

POTATO CROP SHORT

The past season, while it has produced the largest grain crop in the history of Canada, has been particularly unfavorable for the production of potatoes. Summer frosts, which occurred in some sections in every month, combined with dry weather at the time when the tubers were growing, reduced the yield in most parts of the West, while in the East blight and rot have been prevalent.

It is not possible at this time to procure definite figures of the production for 1915, digging in some places not having been completed at the time of writing, but enquiry shows that the crop is considerably smaller than last year in all the provinces except Alberta and British Columbia and possibly Saskatchewan.

The total yield of potatoes in Canada in 1914, according to the Dominion statistician, was 85,672,000 bushels, and of this Ontario produced 25,772,000 bushels.

Half Crop in Ontario

The provincial department of agriculture places last year's crop in Ontario at 26,717,587 bushels, and writing to The Guide with regard to this year's yield on October 20, the deputy minister of agriculture for the province says: "It is not expected that the crop this year will be more than half of last, perhaps not that, altho our acreage was slightly greater. The loss from rot and blight is reported so generally from all parts of the province that there seems to be little doubt but that the loss will be very heavy."

Quebec last year grew over 21,000,000 bushels of potatoes, and while the department has not yet issued any estimate it is understood that conditions there are not much different from those in Ontario. These two provinces in normal years always produce fully one half of the potatoes grown in the Dominion and cutting their crop in two thus reduces the total yield by 25 per cent. without considering the reduction in other provinces.

The Eastern Crop

The latest official report from Prince Edward Island estimates a yield of 4,000,000 bushels compared with 6,000,000 last year, while Professor Cumming, secretary of agriculture for Nova Scotia, expresses the opinion that the yield in his province will not exceed three quarters of last year's crop, which was 7,033,116 bushels. The secretary of agriculture for New Brunswick writes that he expects the crop to be only half of last year's, which was about ten and a half million bushels. War conditions are largely responsible for the short crop in New Brunswick, it being impossible to obtain potash for fertilization. In Manitoba, which last year produced 8,494,104 bushels, the potato crops are generally bad, a large percentage of the tubers being small. Saskatchewan fields also were poor, but last year's crop was small also.

Better Farther West

The two provinces which have increased their production of potatoes this year are Alberta and British Columbia. Alberta last year produced about 6,000,000 bushels and the department of agriculture estimates 8,500,000 for this year. British Columbia has a larger acreage in potatoes and the provincial horticulturist writes that the yield is expected to amount to over 3,000,000 bushels, compared with 2,800,000 last year. These figures do not include the potatoes grown in home gardens or in small patches. Every city in the West has had its vacant lots blooming with potato patches this year and this will solve the problem of the winter's supply for many city dwellers. In the aggregate, however, it will not greatly affect supply and demand, for after all it was only a small fraction of the people who took advantage of vacant lot gardening.

Prices Will Advance

It must be evident from the facts given above that there is a great shortage of potatoes in the country, the increase of 3,000,000 bushels in Alberta and British Columbia being insignificant beside the decrease in the rest of Canada. Dealers at present are getting plentiful supplies for which they are paying only about 50 cents a bushel in carload lots and retailers are selling in Winnipeg at 75 to 80 cents. It is safe, however, to predict that the scarcity will soon make itself felt in smaller supplies and higher prices.

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