

# CHAPTER IX.—AGRICULTURE

## CONSPECTUS

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NOTE.—The interpretation of the symbols used in the tables throughout the Year Book will be found facing p. 1 of this volume.

Agriculture is Canada's leading primary industry, one whose continued growth and importance is felt in every sector of the economy. In the postwar years 1946-53 Canadian farmers realized an average net income of \$1,611,600,000 from farming operations. At the beginning of this century 40 p.c. of those gainfully employed were engaged in agriculture; today less than 20 p.c. are so employed. The decline of agriculture as a field of employment relatively to other sectors of the economy—notably manufacturing—has been accompanied by an increase in farm output, to two and one-half times that attained at the century's opening. This increase in output may be attributed to several factors: more scientific methods of farming, especially in regard to the dry land farming techniques of the western provinces, more diversified farming and the increase in mechanization. From 1947 to 1950 alone Canada's farmers spent an average \$304,000,000 a year on new equipment. In 1951 farming in Canada was carried out using nearly 400,000 tractors, 90,000 grain combines and 196,000 motor trucks, as well as 330,000 automobiles; all these figures are greatly in excess of totals for the same vehicles and machinery ten years earlier, and are a revolutionary development compared with the turn of the century. Land under cultivation, perhaps one of the best measures of the significance of agriculture in the economy, has tripled in the last 50 years and is now put at nearly 100,000,000 acres. Agriculture in Canada represents immense long term capital investment: recent estimates put the value of farm lands and buildings, implements and machinery and livestock, representing capital invested in some two-thirds of a million farms, at near the 10,000,000,000 dollar mark.

The historical development of agriculture in Canada has been dealt with in previous Year Books. The 1924 edition, pp. 186-191, discussed "The Development of Agriculture in Canada"; the 1939 edition, pp. 187-190, dealt with the "Historical Background of Canadian Agriculture"; "Canadian Agriculture during the War and Post-War Periods" was featured in the 1946 Year Book, pp. 200-211. These features and more specialized