

Crop Prospects for 1917

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With the publication by the Census and Statistics Office of the preliminary estimates of the areas sown to the principal cereals, some idea of the crop prospects for the current season, so far as they depend upon areas sown. The reports on the condition of the growing crops, issued recently by both the Dominion and the Provincial Governments, indicate the influence which the character of the season is beginning to have over the eventual yield. We will deal with these two points of areas sown and conditions of the growing crops in order.

ACREAGE OF EARLY SOWN CEREALS.

There is a fairly general realization that the coming season is of critical importance in its relation to the harvests of the world, and especially to the needs of the Allied armies at the battle front. The farmers of Canada have, it is believed, put forth their best efforts to overcome difficulties and sow as large an area as possible, first with wheat, and secondly with other cereals. The difficulties have not been small, and have been caused not alone by scarcity of labour due to the absence of so many young men at the war, but also to seasonal conditions of rather exceptional character. In the first place, owing to the unfavorable weather of last fall, the area sown to winter wheat was considerably less than usual, being only 813,400 acres, instead of over one million acres, as in previous years. A more than ordinarily severe winter caused a great deal of this area to be destroyed, and at the end of the winter the acreage under fall wheat was greatly reduced. The long-drawn severity of the winter and lateness of the spring greatly curtailed the time available for the sowing of spring wheat, so that one is not surprised to learn that the total acreage under wheat this year is estimated to be less than either of the two previous years, when under the stimulus of the war, special efforts to increase the acreage met with so much success. Yet, although the total wheat area this year, amounting to 13,450,250 acres, is less by ten per cent. than last year's sown area of 14,897,000 acres, it is still more by 4 per cent. than the area harvested last year, viz., 12,879,500 acres. Altogether, therefore, so far as area is concerned, the prospect is for a better result. Where the shortness of the seeding season prevented the sowing of wheat, efforts were directed to other crops, and this accounts for a considerable increase in the area sown to oats, which are estimated to occupy 11,781,900 acres, as compared with 11,376,346 acres, the area sown, and 9,875,346 acres, the area harvested last year. The following statement shows the areas estimated to be sown this year to early cereals, hay and clover, as compared with the areas harvested in 1915 and 1916:

Crops.	1915.	1916.	1917.
Fall wheat	1,124,200	932,529	809,250
Spring wheat	13,551,100	11,968,061	12,641,000
All wheat	14,675,300	12,900,590	13,450,250
Oats	11,424,600	9,875,346	11,781,900
Barley	1,707,650	1,681,180	1,954,100
Rye	112,300	147,170	159,470
Peas	196,210	159,680	152,465
Mixed Grains	466,300	410,726	558,250
Hay and Clover	7,875,000	7,892,932	7,661,800
Alfalfa	92,490	89,472	84,900

The areas for 1917 given in the table are, it must be remembered, only the first or preliminary estimate. A second estimate will be published after the end of June, when all the seeding will have been completed. And a final revision will be effected later in the year, when the results are completed of the collection of crop statistics in certain of the provinces, which for the first time has been under co-operative arrangements between the Dominion and the Provincial Governments.

CONDITION OF FIELD CROPS.

Added to the increased destruction of the fall wheat crop by winter-killing, we have the fact that the surviving areas were of poor appearance at the close of the winter. Thus, at the end of April the condition of fall wheat was represented by the low percentage of 69 of the standard or full crop—a condition lower than any previous record at the same date. Measured against the eight-year average, this condition indicated a prospective yield per acre of 82 per cent.; that is, 18 per cent. below the average. For the spring sown crops the condition on May 31 was lower than in any recent year, but no doubt this was partly due to the lateness of the season, and we may expect a higher condition as the growth

proceeds. The following statement shows the condition of the crops on May 31, for the past eight years:

NOTE—100 = standard or full crop.

Crops.	1910	1911	1912	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917
Fall wheat	88	81	71	81	80	94	84	71
Spring wheat	91	97	94	92	92	96	92	87
All wheat	90	92	87	89	91	95	90	84
Oats	94	95	92	92	93	92	90	85
Barley	93	93	91	91	92	92	89	87
Rye	88	90	87	88	89	91	91	86
Peas	93	92	84	88	92	93	90	88
Mixed grains	95	94	88	90	93	91	89	89
Hay & clover	98	91	96	81	90	86	98	80
Alfalfa

The statement shows for all the crops a somewhat lower condition than is usual at this time of the year; but with favourable weather there is ample time for recovery. June has, on the whole, been a good growing month, and the reports so far received are encouraging. Of the three Atlantic provinces, conditions in Prince Edward Island are reported as entirely favourable for all crops—cereals, roots, corn and potatoes. A heavy hay crop is assured in most districts, and all kinds of fruit promise well, as no frost has occurred since the bloom opened. In Nova Scotia and New Brunswick cold and wet weather retarded seeding, and delayed growth; but grain crops in Nova Scotia have made rapid progress since June 12, and in New Brunswick the potato acreage is believed to be above the average, though affected by the wet and by shortage of fertilizers. In Quebec vegetation is backward, and crops have suffered from excessive rain, especially those on low-lying lands and on stiff soils. Hay promises to be a big

crop. In Ontario, the fall wheat has in some cases made a wonderful recovery from the set-back of the severe weather, and the late, cold spring, but in others it still shows the effect of these conditions.

