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CURRENT TRENDS IN FOOD DISTRIBUTION, MARCH, 1947

Indexes reflecting current trends in food distribution in Canada have been published for some years, indexes of retail grocery and wholesale grocery and fruits and vegetables sales forming components of the two regular monthly bulletins on retail and wholesale trade issued by the Merchandising and Services Statistics of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. This series brings together in one report the information on retail grocery and wholesale grocery and fruit and vegetable 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 of wholesale grocers were 15 per cent above the dollar volume of business transacted during the same month last year and were valued 8 per cent higher than those for February, 1947, according to statements received from 78 of the larger wholesale grocery establishments in Canada. All regions of the country registered gains but increases were more substantial in the western provinces than in eastern Canada. Sales in British Columbia advanced 25 per cent and in the Prairie Provinces, 17 per cent. Wholesale grocers in Quebec reported an increase of 14 per cent while those in Ontario and the Maritime Provinces showed a gain of 12 per cent. Total sales for the first quarter of this year increased 15 per cent in dollar volume over the volume for the corresponding period of 1946.

The dollar volume of fruit and vegetable sales was maintained at a fairly high level although registering a 12 per cent decrease from the exceptionally high volume of sales in 1946. March, 1947 sales were 18 per cent higher than those in February. These data are based on statements received from 48 of the larger fruit and vegetable wholesalers in Canada. A drop of 19 per cent from 1946 was recorded in Ontario where sales had shown the largest increase last year over the previous year. Sales in the Maritime Provinces were 6 per cent below last year and in the Western Provinces, were down 7 per cent. Cumulative sales for the first three months were 9 per cent lower than those for the corresponding months last year.

March month-end grocery stocks were 34 per cent higher than those on hand at the same date last year but were 2 per cent lower in value than at the end of February, 1947. Inventories at the beginning of March are normally 49 per cent in excess of sales during that month. Stocks on hand at the beginning of March, 1947 were only 26 per cent in excess of March sales.

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Wholesale Grocery Trade by Economic Divisions

Division	Number of firms reporting	Dollar Sales (add 000)		Per cent change		
		March, 1946	March, 1947	March, 1947 over March, 1946	February, 1947	Year-to- date, 1947 Year-to- date, 1946
		\$	\$			
CANADA	78	23,352	26,911	+15.2	+ 8.0	+15.2
Maritime Provinces ..	16	3,217	3,496	+11.8	+14.8	+10.2
Quebec	22	3,504	3,993	+13.9	+17.0	+11.3
Ontario	22	7,353	8,195	+11.5	+ 0.8	+15.9
Prairie Provinces ...	12	6,155	7,224	+17.4	+ 7.2	+17.1
British Columbia	6	3,213	4,003	+24.6	+14.0	+19.3

Wholesale Fruit and Vegetable Trade by Economic Divisions

Division	Number of firms reporting	Dollar Sales (add 000)		Per cent change		
		March, 1946	March, 1947	March, 1947 over March, 1946	February, 1947	Year-to- date, 1947 Year-to- date, 1946
		\$	\$			
CANADA	48	10,574	9,289	-12.1	+18.0	- 9.2
Maritimes and Quebec	16	2,124	2,000	- 5.8	+14.6	- 6.4
Ontario	19	4,557	3,686	-19.1	+17.7	-13.2
Western Provinces ..	13	3,893	3,603	- 7.4	+19.3	- 5.8

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Retail Trade

Chain Stores - March, 1947 sales of 904 chain store units operated by 26 chain companies in the food retailing field were 12 per cent higher than sales of 913 stores operated by the same 26 firms in March, 1946. Average sales per store in March, 1947 were \$22,964, 13 per cent above the \$20,315 average for the same month of the previous year.

Quebec and the Maritime Provinces showed the largest increases in chain food store sales in March this year compared with last. A gain of 17 per cent in these two regions was followed by an advance of 14 per cent in British Columbia, and by identical gains of 10 per cent in Ontario and the Prairie Provinces.

Comparison of Stores and Sales for March, 1946 and 1947

	March, 1946		March, 1947		% Change In Sales March, 1947 March, 1946
	No. of Stores	Sales \$	No. of Stores	Sales \$	
CANADA	913	18,547,400	904	20,759,600	+11.9
Maritime Provinces	30	472,300	31	550,100	+16.5
Quebec	164	3,910,000	164	4,564,900	+16.8
Ontario	487	10,038,100	480	11,038,100	+10.0
Prairie Provinces	138	2,389,600	136	2,623,400	+ 9.8
British Columbia .	94	1,737,400	93	1,983,100	+14.1
<u>Independent Stores -</u>					

- Independent food stores did 5 per cent more business in March, 1947 than in the same month of 1946. The Maritime Provinces showed a decrease of 2 per cent, while all other regions of the country recorded very uniform gains ranging from 4 per cent in Saskatchewan to 7 per cent in Ontario.

Comparison of Sales Reported for March, 1946 and 1947

	No. of Stores Reporting	No. Reporting An Increase	% Change in Sales March, 1947 March, 1946
CANADA	1,151	663	+ 4.7
Maritime Provinces	166	66	- 1.5
Quebec	263	167	+ 5.6
Ontario	353	207	+ 6.5
Manitoba	87	50	+ 4.5
Saskatchewan	73	39	+ 3.6
Alberta	102	62	+ 4.7
British Columbia .	107	72	+ 6.4



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