

# CANADIAN FOOD BULLETIN

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## FOOD CONDITIONS IN 1919.

"What are the prospects of food conditions in 1919?"

Few questions could be more difficult to answer satisfactorily. We are too near our doubled stores of food in the Dominion quite to realize the true conditions. The view is obscured by the plenty close at hand. A considerable release of shipping from war work has eased the tension in Europe. The dread of "a break in the chain" by submarine has gone. There are large parts of three seasons' crop of wheat in Australia, two crops in Argentina and a surplus in India. These are three factors which are very important because of the immediate relief they offer.

But these facts, gratifying as they are, form a serious difficulty. It is the difficulty of over-confidence, which may lead to waste and lowered production for next season. We are apt to forget that even if the whole of these southern and eastern crops were already shipped to Europe—and they are still months away from that point—there would remain an acute shortage.

There are four lean, bare seasons to be made good. The most terrible wastage of foods in war and means of producing foods took place among our own Allies, not in enemy countries. Crops in France and Italy, as well as their meat supplies, are far below average. Belgium is described as "industrially dead". Rumania, Serbia and Russia will be almost destitute for months to come, despite noble efforts to aid them.

Yet it is felt that a reasonable relaxing of the compulsory restrictions may be looked for in Canada. But a word of warning should be uttered. Prices can scarcely be expected to drop for a considerable time. The chief factor in setting prices in the Dominion, that of the Allied Purchasing Commissions, remains. A glance at the table of their purchases, given in this issue, will indicate how potent this factor is in controlling prices. Their activities will go on until the common larder in Europe is reasonably replenished. That this is still a long way off is shown by the curious fact that on December 15th, fully a month after hostilities ceased, the Dutch Food Controller had to institute a rationing plan for Holland. Only for the two holiday weeks at Christmas and New Year have the British food authorities been able to increase the scant rations; conditions in France and Italy are only slightly changed from what they were in October.

A small fraction only of the troops has yet been returned, and the demand on shipping, perhaps throughout the year, for this purpose will not make the bearing of the food burden much lighter for us in Canada, if we are to help to feed 200,000,000 mouths at least until the next harvest.

There ought, therefore, not to be much change in the voluntary food saving systems at home for some months to come.