

DAIRY DIVISION

REPORT OF G. M. VALENTINE, ACTING-DIRECTOR

Climatic conditions throughout the Dominion varied considerably during the year under review, but, taken as a whole, the season was very disappointing from the production viewpoint. After a fairly wet spring in the North Auckland, Waikato, and Hawke's Bay - Wairarapa areas, dry conditions set in early in December and in North Auckland and the Waikato developed into one of the worst droughts experienced for many years. Owing to the rapid decline in production from January onward, most companies in the drought-affected areas found the daily collection of cream uneconomic and adopted an alternate-day collection early in February. As the hot weather continued, dairy herds lost condition rapidly because of the increasing scarcity of feed, with the result that many suppliers began to lose interest, and quality of both cream and butter was adversely affected. Feed in the Auckland Province became so scarce that in many cases hay and silage saved for winter feeding was used up and further supplies had to be obtained from other districts.

In Taranaki, the Manawatu, and the greater part of the South Island a fairly good season was experienced. Although the spring was wet and cold, there were no protracted spells of dry weather during the summer, and consequently production from these localities should be well up to previous seasons. In North Canterbury insufficient rain fell during the summer months to suit the district, with the result that production from this locality was below the normal expectation.

OUTPUT

As was to be expected from the climatic conditions, butter and cheese graded for export showed a decrease in quantity over the previous year. In terms of butterfat the decrease was 11,584 tons, or 8.47 per cent., over the 1944-45 figure, which showed an increase of 24,219 tons, or 21.52 per cent., over the 1943-44 figure.

Creamery butter received for grading for export during the year ended 31st March amounted to 107,582 tons, and cheese to 90,523 tons, as compared with 119,781 tons of butter and 94,140 tons of cheese for the preceding twelve months, a decrease of 12,199 tons of butter, or 10.18 per cent., and 3,617 tons of cheese, or 3.84 per cent.

Attention is again drawn to the fact that the figures used in this report are grading figures, not production figures, and, moreover, relate only to gradings for export. Although the gradings of butter for export show a decrease for the year under review, this would have been greater were it not for the rationing of butter for the local market to 6 oz. per capita per week. New Zealand's normal consumption, being approximately 13 oz. per capita per week, would obviously increase exports of butter in proportion to total production. The cancellation in November, 1945, of the contracts with the United States Joint Purchasing Board has also been responsible for the diversion to normal export of appreciable quantities of both butter and cheese.

EXPORT VALUES

The total value, for Customs purposes, of all dairy-produce exported from the Dominion during the 1945-46 financial year was £30,519,302, an increase of £1,334,583 over the 1944-45 valuation of £29,184,719. The products included under this heading are butter, cheese, casein, dried milk, milk-sugar, and condensed milk and cream.

Taking butter and cheese separately, butter exported during the year was valued at £21,455,369 and cheese at £7,782,000. The values for the previous year were £18,754,698 and £9,643,013 respectively.

While these figures are interesting and useful as indicating the Customs valuation of dairy products exported during the year, it should not be overlooked that the quantities represented are actual shipments and therefore must not be related to the grading statistics included in this report.