

COMMERCIAL SUNFLOWER SEED PRODUCTION  
AND MARKETING IN CANADA

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Commercial sunflower seed production was introduced in Canada in 1943 when 12,400 acres were sown to this crop and the Co-op. Vegetable Oils' crushing plant at Altona, Manitoba, commenced operations in 1946. Since then, that is from 1946 to 1963, sunflower seed production within a radius of approximately 50 miles of this plant has accounted for over 90 percent of the total Canadian production. Yearly seedings in the province fluctuated over the 18-year period between 3,000 and 60,000 acres and averaged about 25,000 acres.

Preliminary estimates place sunflower seedings in Manitoba this year (1964) at 48,000 acres, and an additional 23,500 and 7,500 acres are reported respectively for the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta. This includes some 61,000 acres of the Russian oilseed type variety Peredovik, 8,000 acres hybrid, and about 10,000 acres of the large-seeded variety Mennonite. Corresponding seedings with respect to varieties in 1963 were as follows: Peredovik and other Russian oilseed varieties 11,000, hybrid 11,000, and Mennonite 16,000 acres.

Predominance of the variety Peredovik in sunflower seed plantings in Western Canada has come in four years after it was first introduced for testing by the Canada Department of Agriculture. Last year two commercial firms, that is, our organization and the J. Gordon Ross Syndicate of Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, imported seed of this variety from the Soviet Union for increase under contract. Both seed and oil yields from the increase of the imported seed turned out fully equal to what had been anticipated on basis of reports in the literature. Furthermore, it compared quite favorably with Mennonite and the hybrid varieties now being grown in earliness of maturity. Indications are that our crushings of 1963 crop Peredovik will average somewhat over 33 percent higher in oil yield than the seed of the other varieties.

We intended to project trends as experienced in Manitoba with respect to sunflower seedings and gross cash returns per acre in terms of the higher oil yields of Peredovik. After outlining the pertinent data we considered it best, however, to let everyone draw his own conclusions. In an attempt to facilitate the matter, we are showing seed yields and prices in the form of a graph on page 3 and yearly seedings and average gross returns per acre on page 4.

In regard to yields per acre on page 3, we like to point out:

