

Covers April 1919 conditions

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NINTH DISTRICT

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Telegraphic reports from practically all of the grain raising portions of the district do not indicate much prospect of an increased acreage this year in any of the principal small grain crops, unless it may be rye, which in some localities will be more generally planted than last year. The small grain acreage in Wisconsin, Minnesota and South Dakota will be approximately the same as last year. North Dakota, on the whole, does not show much prospect of an increase in either wheat, oats or barley. Montana, which has a very satisfactory winter wheat acreage, may prove an exception to the rule if the weather and planting conditions continue favorable for 10 days longer, and may show an increase of spring wheat.

From the planting standpoint, the early spring that was hoped for was not materialized. The season is at least 10 days late, and in many sections, planting is 15 days behind the normal schedule. From Wisconsin to the Idaho line, wheat seeding is being pressed with energy, and in the areas, that from the standpoint of this crop are of chief importance, there is no doubt but that the planting will be completed by the 10th of May, or the date which farmers have generally accepted as the dead line on wheat. The only localities where wheat seeding will continue beyond the end of the present week are in northern Montana, and in some parts of northern and western North Dakota.

Soil and moisture conditions throughout the entire district are favorable. During the early stages of planting, both in eastern and western Montana, the ground was somewhat dry, but the western half of the state has benefited by general rains, and the Yellowstone Valley section in the east has had very satisfactory showers. In northern Montana there is sufficient moisture to give the crop a good start, and rains in about three weeks will be very beneficial to the growth.

Winter wheat in Wisconsin, southern Minnesota and Montana is in excellent condition.

The farm labor situation presents some problems. There is a pronounced shortage of help in Montana, and considerable call for labor in North Dakota and some parts of western Minnesota.

Live stock in the western part of the district wintered well, and lambing operations are under way, with prospects of good increases in the flocks. Montana wool is now being contracted at 55 cents and up.

Live stock receipts at the South St. Paul market during April showed a considerable decrease in both cattle and hogs, with a fairly good increase in sheep and calves. The year's receipts to date, however, show a generally satisfactory condition, with large increases in cattle, calves, hogs and sheep, and in the total number of cars received, but with a marked falling off in receipts of horses, which doubtless reflects the heavy demand upon this district during the past two or three years for horses for military purposes.

Unsettled conditions in the steel market are being reflected in a slowing down of operations in the northern Minnesota iron mining district, where all the independent properties are operating at from 40 to 60 per cent of capacity, and where only the steel corporation mines are operating at normal. The settlement of the controversy between the railroad administration and the steel interests will undoubtedly be followed by considerably increased activity.

Labor conditions throughout the district are fairly good. Labor rates are still very high, and May Day brought demands at some of the principal points for further increases, particularly in the pay of various classes of labor employed on construction.

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Building operations are still confined to a considerable extent to business structures, and larger enterprises, and the volume of small building and residence construction is not up to normal. The popular attitude is to wait for a drop in construction costs, and there is evidence of a disposition to hold back. The 1913 price level will not in all probability return during the lifetime of the present generation. Price levels throughout the world have advanced to a new basis, and recessions from the present high levels are likely to come gradually. Many able observers argue from this basis that there ought to be no hesitation about proceeding to business as usual. Prices went up rapidly and are going to fall gradually. Recessions may be looked for from time to time, but the process promises to be rather slow. In agreement with this view, one of the best authorities in the United States writes as follows:

"I agree with the view that the people should accept conditions substantially as they are at the present time and proceed to business. It does not seem to be probable that there will be any marked fall in prices until the price of wheat to the consumer shall have undergone a considerable reduction. This may result in another year, after the expiration of the Government's obligation to support the price, or it might come about earlier, if the Government should decide to stand the loss arising from sales on the market at prices lower than the guaranteed price. With a drop in the price of wheat, corn and other cereals, meat prices might soften, and it might be possible then to look for some reduction in wages. This process is going to be a gradual one."

The present crop and planting conditions throughout the district may be summarized as follows:

Throughout the Red River Valley in Minnesota, the acreage of wheat will not be affected by the season. Wheat planting will be completed this week, and the planting of other grains will doubtless be accomplished by the middle of the month or shortly after. Seventy per cent of the wheat is already seeded, and approximately 20 per cent of the other grains. Soil and moisture conditions throughout this district are nearly perfect, and the outlook at this date is excellent. Throughout the central and southern portion of the state, wheat planting is somewhat further advanced, and the planting of other crops is making good progress, except as it has been temporarily delayed by showers, and two or three days of freezing temperatures.

Winter rye in southern Minnesota and Wisconsin is particularly promising.

In the southern portion of South Dakota the seeding of wheat is already 80 per cent completed, and the farmers will finish planting this week. The soil is in very good condition, and there is plenty of moisture. Some of the early grain is already up. In the central part of the state, wheat seeding is making excellent progress, and the planting of oats and barley is in full swing.

The season in South Dakota is about 10 days late, and reports from various sections indicate approximately the same wheat acreage as last year. There will be a small decrease in the acreage of both oats and barley, and in all probability an increase in the corn acreage. The rye acreage will increase about 10 per cent.

Throughout eastern North Dakota reports indicate about the same wheat acreage as last year, and that seeding with favorable weather will be completed this week, or early next week at the latest. The season in North Dakota is about 10 days late, but soil and moisture conditions are very satisfactory. In the central and western portions of the state, the same favorable soil and moisture conditions prevail, but the season is about 15 days late.



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In the northern counties of Montana, the season is from 10 to 15 days late. In the northeastern portion of the state only a relatively small proportion of the wheat planting has been completed and seeding will continue for at least 10 days. Farther west the planting has made better progress and there is enough moisture in the ground to give the crop a favorable start, and general rains in about three weeks will greatly help the crop outlook. While weather and soil conditions are generally favorable for planting, the season has been too backward to produce a large growth. High winds in some localities have caused damage, but not to an extent to affect the general outlook. In the eastern and central portion of the state, the season is also late, and the ground has been somewhat dry. Showers have occurred which have helped soil conditions, and planting is making good progress.

In the Yellowstone Valley about 75 per cent of the wheat is already in the ground.

In western Montana the preparation of the ground was never conducted under more favorable conditions. General rains have helped the spring planting, and winter wheat is in fine condition.

Underlying everything there is a substantial prosperity throughout the district. This is evidenced by large sales of automobiles, by the trade of houses dealing in silverware and jewelry, by the satisfactory sales of concerns handling oriental rugs and fine furniture, by the increased trade of merchandisers in the rural sections, by the movement of city real estate, especially residences, and by a satisfactory demand for agricultural implements and machinery of all kinds. Collections are good and the trade outlook is satisfactory.

Rates show no change of any consequence, and the demand is active.