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CURRENT TRENDS IN FOOD DISTRIBUTION, MARCH, 1943

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 73 of the larger wholesale grocery houses in Canada increased 9 per cent in March, 1943, over the dollar volume of business transacted in March last year, and were 18 per cent above the value of sales reported in February. British Columbia reported a decline of 12 per cent in sales below March last year while the other regions of the country showed the following gains: Maritimes, 14 per cent; Quebec, 6 per cent; Ontario, 12 per cent; Prairies, 11 per cent. Sales for the first quarter of this year averaged 3 per cent greater than for the corresponding period of last year.

Inventories held by wholesale grocers at the end of March, 1943, were valued 12 per cent lower than the merchandise reported on hand at the end of March last year, and declined by 2 per cent from the inventory position at the end of February. Stocks at the beginning of March are normally 43 per cent in excess of the volume of business transacted in that month. Stocks at the beginning of March, 1943, were 17 per cent in excess of the volume of business realized in the month, indicating that the stock position at the beginning of March had fallen considerably below the normal situation for this time of the year.

Wholesale Grocery Trade by Economic Divisions

Division	Number of firms reporting	Dollar Sales (add 000)		Per cent change		Year- to- date 1943 1942
		March, 1942	March, 1943	March, 1943 over March, 1942	February, 1943	
		\$	\$			
CANADA	73	17,071	18,526	+ 8.5	+18.3	+ 3.4
Maritimes	16	2,121	2,419	+14.1	+24.9	+ 8.9
Quebec	22	3,025	3,192	+ 5.6	+18.5	+ 7.6
Ontario	19	5,422	6,094	+12.4	+20.4	+ 7.0
Prairies	11	4,808	5,331	+10.9	+21.2	- 0.2
British Columbia	5	1,695	1,490	-12.1	- 2.4	- 8.0

Retail Trade

Chain Stores

Sales of 994 chain store units operated by 29 chain companies in the food retailing field averaged 7 per cent lower in March, 1943, than sales of 1,027 units operated by the same 29 firms in March a year ago. Average sales per store were \$13,196 in March, 1943, 4 per cent lower than the \$13,797 average for the same month of 1942.

Sales decreased by 6 per cent in Quebec, 11 per cent in Ontario, and 4 per cent in British Columbia, while an increase of 3 per cent occurred in the Prairie Provinces.

Comparison of Stores and Sales for March, 1942 and 1943

	March, 1942		March, 1943		Per cent change in sales
	No. Stores	Sales	No. Stores	Sales	
		\$		\$	
CANADA	1,027	14,169,120	994	13,116,801	- 7.4
Quebec	187	2,971,880	176	2,780,587	- 6.4
Ontario	556	8,028,176	543	7,178,370	-10.6
Prairie Provinces	188	1,812,791	181	1,861,879	+ 2.7
British Columbia	96	1,356,273	94	1,295,965	- 4.4

Independent Stores

Reports received from 917 independent grocery or grocery and meat stores revealed that sales were valued 17 per cent higher in March, 1943, than in March, 1942. All regions of the country shared in the increase in trading, although gains in the Prairie Provinces were smaller than increases reported in the other provinces. The following gains were recorded over March of last year: Maritimes, 19 per cent; Quebec, 18 per cent; Ontario, 17 per cent; Manitoba, 10 per cent; Saskatchewan, 8 per cent; Alberta, 11 per cent; British Columbia, 18 per cent.

Comparison of Sales Reported for March, 1942 and 1943

	No. stores reporting	No. reporting increase	Per cent change in sales
CANADA	917	764	+16.6
Maritimes	128	110	+19.4
Quebec	198	167	+17.7
Ontario	360	299	+16.8
Manitoba	63	50	+ 9.6
Saskatchewan	36	29	+ 7.8
Alberta	62	53	+10.8
British Columbia	70	56	+18.0

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