

# Agriculture

## The promised land still not in sight for farmers

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Communications Division  
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OTTAWA - "Promised land reached; farm incomes up 40%."

Set aside the biblical reference and a headline like the one above is accurate. Figures recently released by Statistics Canada show total net farm income stood at \$4.9 billion in 1989, up 40% from \$3.5 billion in 1988. But anyone who wants a true picture of agricultural economics won't get it by looking at one factor in isolation. Many other numbers regularly published by Statistics Canada give plenty of evidence that farm life today is not a bed of roses.

For example, realized net income for farmers (net cash income plus any income in kind but minus depreciation) dropped 11% in 1989, reaching just \$4.1 billion compared with \$4.6 billion in 1988. Farm cash receipts were up \$22.5 billion compared to \$22.0 billion in 1988, a 2% increase. But that was only about half as much as the increase in the rate of inflation.

Farm expenses hit \$18.6 billion in 1989, up a hefty \$1 billion or 6% from the previous year. Even with all the effects of inflation removed, the expense bite was still 1% higher than 1988. The cost of operating machinery, crop insurance, interest expenses, wages and feed all moved higher in 1989, narrowing the potential for profitable operations. Crop receipts were generally

higher than in 1988, with Canadian Wheat Board payments accounting for almost 70% of that increase. Barley prices hit their highest level in four years primarily due to tight North American feed grain supplies resulting from the 1988 drought.

But cash receipts were almost unchanged for cattle and calves and for hogs. More animals went to market but prices were lower. Receipts for dairy products were up less than 1%. Some specialist operations were hit particularly hard: For example, shrinking markets brought a 28% drop in fur farming receipts, down to just \$41 million in 1989.

The debit side of the account book offers a look at the fiscal picture from another angle. Farm debt outstanding totalled \$22.5 billion at the end of 1989. That was down only 1% from \$22.8 billion in 1988.

Through the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s, farm debt kept edging upward. Since then, the trend has been downward. Analysts say this has been due in part to increased caution by both lenders and farmers.

That caution could be taken as a major indicator of how things have been going for the farm community. The promised land still lies beyond the horizon.

For further information, contact Tom Mitchell (613) 951-8292, Communications Division, Statistics Canada, Ottawa, Ont. K1A 0T6.



### Greeting delegates

Miss Acton Fall Fair, 17-year-old Leigh Whiting, was at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto last week, greeting delegates to the Ontario Association of Agricultural Societies annual convention. Miss Whiting is a Grade 12 French Immersion Program student at Georgetown District High School. (Thomson Newspapers photo)

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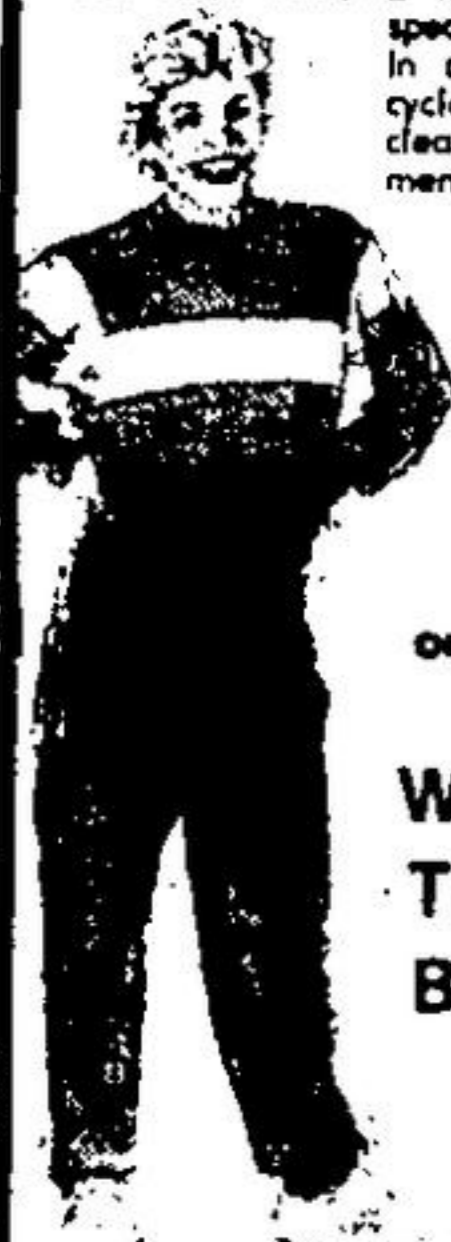
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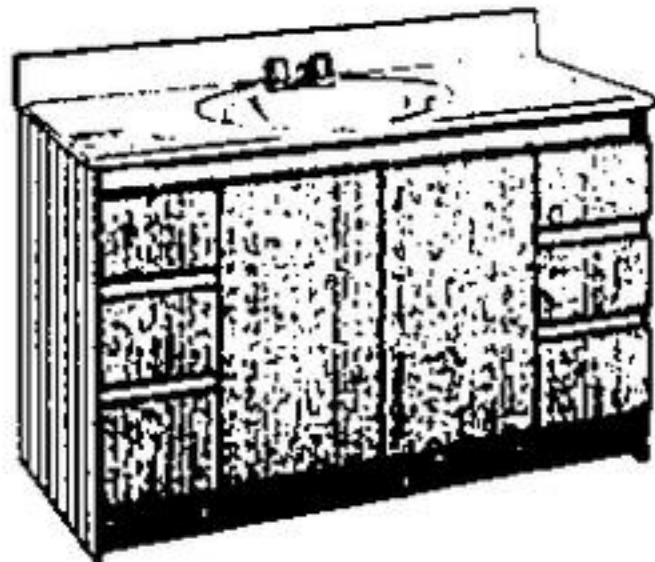
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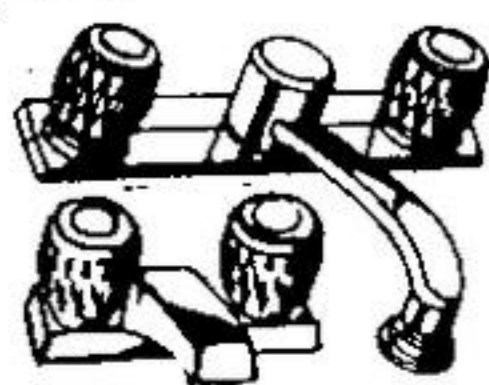


