

THE FARM SECTOR

The one consistent feature of farming in Canada over the past 35 years has been that of change - change in numbers of people on farms, change in production technology, change in productivity and change in financial and business aspects. Few, if any, other sectors of our economy have gone through as many structural changes.

Thirty five years ago there were some 623,000 census farms with a population of 2.9 million people (see table 1). Total farm cash receipts were just over \$2.7 billion and farm operating costs were in the order of \$1.2 billion. Total capital investment per farm was about \$15,200 and net income was \$2,530.

By 1981 there were some 318,000 census farms - a reduction of 49% and farm population of 1.08 million (see table 1). Total farm cash receipts had risen to \$18.8 billion and operating expenses had reached about \$12.4 billion. Total capital investment per farm had risen to more than \$409,000 and net income, including off-farm rose to \$12,700.

One way to show the magnitude of these changes is to express 1981 figures as a proportion of those from 1951 (see table 1). This index provides a quick means to compare rates of changes over time.

While the Canadian population was nearly doubling over that 30 year period, the number of people living on farms dropped by almost two thirds and the number of farms was reduced by one half.