

CHAPTER XI.—AGRICULTURE

CONSPECTUS

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The interpretation of the symbols used in the tables throughout the Year Book will be found on p. viii of this volume.

Agriculture has been and continues to be a most important part of the Canadian economy. Farm cash receipts for agricultural production in 1965 reached a total of \$3,804,000,000 but this value of primary farm production gives only a partial view of the importance of the industry. To this must be added the processing, the transportation and the myriad other allied groups that are involved in the movement and transformation of the raw product of the farm into food for Canada and for the world. Despite the fact that only about 10 p.c. of the present Canadian work force is engaged in agricultural pursuits, compared with about 25 p.c. in the mid-1940s, agricultural production has, in the same period, increased by about 40 p.c. The primary producer, the farmer, has become more efficient, producing more food with less help, and the processing industry has paralleled that increase in efficiency.

It may be said that the dominant trends in Canadian agriculture since the end of World War II have been the marked reduction in the number of farms and in the farm labour force, accompanied by increases in capital investment, in specialization, in mechanization and in output. These trends have not yet run their course so that adjustment is constantly taking place in the structural organization of agriculture at the farm level. In addition, important developments have occurred in the marketing, processing and handling of farm products and in the response of industry to serve agriculture with the necessary machinery and production supplies.

Although a great many farms have been transformed into extensive, modern, efficiently operated units, there are still large numbers that have not made this adjustment. The returns from agricultural output on these old-type farms are small and their operators often find it necessary to seek part-time employment in off-farm activities. Even on farms where adjustments have been made to larger acreages or more capital input, there is a great disparity in revenue between the smaller and larger farms. Increased productivity for the group as a whole barely meets the increased costs of modern farming. Prices of farm products generally have not risen as fast as the costs of the goods and services that farmers purchase. The impetus on the part of farmers is to continue to increase efficiency and to exert as much influence as possible in effecting higher returns for their products.