Canadian Agricultural Statistics for 1917

With the lifting of the potato, root, fodder and other late crops we are in a position to reveiew the year's agricultural operations and to juc'ge on the results in total yields and values.

By ERNEST H. GODFREY, F.S.S.

With the lifting of the potato, root, fodder and other late crops we are in a position to review the year's agricultural operations and to judge on the results in total yields and values.

Before doing so, however, it will be well to describe very briefly certain new arrangements, the effect of which should be to inspire greater confidence in the agricultural estimates put forth on government authority. Hitherto, two sets of government statistics of the acreage and yield of field crops, and of the numbers of live stock, have been annually published for several of the provinces—including the three prairie provinces, which produce the bulk of our wheat,—viz.: those of the Dominion Government and those of the Provincial Governments; and it has been notorious that the two sets of figures have constantly conflicted; so much so that doubt has been thrown upon the accuracy of both until the correcting influence of the decennial or quinquennial census has supervened. This year, for the first time, four of the provinces, viz., Quebec, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, have co-operated with the Census and Statistics Office in the joint collection of what are intended to be annual agricultural statistics, available for simultaneous publication by the provincial governments, and by the Census Office, and identical for the same province. Not only so, but the method of collection has been changed to one more statistically sound than that which has hitherto been employed. Briefly, the new method consists in the collection of returns from individual farmers, and employment of the returns so obtained as the basis for the estimation of totals for the whole province. In Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Quebec, the schedules were distributed to and collected from farmers through the public school teachers and children, who entered very heartily into a work of so much national importance. In British Columbia the schedules were distributed through the post; but a similar method of estimating totals was employed. In Quebec, Saskatchewan and Alberta, the work of compilation was undertaken by the Census staff at Ottawa; but in British Columbia this was done by the provincial statistical office. In all cases the local knowledge and experience of the provincial authorities were utilized, and the final results were agreed to by both the Dominion and provincial statisticians. The experiment thus made has proved an undoubted success, and there is every reason to expect that the system will in future increase in efficiency as it becomes more widely known and appreciated, and is perfected in the details of its application. It's future extension to all the provinces will mean not only the elimination of discordant, and therefore perplexing, figures, but also the establishment of annual records of great positive value.

In the accompanying statement (Table I.) are shown for the whole of Canada the areas of the principal field crops for the two years 1916 and 1917. For 1916 the figures include the latest revisions according to the returns of the western census of that year and for 1917 they include the figures specially collected by the Dominion and provincial governments for the four provinces under the new arrangements just described.

I.—Areas of Field Crops, 1916 and 1917.

Crops.	1916. Acres.	1917. Acres.
Fall Wheat	818,264	725,250
Spring wheat	14,551,445	14,030,550
All wheat	15,369,709	14,755,800
Oats	10,996,487	13,313,700
Barley	1,802,996	2,392,200
Rye	148,404	211,870
Flax	657,781	919,500
Peas	151,790	198,881
Beans	32,500	92,457
Buck wheat	341,500	395,977
Mixed grains	412,670	497,236
Corn for husking	173,000	303,369
Potatoes	472,992	656,958
Turnips, etc.	141,839	218,233
Sugar beets	15,060	14,000
Hay and clover	7,821,257	8,225,034
Alfalfa	99,350	109,825
Corn for fodder	293,058	297,488

It will be seen that the acreage under wheat is about half a million acres less this year than last. This was a consequence of the lateness of the spring, which made it very difficult to sow within the time available, and which compelled farmers to put more land under oats and later crops than they otherwise would have done. The scarcity and dearness of potatoes during the last two years caused special efforts to increase the acreage planted, and, as the table shows, the result was an acreage of nearly 657,000 acres in 1917, as compared with 473,000 acres in 1916, the increase amounting to 39 per cent.

The outstanding features of the past season as affecting the yields can be described in very few words. In the west the conditions which brought about last year's disastrous attacks of rust were absent; but a serious drought, broken only just before harvest, caused the yields of grain to be low and the straw short. These conditions were, however, largely counter-balanced by the excellent grading quality of the grain and its high price. Quebec experienced a cold, wet season, and the crops of nearly all descriptions yielded considerably below average; but Ontario proved a bumper year, and all crops, except corn and beans, gave excellent returns. The potato crop of Quebec was extraordinarily poor, and that of New Brunswick, one of the chief potato-growing provinces of the Dominion, was also below average. The average yield per acre of potatoes for the whole of the Dominion was one of the lowest on record; but the total yield, owing to the increased acreage planted was considerably above the yields of the two previous years and, added to the produce of vacant lots in cities and towns, need cause no apprehension of a repetition of the previous shortage in this important article of daily food. Finally, it should be mentioned that the hay crop was again a very abundant one, being exceeded only by the record crop of last year. This will enable larger numbers of live stock to be retained for winter feeding and should influence favorably the production of meat.

In Table II. are shown the total yields for Canada of the field crops, the totals being estimated by the application of averages per acre, as returned by correspondents, to the acreages as given in the first table. The results are at present only provisional, because final averages remain to be collected at the end of the year after the completion of threshing.

II.—Yields of Field Crops, 1916 and 1917.

