

To meet the position created by this action a scheme was devised for supplying retailers and others concerned in the retail-butter business in the Wellington District with supplies from Imperial stocks held in cool stores and advanced against on behalf of the Imperial Government. Such butter is sold at £3 19s. 4d. per box of 56 lb. ex-store, with a minimum order of two boxes, and to the 31st March, 1918, 4,682 boxes have been supplied under this scheme, valued at £18,571 18s. 8d.

As somewhat similar conditions made themselves felt in other parts of the Dominion, action has been taken by the Government to ensure adequate quantities of suitable butter remaining in the Dominion to meet local requirements.

CHEESE FOR DEFENCE DEPARTMENT.

In co-operation with the Dairy Division of the Department of Agriculture, the Department has purchased for the New Zealand Munitions and Supplies Department during the year ended 31st March, 1918, 4,028 crates of cheese, valued at £25,373 4s. 1d.; and the total purchases made by this Department on behalf of the Defence Department to the 31st March, 1918, amount to 7,204 crates, valued at £42,857.

PURCHASE OF WHEAT FROM AUSTRALIA.

At the request of the Board of Trade the Department has also undertaken the accounts necessary in connection with the purchase of wheat from Australia for the Dominion's requirements.

1,150,000 bushels were purchased through the State Wheat Boards of Victoria and New South Wales, and were transported to the Dominion in fourteen steamers, and the total amount expended on these purchases to the 31st March, 1918, was £344,611.

Delivery was taken by the Board of Trade, and invoices were rendered by the Department on receipt of the customary advice from the officers supervising the discharge.

The whole of the accounts in connection with the sale of this wheat have now been paid by the purchasers, with the exception of £16,152, and no difficulty is anticipated in collecting this latter amount.

TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS.

The total disbursements by the Department of Imperial Government Supplies from the 3rd March, 1915, to the 31st March, 1918, were as follows:—

	£
Frozen meat	22,851,823
Cheese, 1915-16 season	917,748
Cheese, 1916-17 season	3,295,557
Cheese, 1917-18 season	3,107,274
Butter, 1917-18 season	2,240,622
Scheelite	97,611
Wool	23,360,888
Sheep-skins	757,323
Hides	596,762
Freezing companies' slip wool	1,594,895
"Glaxo"	248,385
Butter-fat levy	252,142
Purchase of wheat in Australia	344,611
Miscellaneous	215,803
Total	£59,881,444

The salaries, expenses, rent, stationery, and all other incidental charges connected with the internal administration of the Department since its inception to the 31st March, 1918, have amounted to £25,209.