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### CURRENT TRENDS IN FOOD DISTRIBUTION, MARCH, 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

Wholesale food sales were 2 per cent greater in March this year than last. The 2 per cent increase reflects a gain of 8 per cent in wholesale fruit and vegetable sales, while the dollar volume of wholesale grocery trading remained unchanged from March, 1944. These results are based on data received from 74 of the larger wholesale grocery establishments in Canada and 47 fruit and vegetable wholesalers.

The 8 per cent increase recorded by the fruit and vegetable trade was shared by all regions of the country, sales advancing 10 per cent in the Maritime Provinces and Quebec, 8 per cent in Ontario, and 6 per cent in the Western Provinces. Fruit and vegetable trading in March was 23 per cent heavier than the volume of business transacted in February of this year, while sales for the first quarter of 1945 stand 8 per cent higher than for the corresponding period of 1944.

The trend of grocery trading varied greatly for the different provinces. British Columbia registered an increase of 7 per cent; trading in Ontario remained on a par with March, 1944 sales, while dollar business declined 1 per cent in the Maritime Provinces, 2 per cent in the Prairie Provinces and 4 per cent in Quebec. March sales were 10 per cent greater than the volume of business transacted in February while cumulative figures for the first three months of this year stand 8 per cent above the January-March period of 1944.

The value of wholesale grocery inventories on hand at the end of March this year remained unchanged from stocks held on March 31, 1944 and was slightly less than 1 per cent below the valuation placed on merchandise held at the end of February, 1945. Stocks on hand at the beginning of March are normally 49 per cent in excess of the volume of business transacted in that month as reflected in the average experience over the years 1935-1942. Inventories at the beginning of March this year were 17 per cent in excess of the volume of business transacted during the month, indicating that the inventory position at the beginning of March was considerably below the normal situation 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, 1945 Year-to-date, 1944
		March, 1944	March, 1945	March, 1945 over March, 1944	February, 1945	
		\$	\$			
CANADA .....	74	20,295	20,255	- 0.2	+ 9.8	+ 7.8
Maritimes .....	16	2,889	2,864	- 0.9	+16.1	+ 7.3
Quebec .....	19	2,539	2,443	- 3.8	+13.4	+ 2.6
Ontario .....	22	6,761	6,764	0	+ 5.5	+12.1
Prairies .....	11	5,336	5,230	- 2.0	+ 9.9	+ 6.8
British Columbia .....	6	2,770	2,954	+ 6.6	+13.2	+11.0

Wholesale Fruit and Vegetables Trade by Economic Divisions

Division	Number of firms reporting	Dollar Sales (add 000)		Per cent change		Year-to-date, 1945 Year-to-date, 1944
		March, 1944	March, 1945	March, 1945 over March, 1944	February, 1945	
		\$	\$			
CANADA .....	47	7,689	8,274	+ 7.6	+23.1	+ 7.7
Maritimes and Quebec...	17	1,828	2,008	+ 9.8	+13.1	+ 6.3
Ontario .....	18	3,064	3,307	+ 7.9	+26.5	+ 8.6
Western Provinces .....	12	2,797	2,959	+ 5.8	+22.0	+ 7.6



Retail Sales

Chain Stores

Sales of 947 chain store units operated by 27 chain companies in the food retailing field averaged 14 per cent higher in March, 1945, than sales of 965 units operated by the same 27 firms in March a year ago. Average sales per store were \$18,165 in March, 1945, 16 per cent higher than the \$15,601 average for the same month of 1944.

Sales increased by 12 per cent in the Maritime Provinces, 17 per cent in Quebec, 14 per cent in Ontario, Prairie Provinces and British Columbia.

Comparison of Stores and Sales for March, 1944 and 1945

	March, 1944		March, 1945		Per cent change in sales
	No. Stores	Sales \$	No. Stores	Sales \$	
CANADA .....	965	15,055,307	947	17,202,308	+14.3
Maritimes .....	39	471,132	39	528,302	+12.1
Quebec .....	174	3,140,816	169	3,672,536	+16.9
Ontario .....	513	8,155,187	505	9,259,501	+13.5
Prairie Provinces ...	145	1,896,731	142	2,159,497	+13.9
British Columbia ....	94	1,391,441	92	1,582,472	+13.7

Independent Stores

Sales reported by 1,213 stores operating in the food retailing field were 10 per cent higher in March this year compared with last. The sample of stores comprising this survey included grocery stores, combination grocery and meat stores as well as meat markets.

Increases were recorded in all regions of the country compared with the corresponding month last year. These gains may be attributed in part to the fact that there were five Saturdays in March this year and only four in March, 1944. Increases ranged from 13 per cent in the Maritime Provinces to 7 per cent in Alberta. Gains for other provinces were as follows: Saskatchewan and British Columbia, 11 per cent; Ontario and Manitoba, 10 per cent; and Quebec, 9 per cent.

Comparison of Sales Reported for March, 1944 and 1945

	No. stores reporting	No. reporting increase	Per cent change in sales
CANADA .....	1,213	935	+ 9.8
Maritimes .....	176	149	+13.0
Quebec .....	280	201	+ 8.5
Ontario .....	388	302	+ 9.6
Manitoba .....	95	76	+ 9.8
Saskatchewan .....	59	45	+10.8
Alberta .....	103	78	+ 7.4
British Columbia ....	112	84	+10.9



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Table 1. Summary of the results of the 1981 Census of Canada, by province and territory			
Province/Territory	Total population	Male population	Female population
Alberta	2,411,111	1,205,555	1,205,556
Saskatchewan	967,111	483,555	483,556
Manitoba	1,181,111	590,555	590,556
Ontario	10,411,111	5,205,555	5,205,556
Quebec	6,411,111	3,205,555	3,205,556
Atlantic Provinces	2,411,111	1,205,555	1,205,556
Northwest Territories	29,111	14,555	14,556
Yukon	21,111	10,555	10,556
Nunavut	35,111	17,555	17,556
Total Canada	29,111,111	14,555,555	14,555,556