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DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND COMMERCE  
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OTTAWA, CANADA

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Dominion Statistician:  
Chief, Merchandising and  
Services Branch:

S.A. Cudmore, M.A. (Oxon.) F.S.S., F.R.S.C.

A.C. Steedman, B.A.

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CURRENT TRENDS IN FOOD DISTRIBUTION, DECEMBER, 1943

Indexes reflecting current trends in food distribution in Canada have been published for some years, indexes of retail and wholesale grocery sales forming components of the two regular monthly bulletins on retail and wholesale trade issued by the Merchandising and Services 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

December sales transacted by 72 of the larger grocery wholesale establishments increased 9 per cent over the dollar volume of business reported in December, 1942, and were on a par with sales made during November, 1943. Cumulative figures in the annual comparison recorded a 3 per cent increase over the 1942 sales. The 9 per cent increase over December, 1942 reflects major gains reported in the Maritimes, Quebec and Ontario which were offset by a smaller increase in the Prairies and a decided decline in sales in British Columbia. Gains reported were as follows: Maritimes, 25 per cent; Quebec, 19 per cent; Ontario, 11 per cent; Prairies, 8 per cent. Sales in British Columbia fell 12 per cent below the 1942 level.

Inventories held at the end of December, 1943 were valued 6 per cent higher than the stocks on hand at the end of December, 1942, and increased by 9 per cent over the stock holdings reported on November 30, 1943. Stocks at the beginning of December are normally 64 per cent in excess of the volume of business transacted in that month. Stocks at the beginning of December, 1943 were 15 per cent in excess of the volume of business transacted, indicating that the inventory position at the beginning of December, 1943 had dropped considerably below the normal position for that period of the year.

Wholesale Grocery Trade by Economic Divisions

Division	Number of firms reporting	Dollar Sales (add 000)		Per Cent Change		
		December, 1942	December, 1943	December, 1943 over December, 1942		Year-to-date, 1943
		\$	\$	1942	1943	1942
CANADA .....	72	17,776	19,361	+ 8.9	- 0.5	+ 2.5
Maritimes .....	15	1,907	2,387	+25.2	- 8.3	+11.5
Quebec .....	20	2,355	2,790	+18.5	+ 8.0	+ 1.4
Ontario .....	19	5,591	6,192	+10.7	+ 3.0	+ 5.4
Prairies .....	12	5,160	5,566	+ 7.9	+ 6.5	- 0.1
British Columbia .....	6	2,763	2,426	-12.2	- 5.5	- 2.7

Retail Sales

Chain Stores

Sales of 929 chain store units operated by 27 chain companies in the food retailing field averaged 6 per cent higher in December, 1943, than sales of 952 units operated by the same 27 firms in December a year ago. Average sales per store were \$15,985 in December, 1943, 9 per cent higher than the \$14,721 average for the same month of 1942.

Sales increased by 8 per cent in Quebec, 10 per cent in Ontario, while decreases of 1 and 7 per cent occurred in the Prairie Provinces and British Columbia respectively.

Comparison of Stores and Sales for December, 1942 and 1943

	December, 1942		December, 1943		Per cent change in sales
	No. Stores	Sales	No. Stores	Sales	
		\$		\$	
CANADA .....	952	14,014,156	929	14,850,037	+ 6.0
Quebec .....	181	2,845,390	174	3,067,475	+ 7.8
Ontario .....	532	7,676,305	517	8,407,256	+ 9.5
Prairie Provinces .....	145	1,980,873	144	1,966,726	- 0.7
British Columbia .....	94	1,511,588	94	1,408,580	- 6.8

Independent Stores

Sales of 862 independent grocery or grocery and meat stores increased in dollar volume by 7 per cent in December, 1943, over the value of business transacted in the same month of last year. The increase was shared by all regions of the country, the following gains being recorded over December, 1942; Maritimes, 10 per cent; Quebec, 6 per cent; Ontario, 5 per cent; Manitoba, 14 per cent; Saskatchewan, 13 per cent; Alberta, 15 per cent and British Columbia, 4 per cent.

Comparison of Sales Reported for December, 1942 and 1943

	No. stores reporting	No. reporting increase	Per cent change in sales
CANADA .....	862	635	+ 6.8
Maritimes .....	125	102	+ 9.8
Quebec .....	187	118	+ 6.0
Ontario .....	340	246	+ 4.8
Manitoba .....	56	49	+13.6
Saskatchewan .....	32	28	+13.1
Alberta .....	53	48	+15.1
British Columbia .....	69	44	+ 4.1

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