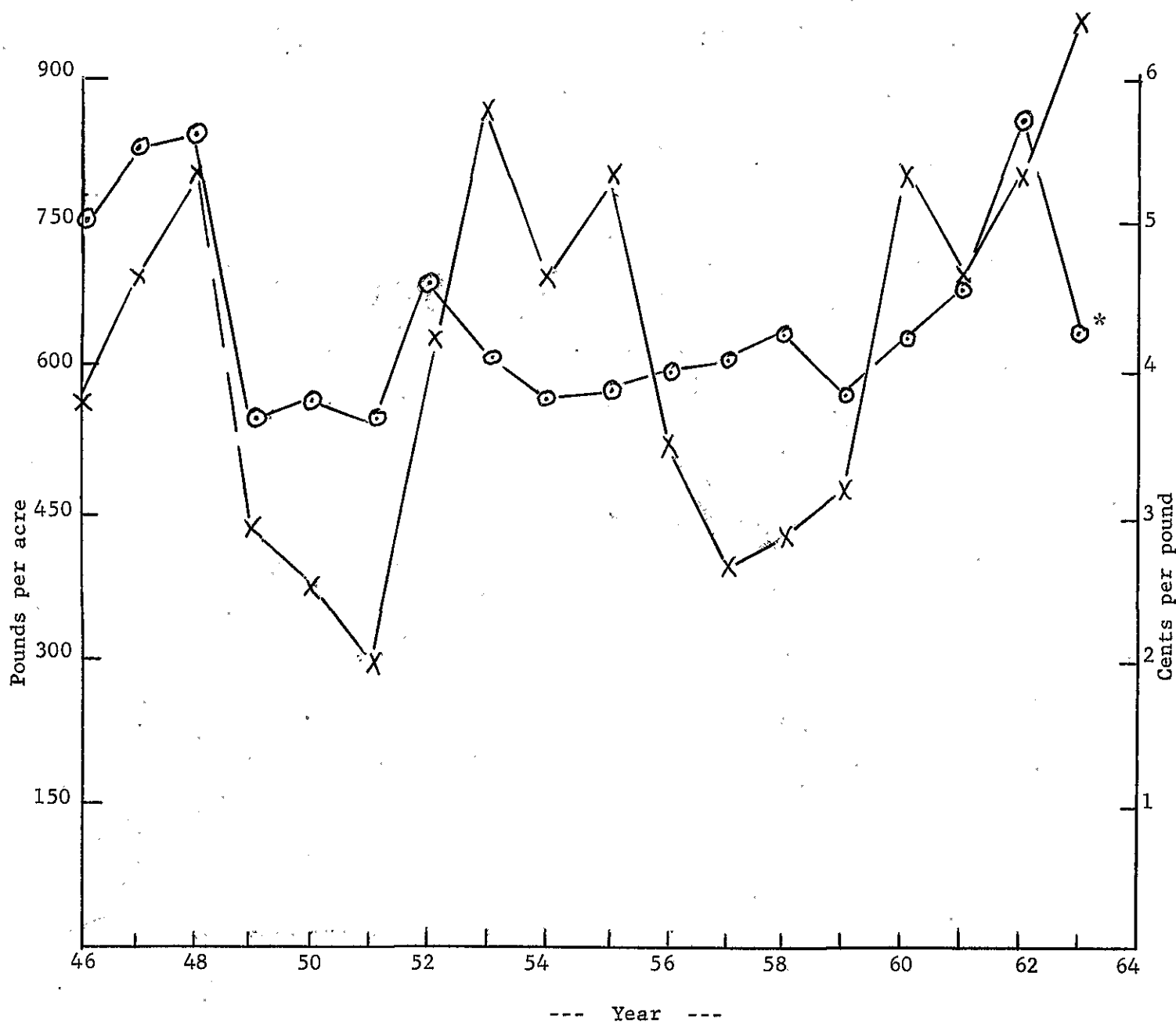
Low yields of seed per seeded acre were attributed largely in 1949 to a windstorm and severe lodging after the crop had matured; in 1950 to late seeding because of flooding in May; in 1951 to rust; in 1958 to abandonment of sunflower acreage because of frost on the 23rd of June; and in 1959 to abandonment of acreage because of beetle damage in the seedling stage.

In the other graph on page 3, low prices to producers from 1949 to 1951 reflected abnormally low oil yields (about 23 percent), whereas, in 1952 returns were more buoyant again due to higher oil prices. The gradual upward trend in sunflower seed prices from 1955 to 1958 coincided with increasing use of hybrid seed in crushings together with increasing sales of the larger and lower oil content Mennonite (roasting type) seed in the specialty trade.

The significance of oil yields and prices declined from 1958 to 1962 as a direct contributing factor to producer prices. About 50 percent of the sunflower seed produced in Manitoba over that four-year period was sold in the roasting and bird-feed trade, and it reached 90 percent in 1962. Since the graph represents weighed average prices, in the projected average price for 1963 a premium on Peredovik seed is obscured by relatively low average returns for Mennonite and hybrid seed.

Incidentally, patronage dividends were not included in the calculation of average prices. Allocations of patronage dividends by our organization on sunflower seed averaged over the last 10 years approximately one-fourth cent per pound.

