

sodium hydroxide. Since 1918 more than 20 companies have been formed to exploit the vast sodium sulphate reserves and production has increased steadily from 163,260 tonnes (180,000 tons) in 1959 to a peak of 453,500 tonnes (500,000 tons), valued at \$8.3 million, in 1969. Since then the market has deteriorated, and both production and unit prices have declined.

Saskatchewan's largest metal mine, Flin Flon, which straddles the Saskatchewan-Manitoba border, produces both copper and zinc from the same ore. The Flin Flon base-metal ore contains copper, zinc, lead, gold and silver. The mine was started in 1930 and a large concentrator-smelter was built to process the ore. The plant has been in continuous operation for 40 years and has processed about 63.5 million tonnes (70 million tons) of ore valued at about \$1,500 million. The Hudson Bay complex of mines stretches from the Saskatchewan-Manitoba border to Snow Lake, Manitoba. It has reserves of 17.2 million tonnes (19 million tons), which represents approximately 11 years at present production rates.

Agriculture

Agriculture is the province's largest single source of income. Forty-three per cent of the improved land in Canada is located in Saskatchewan, with about 46 per cent of the total area of

the province made up of occupied farmland. The natural resource base of Saskatchewan gave an initial advantage to agricultural development. Soil, topography and climate favoured specialization in wheat production, while transcontinental railways and branch lines made it possible. Wheat acreage expanded from the beginning of the century — and particularly during the First World War — until 1921 but has since remained relatively stable. For the last quarter of a century Saskatchewan has provided approximately 65 per cent of the total wheat area of the prairie provinces. Wheat production has therefore consistently occupied a more significant position in the economic life of Saskatchewan than in any other province. Mixed farming, dairying (usually associated with wheat-growing or determined by proximity to the larger urban centres) and ranching are important, but the production of wheat is still the major concern of the majority of Saskatchewan farmers. Two-thirds of the land annually seeded to field crops is normally devoted to wheat, with barley and rapeseed each claiming about one-third of the remaining land. Saskatchewan produces most of the country's rye and is a major producer of oats and flax. Intensive specialization in wheat relative to other grains on the semi-arid plains is made possible by the great drought-resisting