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CURRENT TRENDS IN FOOD DISTRIBUTION, JANUARY, 1945

Indexes reflecting current trends in food distribution in Canada have been published for some years, indexes of retail grocery and wholesale grocery and fruit and vegetables 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 grocery and wholesale grocery and fruit and vegetables 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 sales transacted by food wholesalers increased 22 per cent in the grocery trade and 8 per cent in the fruit and vegetables trade over January, 1944, according to statements received from 75 grocery wholesalers and 41 fruit and vegetable wholesale merchants. Grocery sales were 2 per cent greater than the December business but the January fruit and vegetable trading fell 20 per cent below the December level.

The 22 per cent and 8 per cent gains were shared by all regions of the country. Results for the grocery trade on a regional basis are as follows; Maritime Provinces, 17 per cent; Quebec, 20 per cent; Ontario, 28 per cent; Prairie Provinces, 17 per cent; British Columbia, 23 per cent. Fruit and vegetable sales increased 4 per cent in the Maritime Provinces and Quebec, 6 per cent in Ontario, and 13 per cent in the Western Provinces.

The percentage increases quoted above relate to the total business of firms classified either as grocery or as fruit and vegetable wholesalers. Firms dealing chiefly in grocery products and considered as wholesale grocers may carry some fruits and vegetables. Conversely, although to a smaller degree, fruit and vegetable wholesalers may carry some dry groceries. As just stated, the percentage changes quoted above relate to the business of each of the two trades in their entirety not to the sales of grocery products alone or to the sale of fruit and vegetables alone.

Inventories in the hands of wholesale grocers at the end of January this year were valued 2 per cent lower than the stocks held on January 31, 1944, and 5 per cent lower than the stocks reported on hand at the end of December, 1944. Stocks at the beginning of January are normally 63 per cent in excess of the volume of business transacted in that month as reflected in the average experience over the years 1935 to 1942. Stocks at the beginning of January, 1945, were 34 per cent in excess of the volume of business transacted, indicating that the inventory position

at the beginning of the year had dropped considerable below the normal position for that period of the year.

Wholesale Grocery Trade by Economic Divisions

Division	Number of firms reporting	Dollar Sales (add 000)		Per cent change	
		January, 1944	January, 1945	January, 1945 over January, 1944 December, 1944	
		\$	\$		
CANADA	75	16,177	19,674	+21.6	+ 1.5
Maritimes	17	2,500	2,922	+16.9	+ 3.6
Quebec	20	2,327	2,790	+19.9	+ 1.6
Ontario	20	4,724	6,062	+28.3	+ 1.4
Prairies	12	4,403	5,166	+17.3	+ 9.8
British Columbia ...	6	2,223	2,734	+23.0	+ 0.5

Wholesale Fruit and Vegetables Trade by Economic Divisions

Division	Number of firms reporting	Dollar Sales (add 000)		Per cent change	
		January, 1944	January, 1945	January, 1945 over January, 1944 December, 1944	
		\$	\$		
CANADA	41	4,842	5,222	+ 7.8	-20.3
Maritimes and Quebec	13	1,390	1,448	+ 4.2	-20.9
Ontario	15	1,751	1,853	+ 5.8	-19.4
Western Provinces ..	13	1,701	1,921	+12.9	-20.9

Retail Sales

Chain Stores

Sales of 906 chain store units operated by 28 chain companies in the food retailing field averaged 13 per cent higher in January, 1945, than sales of 894 units operated by the same 28 firms in January a year ago. Average sales per store were \$16,037 in January, 1945, 14 per cent higher than the \$14,048 average for the same month of 1944.

Sales increased by 8 per cent in the Maritime Provinces, 17 per cent in Quebec, 11 per cent in Ontario, 13 per cent in the Prairie Provinces and 16 per cent in British Columbia.

Comparison of Stores and Sales for January, 1944 and 1945

	January, 1944		January, 1945		Per cent change in sales
	No. Stores	Sales	No. Stores	Sales	
		\$		\$	
CANADA	906	12,727,457	894	14,336,841	+12.6
Maritimes	42	422,385	41	455,921	+ 7.9
Quebec	174	2,640,067	170	3,094,674	+17.2
Ontario	523	7,131,426	517	7,886,408	+10.6
Prairie Provinces	106	1,483,221	105	1,679,566	+13.2
British Columbia	61	1,050,358	61	1,220,272	+16.2

Independent Stores

The sample of independent food stores has recently been enlarged to include a representative number of meat stores. Figures for meat stores are combined with those for grocery stores and combination grocery and meat stores in the summary presented below.

Sales of 1,247 independent food stores averaged 5 per cent higher in January this year over last. There was an unusual degree of uniformity in the results for various parts of the country, increases ranging from 1 per cent in Alberta to 7 per cent in British Columbia.

Comparison of Sales Reported for January, 1944 and 1945

	No. stores reporting	No. reporting increase	Per cent change in sales
CANADA	1,247	796	+ 4.8
Maritimes	185	132	+ 5.5
Quebec	297	174	+ 3.6
Ontario	398	271	+ 5.8
Manitoba	90	56	+ 3.9
Saskatchewan	56	33	+ 2.7
Alberta	105	55	+ 1.4
British Columbia	113	75	+ 7.4



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