

War conditions have afforded an excellent opportunity for farmers in certain sections of Canada to engage extensively in the production of fibre flax. *They will thereby not only add to their sources of income but will also be of direct and vital aid in the war efforts of the Allies.*

The mastery of the air is proving a great, perhaps the determining factor, in the struggle now going on. Aeroplanes are being built in vast numbers as rapidly as possible. As a covering for the wings of these, linen is the only material found satisfactory. Large quantities are also needed for machine gun webbing, ambulance and truck covers, thread for sewing uniforms, and a number of other uses. *Were the supply of fibre flax for these purposes to fall short, as is threatened, it would directly and profoundly affect the success of the Allied forces.*

Before the war, flax was imported into the United Kingdom mainly from Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Russia. The German supply is, of course, now cut off, while in 1916 France produced no flax for export, Belgium a mere fraction of its former supply, and the Netherlands about half its former quantity. Owing to conditions in Russia no exports of fibre flax can be depended on this year; Ireland, the great flax-producing country in the United Kingdom itself, cannot with the best of seasons and with the largest possible acreage under flax, commence to meet the demand for fibre.

From the year 1914 to 1916, inclusive, the imports of flax fibre into the United Kingdom were as follows:—

Country—	Imports per Year.		
	1914. Tons.	1915. Tons.	1916. Tons.
Belgium.....	13,987	1,165	62
France.....	1,691	3,199	—
Germany.....	74	—
Netherlands.....	4,145	5,710	2,052
Russia.....	53,248	68,647	51,999

These figures show that the trade with these countries is now practically eliminated especially when we recall what has been stated before regarding trade conditions existing between Russia and the United Kingdom at the present time. During the period 1914 to 1916 Canada grew 1,400 acres in 1914, 4,000 in 1915, and 5,500 acres in 1916; only a small proportion was exported, which found a market in the United States. In 1917 approximately 10,700 acres of flax for fibre were grown in south-western Ontario, with a fibre equivalent of probably 1,300 tons.

Canada must Aid in Flax Production.

From a glance at these data it is obvious that if Canada is to fill the breach in maintaining the essential flax fibre supply to the Motherland *an urgent effort must be made immediately to increase the acreage and yield of this war munition.*

So serious is the situation that the British Government has commandeered all flax products entering the United Kingdom, and Ireland has taken extraordinary steps to increase the 1918 flax acreage in the British Isles. It has to this end imported large quantities of flax seed from western Canada, although but little is known of the possibilities of the prairie-grown seed for fibre production.

Flax Growing in Canada not an Experiment.

It is clear from the above how strong are the incentives to the farmers of Canada to grow flax for fibre. It is not a new crop in Canada, but has been grown for local use since the days of our early settlers. Rather, its possibilities have in the past been overlooked until war conditions forced them upon our attention.

The Experimental Farms Branch for the past four years has been making a study of flax production and has carried on many experiments with excellent results. Fibre flax has been grown on the Central Experimental Farm and on acre plots in every part of Canada.