Yields of Sunflower Seed in Manitoba, and  
Average Prices to Producers 1946 to 1963



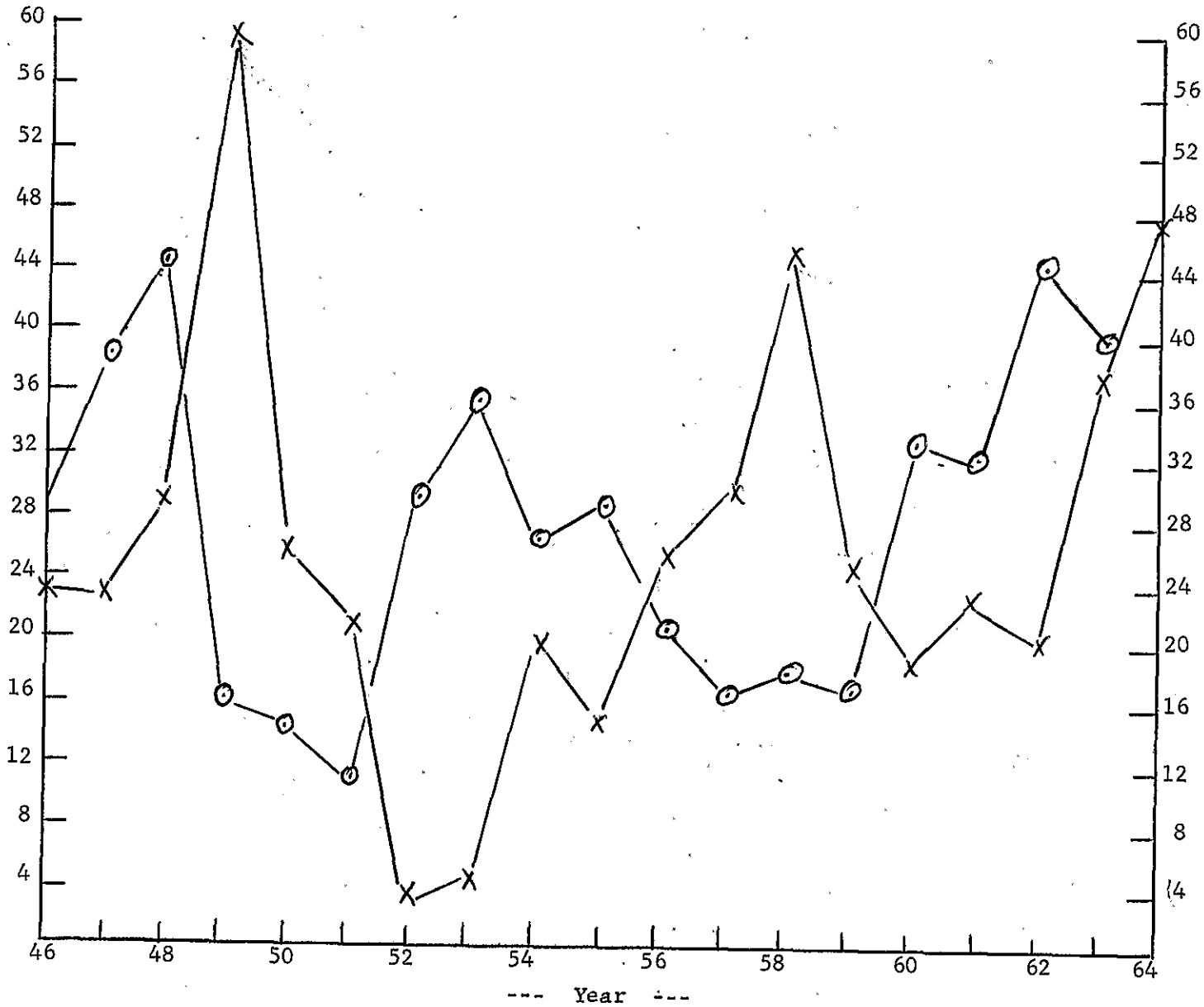
—X— X— X— Average yield in pounds per seeded acre.

—O— O— O— Average price in cents per pound.

Note: 1¢ = 23% of the 18-year average price and  
150 pounds seed = 24% of the average yield.

\* Preliminary estimate.

Sunflower Seedings in Manitoba, and  
Average Cash Returns per Acre 1946 to 1964



—X—X—X— Seeded acreage in thousands.

—O—O—O— Average gross dollars per acre (seed yield × price)