

lashed hogs brought to Winnipeg during the past few months from Ontario. Mutton, eggs and cheese brought in from Eastern Canada for the Winnipeg markets, to say nothing of the numerous car loads of these and other products, including butter, which have been brought in from Eastern Canada and shipped on west to supply our western markets! Each and every one of these commodities, we are told, by those who profess to know, are more profitable to the producer than wheat, averaging one year with another. Certain it is that districts where diversified farming is followed are more prosperous and less subject to hard times than in localities where growing wheat is almost the only industry. If we produced some millions of bushels less of wheat and made up for the deficiency in the ways indicated, the country would be better off and more prosperous. There is certainly no lack of opportunity for profitably diversifying the agricultural production of the country. Now, before another crop is put in the ground is a good time to ponder over these matters.

OUR GRAIN TRADE

Reference was made in The Commercial last week to the action taken by the Winnipeg grain exchange in the matter of mixing wheat. Wheat is our principal export commodity and it is certainly desirable that it should be placed upon the market in as good condition as possible. The existing official regulations governing the grading and inspection of wheat are crude and cumbersome. In connection with the mixing question, it would be well to start at the beginning and revise the regulations all along the line. Under the present system, the grades vary very materially every year. One hard this year may be something else next crop. No one can tell what the quality of the grades will be until the standards for each crop are fixed. Thus there is no continuity or permanency to the grades. This is a great hindrance to export business. Foreign buyers cannot more than familiarize themselves with the quality of the grades of one year, when they are all changed again. As the value of wheat is to a great extent regulated by the export price, and as the quantity for export is increasing year by year, it is time that permanent standards were adopted, so that our wheat would have some chance of gaining a fixed reputation for uniform quality, in foreign importing markets. Besides this, the changing of the standards every year is a great hindrance to business in the early part of the crop year. It is not convenient to fix the standards at the beginning of the crop movement, and until the stand-

ards are fixed business in the new crop is inclined to hang fire.

The first step in reforming or reorganizing our grain regulations would therefore be to make the grades permanent, and have the inspector's grade according to the act. This course The Commercial has advocated for many years. The standards board has been the stumbling block in the past. There has been a strife among various interests to gain control of the board, and while this has been going on, and while agitators have found the grain trade an ever ready theme for discussion, the real interests of the trade have been lost sight of. The standards board might well be dispensed with. It has operated mainly to prevent the establishing of a reputation for a staple grade of Manitoba wheat.

As for the inspection of wheat, we believe the time has come when a change should be made in this connection. The inspectors should be paid a regular salary, instead of by fees. Deputy or assistant inspectors should be paid a regular salary by the government, and should not be dependent upon the chief inspector. There is room for abuses in the present system. There should be no tax on the grain trade beyond the amount which would be barely sufficient to cover actual official expenses in connection therewith.

As for mixing, this is a very difficult matter for the government to deal with. The government cannot entirely prevent mixing. Mixing begins on the farm. Farmers often have different qualities of wheat from the same crop, but it usually all goes together to market. In the receiving elevators we cannot prevent the buyer from mixing the wheat of a number of farmers together, neither can we prevent the owner of an elevator from reducing a very fine sample of wheat to an average No. 1 hard, or even lower, by mixing in a lower grade wheat. The only thing the government can do is to refuse to give certificates for mixed lots of wheat when it is inspected out of a public storage elevator. It has been customary at Fort William, to give certificates for mixed cargoes. Shippers have been allowed to mix a certain percentage of a lower grade in with No. 1 hard and get a certificate for the whole cargo as straight No. 1 hard. Possibly the mixed cargo might be good enough to grade No. 1 hard even after the lower grade had been mixed in. Still the custom is open to abuse. The grain exchange has asked that this custom be not allowed. The government can step in here and refuse to give a straight certificate for a cargo of wheat unless the cargo is made up of all one grade of wheat as it went into the elevator.

When two or more grades of wheat are spouted into a boat, the certificate should show the exact quantity of each grade which goes to make up the cargo. This is the custom which is followed at Duluth. This, we say, is about all the government can do toward preventing mixing. While this policy would undoubtedly improve the situation, it would not be a complete guarantee that the wheat would reach the British buyer in exactly the same condition as represented by the inspector's certificate. There is still a possibility that a cargo may be tampered with between Fort William and Liverpool. However, the possibility of mixing en route is no reason why we should not do all we can to safeguard our inspection certificates wherever it is possible to do so.

Wheat Supplies.

Contrary to the usual course of events, the world's wheat supplies did not decrease during February, but on the contrary increased quite heavily, the result at the close of that month being the holding at leading American and European visible supply points of the largest quantity of wheat reported for more than a year past. American stocks, it is true, fell off slightly, but the decrease was only about 500,000 bushels.

The stock east of the Rocky Mountains on March 1, Bradstreet's report, was 51,685,000 bushels, 6,000,000 bushels larger than the quantity held one year ago, but with this exception the smallest held for eight years past, the farming off ranging from 10,000,000 bushels as compared with March 1, 1897, to as large as 54,000,000 bushels when compared with March 1, 1893, at or about which date wheat supplies reached their maximum.

The total United States and Canadian supplies held on March 1 was 56,189,000 bushels, nearly 7,000,000 bushels larger than one year ago, but the same quantity smaller than two years ago at this date, and 42,660,000 bushels to 50,000,000 bushels smaller than the stocks held on March 1, 1894 and 1893.

European wheat stocks showed an increase during the month of not far from 7,000,000 bushels, this, it may be stated, being the only gain shown in European wheat stocks in February since 1893. The following table shows the situation of European and American supplies on March 1 for eight years past:

	Tot. Amer. and Euro- pean stocks.
March 1, 1899	124,589,000
March 1, 1898	116,545,000
March 1, 1897	133,721,000
March 1, 1896	172,100,000
March 1, 1895	193,748,000
March 1, 1894	208,833,000
March 1, 1893	196,693,000
March 1, 1892	156,007,000

The combined American and European wheat supplies aggregate 124,589,000 bushels, 6,000,000 bushels larger than they were on February 1 and about the same quantity larger, likewise, than they were on March 1 a year ago, but they are 9,000,000 bushels smaller than they were on March 1, 1897; 48,000,000 smaller than on March 1, 1896, and 82,000,000 bushels smaller than on March 1, 1894. Including Argentine and Australian wheat in the world's stocks, the supply is 9,000,000 bushels larger than one year ago.