

Prairie Grain Crop Estimate for 1915

Manitoba Free Press Report Gives Wheat Crop of 222,000,000 Bushels with Surplus of 180,000,000 for Milling and Export—All Grains Estimated at 536,265,954 Bushels.

The Manitoba Free Press, whose estimates are carefully compiled and have been invariably conservative, presents its eleventh annual estimate of the crops of the three prairie provinces, showing a grand total of all grains of 536,265,954 bushels, or 91,567,433 bushels more than any previous crop. The wheat crop of 222,184,071 bushels is 36,225,550 bushels higher than any previous wheat crop reaped in the west.

While this estimate falls considerably below the ones so persistently announced by the railway and milling companies, it is very satisfactory and has at least the merit of being prepared after very careful investigation. The commercial editor has been travelling almost continuously since the 11th day of last June. In that time 1,447 miles of motor-ing and driving has been done through actual crop and 10,087 miles by train. All districts visited early in the season have been carefully re-checked and all available sources of information have been utilized.

Considering the conditions under which this crop has been produced it falls little short of a miracle. Unseasonable June frosts, too little rain in some districts, too much in others, bad outbreaks of cut worm, large areas destroyed by hail, a most unusual toll taken by gophers, an exceptionally heavy loss from weeds occasioned by the cold weather of June, excessive heat during the first ten days of August and frost on the 22nd, 23rd, 24th and 25th of August, are some of the difficulties under which the farmers have labored and all these things have taken toll of the crop. Probably few people realize that from the second day of August until the night of the twenty-second was the longest period during the growing season of 1915 when frost did not occur at some points at least of the three provinces. No such season is on record in the history of the Canadian west. At the present time about 65 per cent of the crop is in stock and threshing will be fairly general in the older sections of Manitoba and Saskatchewan by the end of the present week.

Manitoba.

A word might be said as to the average yields by provinces. The average wheat yield for Manitoba has been placed at 19 bushels. This is a little higher than the general average of the province for 31 years. During that period the averages have ranged all the way from 8.9 in 1900, to 27.86 in 1895, so that the yield of the present year is a little above that of a good general average. There are whole districts in Manitoba that will average very close to 35 bushels, but these, of course, are offset by a number of districts in the south that suffered from lack of rain and also by the districts where weeds have taken an exceptionally heavy toll. Quite a number of areas in Manitoba would have had a lighter yield had it not been for the sudden excessive heat from the 2nd to the 10th of August, and a few of the northern districts have suffered a certain amount of depreciation from the frost around the full of the moon in August. Considering the large area in crop, however, the yield is excellent and a very large percentage will be of contract grade.

In the matter of coarse grains, Manitoba's oat crop, in common with that of the whole three provinces, is rather unsatisfactory. This is due to some extent to the fact that the oats, being seeded later in the season, had got less of a start and were more checked than wheat by the early June frosts. Barley in Manitoba is a pretty fair crop and came in early.

Saskatchewan.

Of the three western provinces Saskatchewan, of course, has much the largest acreage in all grains excepting barley

and her cultivated areas are scattered over so large a territory that it is hardly surprising that in an unusual season she has suffered more than either Manitoba or Alberta. In spite of these drawbacks, however, she has every prospect of nearly 124,000,000 bushels of wheat. The average yield of 18 bushels is slightly below the general average of 10 years, but out of her area of 6,884,874 seeded to wheat, Saskatchewan has lost very heavily in certain sections from hail and also from cutworm, and on her northeastern boundary she has suffered considerably from the late frosts and in the centre and south to some extent from the excessive heat just at the time when the wheat was in the milk and soft dough stage. In the sections which in 1914 suffered so severely from drought she has, however, a most magnificent crop, which, at the present time, is practically out of danger from depreciation in yield. There are many crops in Saskatchewan that will go 35 and 45 bushels to the acre and had it been possible to get the exact acreage destroyed and which will not be cut, there is no doubt that the average of yield of the remaining portion would have been much higher than 18 bushels.

The oat crop of Saskatchewan at 40 bushels to the acre is slightly above the 10-year average. It is, however, conservative in view of the stand of straw, but will probably prove sufficiently high when threshing is reached, as many of the very heaviest stands are not filled in proportion to the straw. In fields already cut there are many sheaves which balance perfectly even when lifted by the band instead of the heads turning the butts almost perpendicular as a good crop should do.

Saskatchewan barley is always a very small matter and this year much of it was late. Indeed many fields of barley seem to be later than either wheat or oats.

Saskatchewan has the largest area of flax and even it is small in proportion to previous years, and, generally speaking, it is a poor crop, though there are some very considerable areas that will yield heavily.

Alberta.

Southern Alberta is enjoying the finest crop she has had since 1908 when her spring wheat averaged 18.81 and her fall wheat 29.47 bushels per acre. In the present estimate it has not been thought necessary to separate the fall and spring wheat as, at the present time, the fall wheat acreage is only 45,000. South, central and northern Alberta has had an abundance of rain and has less poor crop of any kind of grain than either of the other provinces. Of course her areas in crop are much more limited. About the middle of July the whole of Alberta was extremely anxious and uneasy. It had rained every alternate day from the 12th of May, the crop was exceedingly lush and on the 15th of July it is questionable if 35 per cent. of it was fully headed. In many places both oats and wheat had attained a growth of 5½ to 6 feet. The weather had been not only wet but cold and there had been a marked absence of the bright sunshine for which Alberta is famous. On the 20th of July the weather cleared up in northern Alberta and from that time practically until the present, over nearly the whole of northern Alberta the weather has been distinctly favorable for the maturing of crop. In the south and centre the warm bright weather did not come until July 31. There have been a few heavy storms since and a considerable area of the extremely heavy grain has gone down, particularly the oat fields. There has been a little damage in the south from hail but with these exceptions, for the last five weeks Alberta has enjoyed extremely satisfactory weather for the maturing of her crop, and she has unquestionably the finest crop she has ever produced.

The average of 45 bushels for oats is high but will probably not be above returns. The average of the province for