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CURRENT TRENDS IN FOOD DISTRIBUTION, MARCH, 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

March sales increased 13 per cent over the dollar business realized in March last year, according to the data received from 70 of the larger wholesale grocery houses, and averaged 16 per cent higher than February sales. The Maritime Provinces reported 20 per cent more business transacted, while a gain of 13 per cent was reported by both Ontario and British Columbia, and sales increased by 11 per cent in Quebec and the Prairie Provinces. Cumulative sales for the January-March period stand 12 per cent higher than sales for the same three months of last year.

Inventories in the hands of wholesale grocers at the end of March were valued 15 per cent higher than the stocks reported on hand on March 31, 1943, but declined by 2 per cent from the February month end inventory position. Stocks at the beginning of March are normally 49 per cent in excess of the volume of business transacted in that month. Stocks at the beginning of March this year exceeded sales transacted during the month by 23 per cent, indicating that the inventory position at the beginning of March 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		Year-to- date, 1944
		March, 1943	March, 1944	March, 1944 over March, 1943	February, 1944	
CANADA .....	70	17,331	20,121	+12.8	+15.0	+12.5
Maritimes .....	16	2,419	2,897	+19.7	+26.1	+20.3
Quebec .....	13	1,991	2,200	+10.5	+16.7	+8.5
Ontario .....	20	5,725	6,455	+12.8	+17.7	+11.6
Prairies .....	10	5,182	5,733	+10.7	+12.7	+12.2
British Columbia .....	6	2,514	2,851	+12.6	+11.4	+10.9

Retail Sales

Chain Stores

Sales of 910 chain store units operated by 25 chain companies in the food retailing field averaged 13 per cent higher in March, 1944, than sales of 928 units operated by the same 25 firms in March a year ago. Average sales per store were \$15,927 in March, 1944, 15 per cent higher than the \$13,837 average for the same month of 1943.

Sales increased by 13 per cent in Quebec, 15 per cent in Ontario, 9 per cent in the Prairie Provinces, and 8 per cent in British Columbia.

Comparison of Stores and Sales for March, 1943 and 1944

	March, 1943		March, 1944		Per cent change in sales
	No. Stores	Sales	No. Stores	Sales	
	\$	\$	\$	\$	
CANADA .....	928	12,840,642	910	14,493,300	+12.9
Quebec .....	176	2,778,309	174	3,140,596	+13.0
Ontario .....	532	7,133,831	519	8,181,908	+14.7
Prairie Provinces ...	109	1,595,443	106	1,732,985	+8.6
British Columbia ....	111	1,332,500	111	1,437,811	+7.9

Independent Stores

Sales of 870 independent grocery or grocery and meat stores increased in dollar volume by 3 per cent in March, 1944, over the value of business transacted in the same month of last year. The following gains were recorded over March, 1943; Maritimes, 10 per cent; Quebec, 3 per cent; Ontario, 6 per cent; Manitoba, 18 per cent; Saskatchewan, 15 per cent; Alberta, 19 per cent and British Columbia, 4 per cent.

Comparison of Sales Reported for March, 1943 and 1944

	No. stores reporting	No. reporting increase	Per cent change in sales
CANADA .....	870	662	+ 8.3
Maritimes .....	126	37	+ 9.8
Quebec .....	176	126	+ 8.2
Ontario .....	350	260	+ 6.0
Manitoba .....	58	47	+17.5
Saskatchewan .....	28	25	+15.4
Alberta .....	62	57	+18.5
British Columbia .....	70	50	+ 3.7

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