

Agriculture

Conclusions

In recent years land has gone out of agriculture in Eastern Canada and farms have become larger in Western Canada. The number of people employed on farms has been decreasing rapidly and labour productivity has been increasing markedly. These trends are expected to continue for the next 10 years or so.

During the next 10 or 15 years, agricultural output will continue the present shift in emphasis towards livestock products. It is expected that this will result in substantially more hog raising, particularly in the West, and in more cattle raising in all parts of Canada.

The dynamic factors will be further technological improvements, the anticipated growth in the domestic market and the trend towards increasing consumption of meats. It is not expected that foreign market for Canadian agricultural products will increase materially or that imports will increase to a point where domestic producers would be seriously inconvenienced.

The activities of compulsory co-operative marketing boards are probably going to continue to grow.

Suggestions

For the next 10 years or so, substantial irrigation projects, while desirable from the standpoint of local areas, could be harmful rather than helpful to farmers in the aggregate because they would tend to result in overproduction of agricultural products.

There might be merit in imposing some limit upon the number of years in which payments could be made under the Prairie Farm Assistance Act to people who persist in farming lands which have a high record of crop failures over a term of years. If this were done, these people should be helped to re-establish themselves elsewhere.

A broad and comprehensive scheme for a better system of land use should be introduced, including credit facilities to finance consolidation of holdings and the provision of assistance to people who may wish to move elsewhere. Such a major undertaking should be worked out in co-operation with such of the Provincial Governments as may be interested. It should not be attempted without such co-operation.

Farm Credit Agencies might appropriately extend their terms to some extent.

The use of price supports as emergency measures, under the provisions of the Agricultural Prices Support Act, should be administered by a separate Board, the members of which should not be charged with any other duties.