

For many decades after Louis Hébert, the first white farmer, began the cultivation of land on what is now the site of the Cathedral of Quebec in Quebec City in the early seventeenth century, farming in Canada developed very slowly. In the early days subsistence farming was practised which means production only for the use of the farmer and his family. As the population gradually increased with the arrival of new settlers, products other than food and clothing were needed by farm families and small industries other than agriculture became established. These non-farmers needed the products of the farms and commercial agriculture involving the sale of agricultural commodities began to replace subsistence farming. Gradually the area devoted to agriculture expanded as land in Eastern Canada was cleared of trees and then more rapidly as settlers moved into the mid-west and began to plough the virgin prairie lands. The decades passed into history and Canada became known to the world as a great agricultural country when wheat from the western plains became the country's first great export staple and other farm products found their way to importing countries in need of them.

The First World War brought intensified demands for food at home and abroad, prices of farm products rose and farm income increased. Farmers called for more labour-saving machinery and equipment, more fertilizers and insecticides and more productive seeds and plants. Canadian agricultural production took a long step forward as new land came under cultivation and farmers increased in number, and the list of countries buying Canadian farm products became longer. However, it was after the start of the Second World War when the North American Continent was faced with the responsibility of providing greatly increased quantities of food and when farm prices began to rise that a virtual revolution started in agriculture in Canada and in the United States. The war ended but the agricultural revolution gained momentum. Resistance to change had been forgotten and the discoveries of farm scientists and engineers were recognized and adopted by increasing numbers of agricultural producers.

The most revealing aspects of this agricultural revolution include the recent decline in the number of farms and in the number of farm workers, the increase in the average size of farms, the changes in the kinds of power used by farmers to produce crops and animal products, the development of specialization and commercialization in agricultural production, the increase in capital invested in farm machinery and equipment, and the larger purchases of fertilizers. The remarkable increase in the production per man hour spent on agricultural enterprises, the increase in yields of crops, in milk per cow and eggs per hen are further evidences of the technical revolution in agriculture.

Farms.—The number of persons living on farms in Canada (according to census figures) increased each decade from 1900 to 1941, though not in proportion to the increase in the population as a whole. However, from 1941 to 1956 the farm population decreased from 3,153,500 or about 27 p.c. of the total population of Canada, to 2,746,800 or 17 p.c. of the total. During those years, the area in farms remained practically unchanged, their number declined from 732,832 to 575,015 but their average size increased from 236.8 acres to 302.5 acres. Almost all the farms in Canada are still family farms, mechanically operated with little hired help.

There are only about 60 p.c. as many workers in agriculture today as there were a decade ago. During the same period the number of farm operators declined about 30 p.c.

Farm Power.—The demands of the war years for greater quantities of food that had to be produced with limited manpower was perhaps the greatest incentive for the utilization of machinery on farms. The farmer's first venture toward mechanization was the purchase of a tractor but that was only the beginning. When a farmer buys a tractor he must also purchase machinery of various kinds if his tractor is to be used efficiently. This new machinery usually includes wider ploughs to turn over more land per day and other larger machinery for preparing the seed beds for farm crops, for weed control and for harvesting. In the years from 1941 to 1956 the number of tractors on farms increased from 152,607 to 388,816 and in the same years the number of horses on farms declined from 2,788,795 to 784,018. On the great western plains it was no longer profitable nor