

On the basis of information now available, it is estimated that, in addition to the present arable lands across the country, about 40,000,000 acres of virgin land could be used for arable crops if the need arises. However, most of these reserves will require clearing or reclamation measures before they can be used for agriculture. In addition to the present arable land and potential reserves, 55,000,000 to 60,000,000 acres are suitable for wild pasture.

As the Canada Land Inventory (p. 433) progresses, a great deal of detailed information will become available on the land resources of the country, their present utilization and their capability.

Section 2.—Federal and Federal-Provincial Resource Development Legislation and Projects

Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act

The Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act was passed in 1935 by the Parliament of Canada, to provide for the rehabilitation of areas subject to drought and wind erosion in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. A 1937 amendment broadened its scope to include land utilization and resettlement, and a 1939 amendment removed the time-limit so that the Act might remain in force indefinitely.

As originally conceived, the Act provided for assistance in the conservation and reclamation of land and water resources in the southern plains area of the Prairie Provinces. In the main this has consisted of the establishment of community pastures on land sub-marginal for cereal crop production, and the conservation of runoff water by constructing dugouts and damming streams. More recently, the program has been extended to embrace the entire settled agricultural area of the Prairie Provinces and the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration has been made responsible for the development of large-scale irrigation and reclamation projects being undertaken by the Government of Canada. The Administration has also been active in the initiating of the Agricultural Rehabilitation and Development Act program (p. 432) in the four western provinces and has taken over from the Research Branch of the federal Department of Agriculture the operation of the tree nurseries at Indian Head and Sutherland, Sask.

The PFRA is administered from its headquarters at Regina by a Director who is responsible to the Deputy Minister of Agriculture in Ottawa. The following is a résumé of current activities.

Water Development.—A major phase of PFRA activities is provision to farmers of engineering and financial assistance in the construction of individual farm, community and large-scale water storage and irrigation projects. Since 1935 assistance has been provided in the construction of more than 90,000 small dams and dugouts to supply water for livestock, irrigation and domestic use. The PFRA provides all engineering surveys required to plan and design such projects and pays a portion of the construction costs, usually about 50 p.c. but larger proportionately when two or more farmers act together to develop water resources. Applications for large water projects are considered individually by PFRA and if approved are constructed under an agreement between the Federal Government and the provincial or local government concerned; PFRA builds the projects and other government bodies operate them. Six irrigation projects in southern Saskatchewan are owned and operated by PFRA, as are the Bow River Irrigation Project northwest of Medicine Hat in Alberta, and the Predevelopment Irrigation Farm associated with the South Saskatchewan River Development Project near Outlook in Saskatchewan. The projects in southwestern Saskatchewan and in Alberta, originally developed as part of the Federal Government's resettlement and rehabilitation program, now serve 160,000 acres of land and provide direct benefits to about 1,000 farmers.

Four to eight million trees are distributed annually to prairie province farmers for farmstead and field shelterbelts; annual production of trees will be increased to 15,000,000 by 1965.