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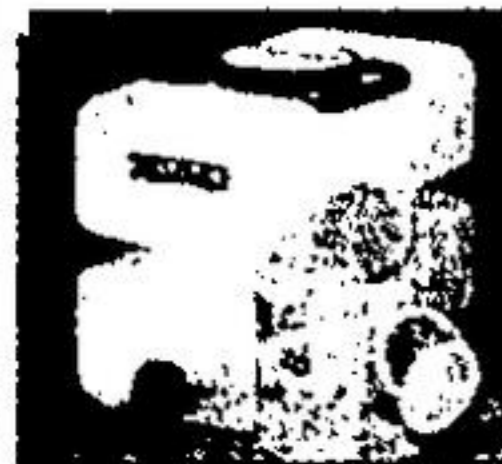
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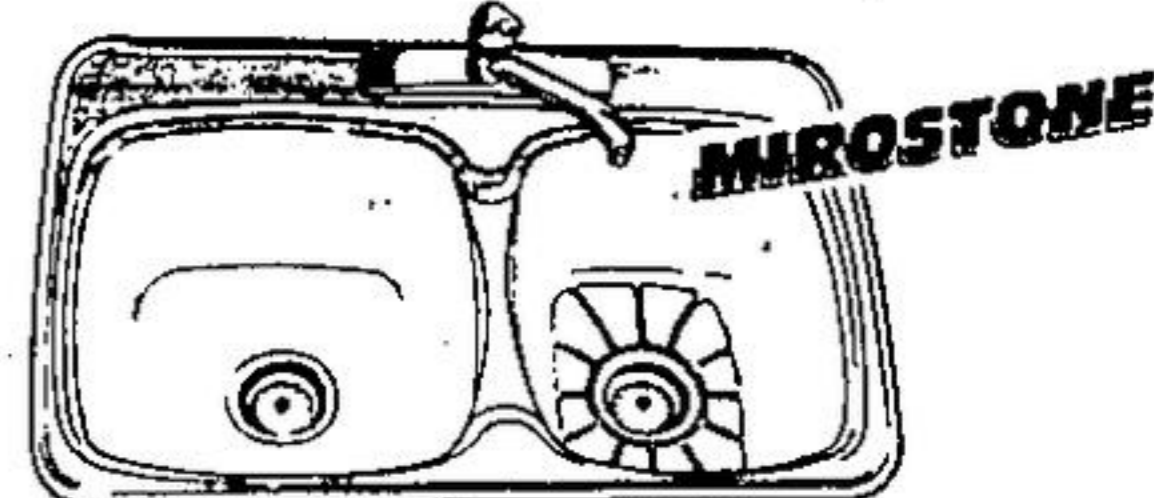
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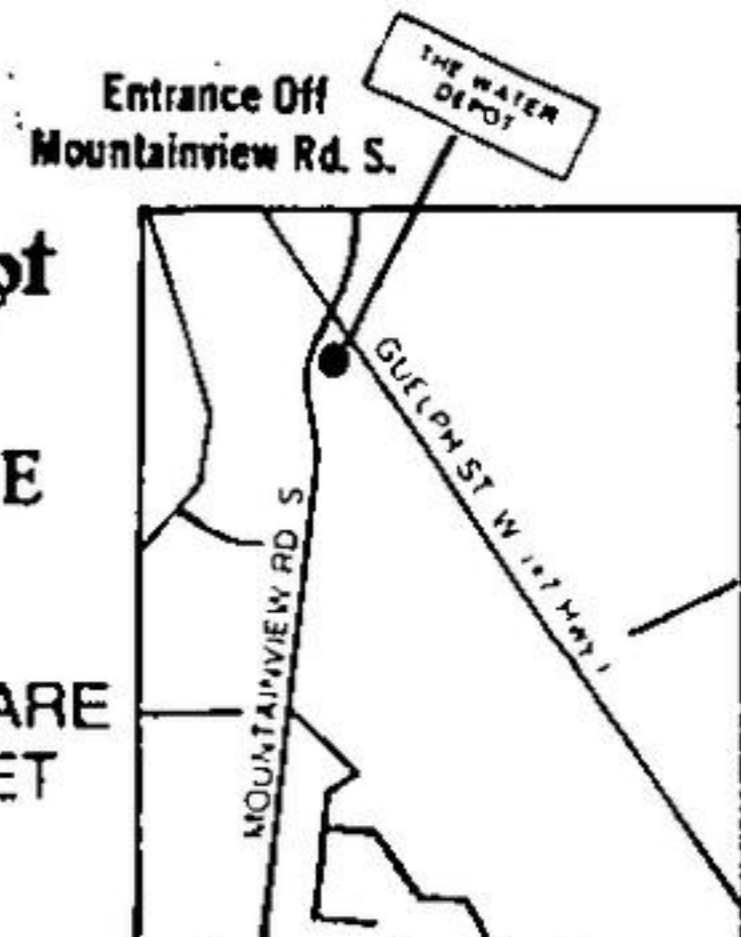
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