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Dominion Statistician: R. H. Coats, LL.D., F.R.S.C., F.S.S. (Hon.)
Chief, Internal Trade Branch: Herbert Marshall, B.A., F.S.S.
Statistician: A. C. Steedman, B.A.

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CURRENT TRENDS IN FOOD DISTRIBUTION, OCTOBER, 1941

Introduction

Indexes reflecting current trends in food distribution in Canada have been published for some years, indexes of retail and wholesale grocery trading establishments forming components of the two regular monthly bulletins on retail and wholesale trade issued by the Internal Trade Branch of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. This series brings together in one report the information on retail and wholesale grocery sales contained in the other bulletins thus facilitating a comparison of the trends in monthly sales in the two stages of food distribution.

Wholesale Trade

Sales of 72 of the larger wholesale grocery houses in Canada averaged 16 per cent higher in October of this year than last and stood 3 per cent higher than in September. The 16 per cent increase compared with October, 1940, is lower than gains recorded during recent months of this year compared with last. September sales stood 31 per cent higher than in September, 1940; August sales were up 29 per cent and July, 36 per cent. Sales for the first ten months of 1941 stand 18 per cent higher than during the corresponding period of 1940.

Increases in October of this year compared with last were greater in the extreme east and west than in other parts of Canada. British Columbia sales gained 30 per cent for the month and were up 20 per cent for the year to date. Sales in the Maritime Provinces stood 21 per cent higher in October of this year than last and were up 21 per cent for the year to date. Increases over October, 1940, for the other regions with gains for the year to date in brackets are as follows: Quebec, 9 per cent (17 per cent); Ontario, 17 per cent (17 per cent); Prairie Provinces, 13 per cent (16 per cent).

Inventories carried by wholesale grocers averaged 26 per cent higher at the end of October, 1941, than 1940 and were up 7 per cent compared with the end of September. Stocks on hand at the beginning of October normally form approximately 118 per cent of October sales. Stocks on hand at the beginning of October, 1941, formed 128 per cent of October sales indicating that the inventory situation at the beginning of the month was slightly above the normal position.

Wholesale Grocery Trade by Economic Divisions

Division	Number of firms reporting	Dollar Sales (add 000)		Per cent change		
		October 1940	October 1941	October, 1941 over		Year to date 1941 1940
				October 1940	September 1941	
CANADA	72	16,804	19,507	+ 16.1	+ 3.0	+ 17.7
Maritimes	14	1,829	2,205	+ 20.5	+ 12.1	+ 20.7
Quebec	21	3,073	3,336	+ 8.6	+ 9.5	+ 16.5
Ontario	21	5,019	5,852	+ 16.6	- 3.2	+ 17.2
Prairies	10	4,914	5,564	+ 13.2	- 2.3	+ 16.0
British Columbia ..	6	1,969	2,550	+ 29.5	+ 12.4	+ 19.5

Retail Trade

Chain Stores

Sales of 990 chain store units operated by 26 chain companies in the food retailing field averaged 29 per cent higher in October, 1941, than sales of 1,067 units operated by the same 27 firms in October a year ago. Average sales per store were \$13,533 in October of this year, 39 per cent greater than the \$9,743 average in the same month of 1940. A considerable reduction in the number of stores operated by the reporting chain companies is responsible, to some extent, for the increased sales volume per store.

Increases in various regions of the country were as follows: 38 per cent in Quebec, 28 per cent in British Columbia, 27 per cent in Ontario, and 23 per cent in the Prairie Provinces. Average daily sales for food chains increased 27 per cent in October of this year over last.

Comparison of Stores and Sales for October, 1940 and 1941

Division	October, 1940		October, 1941		Per cent change in Sales
	No. Stores	Sales	No. Stores	Sales	
		\$		\$	
CANADA	1,067	10,396,159	990	13,397,325	+ 28.9
Quebec	210	2,066,401	193	2,848,690	+ 37.9
Ontario	577	5,956,578	545	7,575,265	+ 27.2
Prairie Provinces	154	1,308,388	132	1,609,393	+ 23.0
British Columbia	126	1,064,792	120	1,363,977	+ 28.1

Independent Stores

Dollar sales of 1,019 independent grocery and combination grocery and meat stores were 15 per cent higher in October of this year than last, gains ranging from 6 per cent in Alberta to 18 per cent in the Maritime Provinces and Quebec being reported. Increase for other provinces were 7 per cent for Saskatchewan, 10 per cent for British Columbia, 12 per cent for Manitoba, and 15 per cent for Ontario.

Comparison of Sales Reported for October, 1940 and 1941

Division	No. stores reporting	No. reporting increase	Per cent change in sales
CANADA	1,019	839	+ 14.8
Maritimes	147	128	+ 18.3
Quebec	222	197	+ 18.4
Ontario	390	322	+ 14.5
Manitoba	75	59	+ 11.5
Saskatchewan	38	28	+ 7.0
Alberta	65	46	+ 5.7
British Columbia	82	59	+ 10.0

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