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CURRENT TRENDS IN FOOD DISTRIBUTION, FEBRUARY, 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

Dollar volume of sales transacted by 73 of the larger wholesale grocery houses during February averaged 15 per cent higher than the value of sales realized in February, 1943, and increased by 10 per cent over January. The 15 per cent gain over February last year reflects an increase in trading activities in each of the economic divisions of the country. Gains recorded on a regional basis are as follows: Maritime Provinces, 19 per cent; Quebec, 12 per cent; Ontario, 16 per cent; Prairie Provinces, 17 per cent; British Columbia, 10 per cent.

Wholesale grocers reported the value of stocks held at the end of February to be 12 per cent higher than the inventories held on the same date last year, but decreased by 1 per cent from the January month-end stock position. Stocks at the beginning of February are normally 66 per cent in excess of the volume of business transacted in that month. Stocks at the beginning of February this year exceeded sales transacted during the month by 44 per cent, indicating that the inventory position at the beginning of February was considerably below the normal level for that period of the year.

Wholesale Grocery Trade by Economic Divisions

Division	Number of firms reporting	Dollar Sales (add 000)		Per cent change	
		February, 1943	February, 1944	February, 1944 over February, 1943	1944 over January, 1944
		\$	\$		
CANADA	73	15,843	18,229	+15.1	+ 9.5
Maritimes	15	1,894	2,259	+19.3	- 3.6
Quebec	21	2,437	2,740	+12.4	+21.1
Ontario	20	4,742	5,482	+15.6	+10.1
Prairies	11	4,521	5,275	+16.7	+11.8
British Columbia	6	2,249	2,473	+10.0	+ 8.9

Retail Sales

Chain Stores

Sales of 949 chain store units operated by 26 chain companies in the food retailing field averaged 13 per cent higher in February, 1944, than sales of 970 units operated by the same 26 firms in February a year ago. Average sales per store were \$13,934 in February, 1944, 15 per cent higher than the \$12,067 average for the same month of 1943.

Sales increased by 13 per cent in Quebec, 16 per cent in Ontario, 7 per cent in the Prairie Provinces, and 4 per cent in British Columbia.

Comparison of Stores and Sales for February, 1943 and 1944

	February, 1943		February, 1944		Per cent change in sales
	No. Stores	Sales	No. Stores	Sales	
		\$		\$	
CANADA	970	11,704,640	949	13,223,447	+13.0
Quebec	178	2,491,914	174	2,809,216	+12.7
Ontario	533	6,359,128	519	7,407,511	+16.5
Prairie Provinces	148	1,601,718	145	1,706,495	+ 6.5
British Columbia	111	1,251,880	111	1,300,225	+ 3.9

Independent Stores

Sales of 877 independent grocery or grocery and meat stores increased in dollar volume by 7 per cent in February, 1944, over the value of business transacted in the same month of last year. The following gains were recorded over February, 1943; Maritimes, 10 per cent; Quebec, 6 per cent; Ontario, 5 per cent; Manitoba and Saskatchewan, each show an increase of 16 per cent; Alberta, 19 per cent and British Columbia, 6 per cent.

Comparison of Sales Reported for February, 1943 and 1944

	No. stores reporting	No. reporting increase	Per cent change in sales
CANADA	877	651	+ 7.0
Maritimes	129	100	+ 9.5
Quebec	181	125	+ 5.6
Ontario	349	246	+ 4.5
Manitoba	58	46	+15.6
Saskatchewan	31	29	+16.2
Alberta	58	51	+18.7
British Columbia	71	54	+ 5.5

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