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Distribution of the Canadian Wheat Crop

DEFICIT in 1914-15 Season was 10,415,500 Bushels—During the Past Five Years, there were 3 Deficits and 2 Surpluses—The Net Surplus for the Five Years was 55,714,500 Bushels or a Yearly Average Surplus of 11,142,900 Bushels

AN article in the census and statistics monthly for February and March, 1914, attempted to show how the Canadian wheat crop was disposed of in each of the four fiscal years ended March 31, 1914. The investigation then made revealed an apparent net surplus unaccounted for of 51,447,000 bushels, this quantity being about 6 per cent. of the total estimated yield for the four years of 819,849,000 bushels.

It is now possible to bring up to date the calculations of a year ago, with the additional advantage that from the results of the special inquiry into the stocks of wheat in Canada on February 8, 1915, published in a recent issue of the census and statistics monthly, a fairly close estimate can be formed of the stocks of wheat and wheat flour floating in elevators and mills and in course of transit by rail.

Calculations relating to the disposal of the wheat crop should be based, says Mr. Ernest H. Godfrey, editor of the census and statistics monthly, Ottawa, in the issue dated March, 1915, upon the figures of a series of years, because stocks are carried over from year to year and the figures for one year alone would be deceptive. Table I. shows, therefore, the distribution of the wheat crop for each of the five fiscal years ended March 31, 1915. It reveals deficits of 1,876,000 bushels in 1910-11, 1,750,000 bushels in 1913-14 and 10,415,500 bushels in 1914-15, and surpluses of 49,003,000 bushels in 1911-12 and 20,753,000 bushels in 1912-13. Setting the total of the three deficits (14,041,500 bushels) against the total of the two surpluses (69,756,000 bushels), there is a net surplus for the five years of 55,714,500 bushels, or a yearly average surplus of 11,142,900 bushels. This result may be more clearly shown by Table II., in which the figures for the five years are aggregated.

According to the census of wheat in Canada, taken on February 8 last, the quantity of wheat, and of wheat flour expressed as wheat, then in elevators, in flour mills and in transit, was about 50,000,000 bushels; so that the surplus unaccounted for, viz., 5,714,500 bushels, represents only an insignificant proportion (less than half a bushel in every 100 bushels) of the aggregate yield for the five years.

Of the various factors entering into the above calculations those of production and trade are the most stable, whilst the quantities lost in cleaning, fed on the farm,

retained for seed and used for human consumption are more or less problematical. The yield is based mainly upon the acreage as returned for 1910 and 1911 at the census of 1911, and, if the remaining figures may be accepted as approximately correct, the fact that the whole of the crops of the past five years can be accounted for within narrow limits affords strong presumption in favor of the substantial accuracy of the crop estimates for Canada, as published annually by the census and statistics office, Ottawa. The exports and imports in the tables include wheat and wheat flour the produce of Canada in the case of exports and wheat and wheat flour for domestic consumption in the case of imports. Flour, expressed in the customs returns as barrels of 196 pounds, has been converted into bushels of wheat at the average rate of 4.59 bushels of wheat to the barrel of flour. The quantity retained for seed is calculated at the average rate of 1.75 bushels per acre upon the acreage of the ensuing crop. The rate adopted agrees with the results of an inquiry conducted by the seed branch of the department of agriculture in the spring of 1913. The deduction of 3 per cent. of the total yield represents the loss in cleaning at interior or terminal elevators; it is considered to be a fair average as ascertained by practical experience. The deduction for wheat not of merchantable quality varies with the character of each season, and is expressed as a percentage of the total yield derived from the reports of correspondents made annually at the end of March. Most of it is fed to live stock on the farm. For each of the years under review the percentage of deduction is given in the note at the foot of Table I.

Finally, there remains the question of the annual consumption per capita of wheat used as human food. From the tables it will be noted that the average annual consumption is placed at $6\frac{1}{4}$ bushels per head of the population, this being given as returned by the census for 1911, and as estimated arithmetically for the other years. Occasionally a small proportion of grain is lost by fire or by water during transportation; but if it be assumed that the whole of the surplus unaccounted for, viz., 5,714,500 bushels, is also used as food, the annual per capita consumption for the five years would only be raised to a little over $6\frac{1}{2}$ bushels. This rate does not differ greatly from the average consumption per head of $6\frac{3}{4}$ bushels, which was given in the statistical year book of Canada for 1891