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CURRENT TRENDS IN FOOD DISTRIBUTION, APRIL, 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

Statements received from 74 of the larger wholesale grocery houses in Canada indicated that sales transacted during April were 6 per cent greater than the dollar sales realized in April, 1943, but were 11 per cent lower than March sales. Quebec reported a 4 per cent decline which was offset by increases of 6 per cent in the Maritime Provinces, 6 per cent in Ontario, 9 per cent in British Columbia and 11 per cent in the Prairie Provinces. The decline from the March level of trading was felt in all regions of the country, decreases ranging from 9 per cent in Quebec to 15 per cent in the Maritimes. Cumulative sales for the first four months of the year have increased 9 per cent over the same period of last year.

Wholesale grocers valued their stocks on hand at the end of April, 1944, 15 per cent higher than the inventories held at the end of April last year, but the inventory position declined by 2 per cent from the stock holdings reported at the end of March. Stocks at the beginning of April are normally 35 per cent in excess of the volume of business transacted in that month. Stocks at the beginning of April this year exceeded sales transacted during the month by 34 per cent, indicating that the inventory position at the beginning of April was on a par with 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 Year-to-date, 1943
		April, 1943	April, 1944	April, 1943	April, 1944 over March, 1944	
		\$	\$			
CANADA	74	17,317	18,366	+ 6.1	-11.4	+ 9.2
Maritimes	15	2,166	2,296	+ 6.0	-15.2	+16.4
Quebec	21	2,856	2,732	- 4.4	- 8.9	+ 3.9
Ontario	20	5,240	5,563	+ 6.2	-10.4	+10.2
Prairies	12	4,795	5,302	+10.6	-13.0	+11.6
British Columbia ..	6	2,260	2,473	+ 9.4	-10.8	+10.5

Retail Sales

Chain Stores

Sales of 949 chain store units operated by 27 chain companies in the food retailing field averaged 8 per cent higher in April, 1944, than sales of 962 units operated by the same 27 firms in April a year ago. Average sales per store were \$15,408 in April, 1944, 10 per cent higher than the \$14,015 average for the same month of 1943.

Sales increased by 7 per cent in Quebec, 11 per cent in Ontario, 5 per cent in the Prairie Provinces and British Columbia respectively.

Comparison of Stores and Sales for April, 1943 and 1944

	April, 1943		April, 1944		Per cent change in sales
	No. Stores	Sales	No. Stores	Sales	
		\$		\$	
CANADA	962	13,482,618	949	14,621,791	+ 8.4
Quebec	173	2,868,709	174	3,065,094	+ 6.8
Ontario	534	7,411,082	523	8,198,862	+10.6
Prairie Provinces	144	1,833,199	142	1,923,444	+ 4.9
British Columbia	111	1,369,628	110	1,434,391	+ 4.7

Independent Stores

Sales of 859 independent grocery or grocery and meat stores increased in dollar volume by 4 per cent in April, 1944, over the value of business transacted in the same month of last year. The following gains were recorded over April, 1943: Maritimes, 9 per cent; Quebec, 5 per cent; Ontario, 1 per cent; Manitoba, 9 per cent; Saskatchewan, 3 per cent; Alberta, 11 per cent while British Columbia, decreased fractionally over the same month last year.

Comparison of Sales Reported for April, 1943 and 1944

	No. stores reporting	No. reporting increase	Per cent change in sales
CANADA	859	568	+ 4.0
Maritimes	120	85	+ 9.4
Quebec	182	124	+ 4.9
Ontario	344	212	+ 1.2
Manitoba	56	41	+ 8.5
Saskatchewan	28	20	+ 2.9
Alberta	61	50	+10.8
British Columbia	68	36	- 0.5

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