All spring-sown crops are reported as doing well, and showing great promise, whilst pastures are in first class condition, and the flow of milk is excellent. In Manitoba wheat is reported as being uneven, and in some parts has suffered severely from a night frost about June 21. In this province much will depend upon the prolongation of warm weather later in the season. In Saskatchewan, the crops are from seven to ten days later than last year, which itself was not an early season. Straw apparently will be short, except on the summer fallows. In Alberta the latest report at the end of June states that all crops are looking very well, with warm weather and plenty of moisture prevailing all over the province; so that the conditions are ideal for good growth. Potatoes and root crops are making excellent progress. In British Columbia the cereal crops, although somewhat later than usual, are promising well; so are the fruit crops, cherries and strawberries being abundant.

URBAN AGRICULTURE AND GARDENING.

A movement which appears to have become very general throughout Canada this year, is the bringing under cultivation in the towns of vacant building lots, and the growth of vegetables in private gardens. The efforts that are being made in this direction will, in the aggregate, prove of considerable value in connection with the national food supply, and should especially improve the situation as regards potatoes, the field crops of which have been poor during two successive years, and the price correspondingly high. In this direction the younger women of our cities and towns are rendering admirable service for the general benefit of the community, which includes the raising of the standard of their own physical health.

Official Report

The press bulletin issued by the Census and Statistics Office, Ottawa, gives the following report on the condition of field crops throughout Canada at the end of June, as summarized from telegrams from selected correspondents, including the Superintendents of the Dominion Experimental Farms by arrangement with the Department of Agriculture. The reports for Saskatchewan and Alberta are furnished by the respective Departments of Agriculture for those provinces.

ATLANTIC PROVINCES.—In Prince Edward Island the weather conditions have been favorable for maximum growth and a heavy hay crop is assured in most districts. Cereal crops are sturdy and healthy in appearance, while early wheat is two feet high. Roots, corn and potatoes germinated well and growing rapidly. Fruit of all kinds is most promising, as no frost occurred since the bloom opened. In Nova Scotia seeding was retarded by the wet weather; but crops since June 12 have been making rapid progress. Fruit prospects are good. In New Brunswick a wet cold May was followed by a wet June. The grain acreage is short, and the stand poor. The potato acreage is probably above average, though below expectation, owing to wet and shortness of fertilizers. Large hay crop assured; pastures are luxuriant, and the milk flow large.

QUEBEC.—Vegetation is very backward, and the crops have suffered from excessive rains during June, especially those on lowlands and strong soils. Hay promises to be a big crop. Potatoes look well. In some parts seven inches of rain fell during June, and the acreage under field roots will be considerably increased owing to the failure of grain.

ONTARIO.—Ottawa: The grain crops promise well, having a good stand and being even and well stooled. Hay is an average crop. Corn is good and roots are first class. All crops are from ten days to two weeks late. Peterborough: Fall wheat will average only half a crop. Early sown spring grains are promising, but from 10 to 15 days late. The hay crop is light; corn, potatoes and roots are doing well. Waterloo, N.R.: Wheat crop small, just heading out. Spring crops promise well. Corn shows poor growth. Potatoes look fairly well. Hyde Park: All crops making great headway, though six weeks late. Potatoes variable, bugs voracious. No apples. A great crop of strawberries. Petrolia: Season late. Fall wheat and spring grains promise a heavy crop. Hay, clover and alfalfa average. Winter

crop prospects are good. Not over 5 per cent. of apples 15 per cent. of peaches only fair. June 21st, new harvest. In Temiskaming district crops are slightly below average, and later than last year. All wheat, peas and hay are good, oats fair, spring wheat average, clover and pasture excellent. With good growing weather

MANITOBA—Dauphin: Wheat two weeks later than last year, cut one-third by dry seed bed, May frosts and prolonged dry weather. Plenty of moisture now. Wheat very ragged. Much in shot blade and some just coming through. Oats good and barley very good. Millwood: Since rains commenced on 19th all crops made good growth. Wheat uneven germination; 50 per cent. in shot blade. Dominion City: Average wheat crop almost assured. With favourable weather for a late harvest there should be an abundance of coarse grains and fodders, and a big yield of potatoes and vegetables. Elm Creek: Grain crops in good shape. Light showers ideal for the formation of wheat heads. Hoed crops uneven and pastures very light. Manitou: Not sufficient rain. Severe frost night of 21st, froze wheat and some oats in low lands. Early sown wheat and oats very short and heading out. Franklin: Crops two weeks late. Good showers lately, but lack of heat. A fair promise on present appearances. Brandon: Only two-thirds of an inch rainfall before last week of June. Severe late frosts and high winds make the crop conditions the worst in many years. Grain at least three weeks late and very uneven. Almost no growth of hay and fodder crops. Prospects improved by showers last week. Beresford: Crops two weeks later than average through repeated frosts and dry weather. Favourable rains have fallen recently, and prospects are for a good half crop. Hay light and pastures poor. Pierson: Late frosts have done great damage, 75 per cent. of wheat frozen, coarse grains late. With best of condition may get 12 bushels per acre of wheat. Prospects better for barley, oats and flax. Root crops damaged by frost.

SASKATCHEWAN.—The Provincial Department of Agriculture reports that the crops are from seven to ten days later than last year. Some wheat is in shot blade. The straw will be short except on summer fallows, where abundant rains and warm days have caused rapid growth. About half the summer fallowing is completed, and the acreage of new breaking and summer fallowing shows slight increase over last year. The Dominion Experimental

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