

eligibility of any area for an award. The Board is also required to decide questions concerning the eligibility of any farmer or class of farmers for awards under the Act. No minutes are maintained by the Board recording its policies and reasons for certain of its decisions with respect to applications for awards and other relevant matters. As a result, difficulty was experienced in the verification of the eligibility of townships and farmers for awards under the Act.

Inspections are made of areas suffering a crop failure and it is the duty of the inspectors to obtain information from farmers concerned and to determine the actual yield on each parcel of land. The information is recorded on a "Cultivated Acreage Report", which is required to be signed by the farmer and by the inspector. These reports form the basis of the awards and, if the inspectors fail to carry out their duties properly or if there is collusion, it would be difficult, if not impossible, for irregular payments to be detected. The Audit Office is therefore in agreement with the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry that greater care be taken in investigating and checking the accuracy of reports, that consideration be given to placing the permanent staff of the Prairie Farm Assistance Administration under the Civil Service of Canada, and that spot checks be made throughout municipalities by investigators from P.F.A.A. headquarters.

Our examination revealed that one township had been eligible for an award in 23 out of the 25 crop years between 1939, when the program of crop failure assistance was inaugurated, and 1963. Thirty surrounding townships were eligible on an average of 20 out of the 25 crop years. Therefore we also concur in the recommendation of the Commission of Inquiry that consideration be given to the elimination from eligibility for payment of awards of marginal land on which crop failures continuously occur from year to year and which apparently only remain in production by reason of the benefits available under the P.F.A.A. program.

Section 6(a) of the Act provides that a section of land or blocks of sections, having a side along the boundary of an eligible township, may be eligible for assistance as long as the average yield of wheat within such area is eight bushels or less per acre. For 1962 a policy was introduced whereby a section or a block of sections need touch eligible townships only corner-to-corner. While it is difficult to estimate the total amount paid in respect of areas receiving awards due to this policy in 1962, a test involving only a small number of townships revealed payments of approximately \$10,000. The policy was not continued in 1963.

In the 1963-64 crop year there were 288 townships eligible for assistance in the Alberta Division on the basis of the predominant crop being a coarse grain. In field inspections, great emphasis is placed on measurement of wheat storage facilities in order to verify the quantity of wheat on hand and the current year's wheat production. We were, however, informed that, as a general rule, the stocks of coarse grain on hand were not measured nor were the sales of coarse grain to date of inspection established by reference to Wheat Board permit books. One of the reasons advanced for this course of action was that in many cases considerable quantities of coarse grain had been used as feed so that it was not possible for an inspector to verify the yield with any degree of accuracy.