Crops.	1916. Bush.	1917. Bush.
Fall wheat	17,590,000	15,708,200
Spring wheat	245,191,000	216,022,000
All wheat	262,781,000	231,730,200
Oats	410,211,000	393,570,000
Barley	42,770,000	51,684,000
Rye	2,876,400	4,239,800
Flax	8,250,800	6,872,700
Peas	2,218,100	3,372,600
Beans	412,600	1,389,700
Buckwheat	5,976,000	8,217,000
Mixed grains	8,250,800	6,872,700
Corn for husking	6,282,000	9,177,400
Potatoes	63,297,000	79,872,000
Turnips, etc.	36,921,100	62,451,000
	Tons.	Tons.
Sugar beets	71,000	117,600
Hay and Clover	14,527,000	13,684,700
Alfalfa	286,750	262,400
Corn for fodder	1,907,800	2,103,870

The preceding table shows that the total production of wheat this year is 231,730,200 bushels. Of this quantity 209,794,200 bushels is the estimated production of the three Prairie Provinces. After allowing for home requirements in the way of food and seed, and making the necessary deductions for loss in cleaning, as well as adding the "carry over" from the previous year's harvest, it is officially calculated that the exportable surplus will be at least 138 million bushels, as compared with 170,804,000 bushels, the actual export of wheat and flour in the crop year ended August 31, 1917. In this calculation, the food requirements of Canada are placed at the high rate of 6¼ bushels per capita. A reduction of this rate to, say, 5 bushels, which would be nearly equivalent to the normal rate of wheat consumption in the United Kingdom and the United States, would make available for export from Canada at least another 10 million bushels. In view of the urgent necessity of supplying the food requirements of the Allied troops and of the European populations supporting them, as well as of the high prices now ruling for wheat, it would be both patriotic and profitable on the part of Canada to reduce its bread consumption by the substitution for wheat as far as possible of oatmeal, corn, potatoes, buckwheat, rice, etc., corn and rice being fairly abundant in quantity and consequently moderate in price.

THE NUMBER OF FARM LIVE STOCK.

As in the case of the acreage under farm crops, the enumeration of farm animals in June last formed part of the collection of agricultural statistics by means of the compilation of individual schedules filled up by farmers, as undertaken by the Census Office and the provincial governments of Quebec, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. This work has necessitated a revision of the total results for Canada, and the new totals for 1917 are, therefore, as in Table III., with the figures of 1916 for comparison:

III.—Numbers of Farm Live Stock, 1916 and 1917.

Description.	1916.	1917.
Horses	3,258,342	3,412,749
Milch cows	2,833,433	3,202,283
Other cattle	3,760,718	4,718,651
Total cattle	6,594,151	7,920,941
Sheep	2,022,941	2,369,358
Swine	3,474,840	3,619,382

GROSS VALUES OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION.

The great struggle in which Canada is seeking to take her proper share, has naturally caused attention to be directed to the material resources of the country; and the financial obligations incurred by war loans and "Victory Bonds" give special interest to estimates of agricultural wealth. In the accompanying statement (Table IV.) are given for 1915 and 1916 the value of the field crops of Canada, as officially computed by the Census and Statistics Office. In the last two columns I have added a personal and tentative computation of the values for 1917, based upon the provisional estimates of production and upon market prices now ruling.

IV.—Values of Field Crops, 1915, 1916 and 1917.

Field Crops.	1915. Per Bush.	1915. Total.	1916. Per Bush.	1916. Total.	1917. Per Bush.	1917. Total.
Wheat	$0.91	$356,816,900	$1.31	$344,096,400	$1.95	$451,874,000
Oats	0.36	171,009,100	0.51	210,957,500	0.60	236,142,000
Barley	0.52	27,985,800	0.82	35,024,000	1.00	51,684,000
Rye	0.77	1,921,900	1.11	3,196,000	1.50	6,359,700
Peas	1.65	5,724,100	2.22	4,919,000	3.00	10,117,800
Beans	3.05	2,206,800	5.40	2,228,000	7.00	9,727,900
Buckwheat	0.75	5,913,000	1.07	6,375,000	1.20	9,860,400
Flax	1.51	9,210,400	2.04	16,889,900	3.00	20,618,100
Mixed grains	0.57	10,062,300	0.88	9,300,900	1.00	16,461,400
Corn for husking	0.71	10,243,000	1.07	6,747,000	1.00	9,177,400
Potatoes	0.60	36,459,800	0.81	50,982,300	1.00	81,355,000
Turnips, etc.	0.24	14,588,700	0.39	14,329,000	0.46	29,253,000
	Per Ton.		Per Ton.		Per Ton.	
Hay and clover	14.37	152,531,600	11.60	168,547,900	10.40	142,320,300
Fodder corn	4.91	16,612,600	4.92	9,396,000	5.18	10,900,900
Sugar beets	5.50	775,500	6.20	440,000	6.75	793,800
Alfalfa	12.68	3,309,100	10.69	3,066,000	11.59	3,041,300
Totals	....	825,370,600	....	886,494,900	....	1,089,687,000

(Continued on next page.)