

CHAPTER 9.—METHODS OF SUPPLY

The Commission's task under this heading is to consider what steps should be taken in order to ensure that the supply will be adequate in quantity, of a high standard, and produced in such a manner that whilst fulfilling these conditions milk will remain reasonable in price. It is in methods necessary to ensure adequate supplies of milk of high standard that the present organization has failed to a considerable extent. The Commission for that reason has thought it desirable to discuss in detail what constitutes an adequate supply and the steps necessary to ensure that the quantity available in future will be adequate.

In the opinion of the Commission the supply of milk is, and should remain, the full responsibility of the producer. Furthermore, it is axiomatic that milk, no matter how carefully transported or treated, can never be better in quality than when it leaves the farm. The producer, therefore, is the logical person to accept full responsibility for the initial safeguarding of the production of an adequate supply of milk of high standard, and the Dairy Farmers' Co-operative Milk Supply Association, as the representative body, should accept general responsibility for these matters.

METHODS OF PRODUCTION

The Commission has stated elsewhere its opinion on the present conditions relating to production in town-milk-supply herds, and in order to achieve maximum efficiency in production a Dairy Farmers' Supply Association in each centre is recommended with full powers (including an appropriate degree of economic pressure) to bring production standards up to the highest point of efficiency.

The Commission recommends the Central Authority to give consideration to the appointment by the Central Authority, and under the control of the Central Authority, of at least two consultants or advisors for field-work among town-milk suppliers. It is possible that this might in some respect mean overlapping with the Fields Instructors, Dairy Instructors, or Stock Inspectors of the Department of Agriculture, but the technique of production of town milk is of such a nature that a considerable amount of specialized knowledge is essential. From what the Commission has seen of the work of the Department's field officers there is no doubt that the addition of any extra work would completely overburden them. In fact, at the present time they are fully occupied with carrying out normal routine duties, and in more than one area already have too many herds under their control to give effective assistance to all producers. Any work of a specialized nature must therefore involve the employment of more field officers.

The Commission regards the task of the Stock Inspector in Christchurch, where he has to supervise and control conditions on approximately five hundred licensed dairy-farms, as a task too great to permit full advantage accruing to the supplier from the advice of the Stock Inspector or to permit the Stock Inspector in turn to give the necessary detailed attention to the less progressive of such suppliers. It is, in the opinion of the Commission, a striking tribute to the Stock Inspector in this area that he has been able to achieve the results which are at present evident. It is worthy of note that in all centres the Stock Inspector is held in high regard by city-milk suppliers, and he is certainly regarded more as an instructor than as an inspector. This is a desirable state of affairs, but it would be a considerable improvement if the number of such field officers could be increased to permit of more detailed attention to all herds and sheds.

It is obvious that considerable room for improvement exists not only in the technique of actual milk-production on the farm, but also in matters of husbandry, such as replacement of stock, control of disease, and winter feeding, and these require urgent attention.

There are two major problems confronting the town-milk supplier on which it is imperative that assistance be given him in overcoming the problems involved. One is the technique of winter feeding in order to prevent the heavy fall in the production of autumn and winter calvers which, as most producers have claimed, actually occurs. It has been suggested elsewhere that the evidence before the Commission fully justifies the belief that this fall in production is largely a matter of feeding and could be avoided to a considerable extent by proper methods of feeding.

Secondly, there is the problem of herd-replacement policies and the necessity for avoiding methods of purchasing replacements from sources which are likely to prove unsatisfactory both in the health and producing qualities of the cattle purchased. This refers particularly to the present most unsatisfactory system of purchasing stock in the saleyards.

Whatever course is adopted by the Central Authority for the provision of specialized advice to town-milk producers it will be essential for the closest possible co-operation to exist between the officers carrying out the advisory work and the Dairy Farmers' Supply Association.

The reasons underlying the Commission's recommendations for the setting-up of such a supply association and the general conditions under which that supply association should operate have already been set out in the chapter on organization.

FARM LABOUR

In common with all primary industries, and particularly the dairy industry, the liquid-milk industry is facing severe difficulties owing to the shortage of man-power. This has had a direct effect on the quantity of milk-supply available and to the extent that the Government is able to ameliorate the labour shortage in primary industries generally the Commission asks that full consideration be given to the claims of the liquid-milk industry. Wage costs are undoubtedly very high at the present time on such farms, but the chief complaint of the producer is that he is unable to obtain adequate labour even at the high wage rates being offered.

FUTURE PRODUCTION AREAS

In certain areas, particularly Dunedin and the 30-mile area in Wellington, costs of producing winter milk are high, and any attempt to achieve a level supply to a greater extent than is being achieved at present will undoubtedly involve the producer in additional costs. It is quite evident that costs of winter feeding are substantial, and the Commission recommends that the Central Authority give careful consideration to the question of whether in any area it would be better to incur mileage-costs