varieties except Spys showed a heavy blossom. Rain on May 9 ended a long dry spell. Frost during the night of May 15 caused some blossom killing in frost pockets. In western Ontario all varieties except Spy, Greening and other late types were at or passed full bloom in all early areas. Blossom was very heavy. In the Georgian Bay section the blossoms were opening by the middle of May. Wet weather did not favour pollination, however, and frost damage reduced crop prospects in most areas, especially in the London District. It is expected that the yield will be quite irregular.

In the interior of British Columbia apple orchards came through the winter with very little injury. However, some of the trees were still showing the effects of damage sustained during the winter of 1955-56. This spring has been favourable and a few days earlier than usual. The blossom was generally heavy and indications pointed to a crop much above that of last year.

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