

FRUIT STATISTICS.

Mr. JAMES, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, said: As most of you, I presume, are aware, the Department of Agriculture for the Province gathers every year statistics in connection with the production of the staple field crops, statistics in regard to our live stock and other information dealing with agriculture. It is not a matter of very great difficulty to obtain, for instance, the acreage of fall wheat in Ontario. We can get that from the farmers, and we can also get it directly from the assessors' returns. Having that to start with, all that we have to do is to send out our thousands of circulars to the farmers all over the province during the summer and at the end of the season, in order to obtain the yields per acre. In that way we are able to find out pretty closely how many bushels of wheat and other grains are produced in this Province. But that is only a part of the farm work of this country. Then we have been accustomed for the last ten years to gather statistics in regard to the cheese industry of Ontario. We have found, for instance, that we have been making enormous strides in that direction, until now our annual product is coming pretty well up to 100,000,000 pounds. There is another field that, as I said, has not been touched upon, viz., that of the orchard, garden and vineyard; but there are so many difficulties right at the outset that we are almost afraid to undertake it. Wheat is wheat; and no matter what the varieties may be, all go in together, are mixed in our elevators together, and are sold together. When we come to apples there are so many varieties, and the difference in bearing is so great, that the difficulties seem to be insurmountable. However, for two years, acting partly in concert with this Association, we have been endeavoring to gather statistics; and I think now we have the foundation laid to gather information that will be as reliable in regard to our fruits as the information that we have in regard to our grains. Some may say, perhaps, that the fruit growing of Ontario is not nearly as important as grain growing, or as the production of dairy articles. A man has a little orchard; he has a few trees, a few vines; and probably very few out of the entire number of farmers send their produce to market. Now, let us see as to whether the fruit-growing industry of Ontario is of such little consequence as some are apt to believe. From our two years' work we have come to what we consider pretty reliable information in regard to the number of the various fruit trees—i. e. fruit of the larger sorts—that we have grown here in Ontario. In round figures they are about as follows—of course this does not take in the small orchards of towns and villages; our work so far deals only with farm lands and the large fruit growers, so that the number may have to be slightly increased although not to any great extent. Thus, for instance, in apples we find there are about 7,000,000 bearing apple-trees in Ontario; about 2,000,000 bearing grape vines; 700,000 plums; 500,000 each of cherries, pears and peaches. Now, if you will take the average crop for each of these, and put a moderate rate as the value of the product, you will find that the figures thus obtained will amount up to a considerable sum. Of course only a portion of the fruit goes to market; nevertheless it is the produce of the farms, orchards and gardens of this country, and though it may not find its way to market, it finds its way to the tables of this country, and the farmer himself perhaps consumes the larger portion of it. I have put the figures in that rounded-off form in order that we may carry them away. I presume there is no great necessity to go into minute details. We find that whereas some of the different fruits are confined to different localities, some of these, such as apple-growing, is found in all parts of the Province. The second point I want to refer to this, that, taking our figures of this year and comparing them with last, we find a slight increase in regard to all those fruits over last year, showing that the number of pear trees, peaches, plums, cherries and grape-vines—is slightly increasing year after year; and just as in the case of the cheese production of Ontario, we have not yet come to the limit of our production. I suppose the limit will be set by the demands of our home and foreign markets. The only two points, then, that I want to make here are these: First, that fruit growing has already assumed very large proportions here in Ontario—much larger proportions than we are at first disposed to think; and second, that there is a steady increase; there is also a gradual and quite a perceptible improvement in the nature of our fruit growing and in the quality of the fruit which is being produced. (Applause.)