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CURRENT TRENDS IN FOOD DISTRIBUTION, DECEMBER, 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 averaged 4 per cent higher in December, 1941, than in the corresponding month of 1940, and were 10 per cent below the dollar volume of business transacted in November. The increase of 4 per cent compared with December, 1940, was considerably below the average increase recorded in earlier months of the year, annual totals for 1941 standing 16 per cent above 1940. Increases over December, 1940, were reported by all provinces excepting British Columbia, while all regions of the country recorded gains in the annual totals. Sales in British Columbia were 4 per cent lower in December, 1941, than 1940, while figures for the year were up 20 per cent. Increases over December, 1940, for the other economic divisions of the country with percentage gains for the year in brackets are as follows: Maritime Provinces, 8 per cent (19 per cent); Quebec, 7 per cent (15 per cent); Ontario, 3 per cent (15 per cent); Prairie Provinces, 7 per cent (14 per cent).

Inventories carried by the wholesale grocers at the end of December, 1941, were valued 20 per cent higher than stocks on hand at the end of 1940, but were 9 per cent lower than at the end of November, 1941. Stocks on hand at the beginning of December are normally about 62 per cent in excess of the volume of business transacted in that month. Stocks on hand at the beginning of December, 1941, were 78 per cent above the volume of business realized in the month, indicating that the stock position at the beginning of December was slightly above the normal situation for this time of year.

Wholesale Grocery Trade by Economic Divisions

Division	Number of firms re- porting	Dollar Sales (add 000)		Per cent change		
		December 1940	December 1941	December, 1941 over		Year to date 1941 1940
				December 1940	November 1941	
CANADA .....	72	\$ 14,481	\$ 15,070	+ 4.1	- 9.6	+ 15.9
Maritimes .....	16	1,744	1,886	+ 8.1	- 13.7	+ 18.9
Quebec .....	18	1,671	1,782	+ 6.6	- 24.8	+ 14.9
Ontario .....	20	4,727	4,845	+ 2.5	- 1.9	+ 15.4
Prairies .....	12	4,305	4,601	+ 6.9	- 6.0	+ 14.2
British Columbia	6	2,034	1,955	- 3.9	- 11.1	+ 20.1

Retail Trade

Chain Stores

Sales of 988 chain store units operated by 24 chain companies in the food retailing field averaged 25 per cent higher in December, 1941, than sales of 1,066 units operated by the same 24 firms in December a year ago. Average sales per store were \$14,480 in December, 1941, 34 per cent greater than the \$10,768 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: 32 per cent in Quebec, 24 per cent in Ontario, 22 per cent in British Columbia, and 18 per cent in the Prairie Provinces. Average daily sales for food chains increased 22 per cent in December of 1941 over 1940.

Comparison of Stores and Sales for December, 1940 and 1941

Division	December, 1940		December, 1941		Per cent change in Sales
	No. Stores	Sales	No. Stores	Sales	
CANADA ....	1.066	\$ 11,478,730	988	\$ 14,306,446	+ 24.6
Quebec .....	207	2,225,064	193	2,933,668	+ 31.9
Ontario .....	577	6,668,460	539	8,269,186	+ 24.0
Prairie Provinces	180	1,431,798	159	1,693,776	+ 18.3
British Columbia.	102	1,153,408	97	1,409,816	+ 22.2



Independent Stores

Sales of 987 independent grocery or grocery and meat stores averaged 15 per cent higher in December, 1941, than in December, 1940, gains in Eastern and Central Canada exceeding those in the Western Provinces. Percentage increases in dollar sales for the various divisions are as follows: Maritime Provinces, 19 per cent; Quebec, 19 per cent; Ontario, 14 per cent; Manitoba, 13 per cent; Saskatchewan, 8 per cent; Alberta, 11 per cent; and British Columbia, 10 per cent.

Comparison of Sales Reported for December, 1940 and 1941

Division	No. stores reporting	No. reporting increase	Per cent change in sales
CANADA .....	987	820	+ 15.0
Maritimes .....	135	118	+ 19.0
Quebec .....	214	187	+ 18.7
Ontario .....	385	326	+ 13.6
Manitoba .....	64	52	+ 13.3
Saskatchewan .....	41	28	+ 7.5
Alberta .....	64	49	+ 10.8
British Columbia .....	84	60	+ 9.9

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