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Dominion Statistician: S.A. Cudmore, M.A. (Oxon.) F.S.S., F.R.S.C.
Chief, Merchandising and Services Branch: A.C. Steedman, B.A.

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CURRENT TRENDS IN FOOD DISTRIBUTION, JANUARY, 1944

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

January wholesale grocery sales increased 10 per cent over the dollar volume of business transacted in January, 1943, according to reports received from 72 of the larger grocery houses, but were valued 12 per cent lower than December sales. All regions of the country shared in the 10 per cent increase. Results on a regional basis indicate substantial gains in the Maritimes, the Prairies and British Columbia and smaller increases in Quebec and Ontario. Percentage gains for economic divisions are as follows: Maritimes, 26 per cent; Quebec, 2 per cent; Ontario, 7 per cent; Prairies, 11 per cent; British Columbia, 10 per cent.

Inventories in the hands of wholesale grocers at the end of January, 1944, were valued 13 per cent higher than on the same date last year, but decreased by 1 per cent from the year-end stock position. Stocks at the beginning of January are normally 63 per cent in excess of the volume of business transacted in that month. Stocks at the beginning of January this year exceeded sales transacted during the month by 53 per cent, indicating that the inventory position at the commencement of this year was somewhat below the normal level for that period of the year.

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Wholesale Grocery Trade by Economic Divisions

Division	Number of firms reporting	Dollar Sales (add 000)		Per Cent Change	
		January, 1943	January, 1944	January, 1944 over January, 1943	December, 1943
		\$	\$		
CANADA	72	15,021	16,498	+ 9.8	-11.8
Maritimes	15	1,776	2,232	+25.7	- 5.1
Quebec	21	2,306	2,357	+ 2.2	-24.0
Ontario	20	4,678	4,983	+ 6.5	-13.8
Prairies	10	4,195	4,657	+11.0	-12.3
British Columbia	6	2,066	2,269	+ 9.8	- 3.5

Retail Sales

Chain Stores

Sales of 903 chain store units operated by 26 chain companies in the food retailing field averaged 2 per cent lower in January, 1944, than sales of 927 units operated by the same 26 firms in January a year ago. Average sales per store were \$13,777 in January, 1944, fractionally higher than the \$13,745 average for the same month of 1943.

Sales decreased by 5 per cent in Quebec, 2 per cent in Ontario, and 4 per cent in British Columbia, while an increase of 4 per cent occurred in the Prairie Provinces.

Comparison of Stores and Sales for January, 1943 and 1944

	January, 1943		January, 1944		Per cent change in sales
	No. Stores	Sales	No. Stores	Sales	
		\$		\$	
CANADA	927	12,741,505	903	12,440,755	- 2.4
Quebec	181	2,788,070	174	2,636,205	- 5.4
Ontario	531	7,252,538	517	7,098,846	- 2.1
Prairie Provinces	104	1,408,959	102	1,462,508	+ 3.8
British Columbia	111	1,291,938	110	1,243,196	- 3.8

Independent Stores

Sales of 844 independent grocery or grocery and meat stores increased in dollar volume by 1 per cent in January, 1944, over the value of business transacted in the same month of last year. The following gains were recorded over January, 1943: Maritimes, 10 per cent; Manitoba, 8 per cent; Saskatchewan, 5 per cent; Alberta, 17 per cent and British Columbia, 2 per cent. Decreases of 1 and 3 per cent occurred in Quebec and Ontario respectively.

Comparison of Sales Reported for January, 1943 and 1944

	No. stores reporting	No. reporting increase	Per cent change in sales
CANADA	844	496	+ 1.1
Maritimes	121	91	+ 9.6
Quebec	183	85	- 1.4
Ontario	334	164	- 2.6
Manitoba	52	40	+ 7.8
Saskatchewan	29	24	+ 5.3
Alberta	57	52	+16.8
British Columbia	68	40	+ 1.7

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