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CURRENT TRENDS IN FOOD DISTRIBUTION, MAY, 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

Dollar sales of 74 of the larger wholesale grocery houses in Canada during May remained on a par with sales transacted in May, 1942, and were unchanged from the value of business done during April, 1943. A decline in sales in the Western Provinces counteracted gains in Ontario and the Maritime Provinces. Sales decreased by 9 per cent in British Columbia and 5 per cent in the Prairies, Ontario recorded a gain of 8 per cent in sales over May, 1942, while increases of 2 per cent and 4 per cent were reported by Quebec and the Maritimes respectively. Total figures for the first five months of the year stand 3 per cent higher than for the corresponding period of last year.

Inventories held by wholesale grocers at the end of May, 1943, were valued 13 per cent lower than on the corresponding date last year, and declined by 2 per cent from the inventory position at the end of April. Stocks at the beginning of May are normally 25 per cent in excess of the volume of business transacted during that month. Stocks at the beginning of May, 1943, were 11 per cent in excess of the volume of business realized in the month, indicating that the stock position at the beginning of May had declined sharply from 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
		May, 1942	May, 1943	May, 1943 over May, 1942	April, 1943	
CANADA	74	17,983	18,065	+ 0.5	- 0.3	+ 3.4
Maritimes	14	2,008	2,076	+ 3.5	+ 4.4	+ 8.7
Quebec	22	3,007	3,068	+ 2.0	+ 0.6	+ 7.8
Ontario	20	5,308	5,741	+ 8.2	- 1.2	+ 8.7
Prairies	12	5,097	4,835	- 5.1	+ 2.2	- 2.8
British Columbia ...	6	2,563	2,345	- 8.5	+ 0.1	- 4.8

Retail Trade

Chain Stores

Sales of 883 chain store units operated by 23 chain companies in the food retailing field averaged 8 per cent lower in May, 1943, than sales of 910 units operated by the same 23 firms in May a year ago. Average sales per store were \$15,943 in May, 1943, 5 per cent lower than the \$16,738 average for the same month of 1942.

Sales decreased by 11 per cent in Quebec, 9 per cent in Ontario, 2 per cent in the Prairie Provinces and 1 per cent in British Columbia.

Comparison of Stores and Sales for May, 1942 and 1943

	May, 1942		May, 1943		Per cent change in sales
	No. Stores	Sales \$	No. Stores	Sales \$	
CANADA	910	15,231,246	883	14,077,656	- 7.6
Quebec	183	3,298,054	174	2,942,838	-10.8
Ontario	529	8,696,638	512	7,950,121	- 8.6
Prairie Provinces ..	103	1,788,648	103	1,756,592	- 1.8
British Columbia ...	95	1,447,906	94	1,428,105	- 1.4

Independent Stores

Sales of 845 independent grocery or grocery and meat stores increased in dollar volume by 11 per cent in May, 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 May, 1942: Maritimes, 10 per cent; Quebec, 12 per cent; Ontario, 10 per cent; Manitoba, 11 per cent; Saskatchewan, 8 per cent; Alberta, 14 per cent; British Columbia, 15 per cent.

Comparison of Sales Reported for May, 1942 and 1943

	No. stores reporting	No. reporting increase	Per cent change in sales
CANADA	845	632	+11.2
Maritimes	121	91	+10.3
Quebec	190	131	+11.9
Ontario.....	325	240	+10.2
Manitoba	54	48	+11.0
Saskatchewan	31	24	+ 7.7
Alberta	54	45	+13.6
British Columbia	70	53	+15.0

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