

THE CHEESE INDUSTRY.

Quality of Cheese.

The cheese which this Dominion has been exporting during recent years has been favourably commented upon in London, and it is considered that improvement has been made. Two factors contributing in this direction are doubtless (1) pasteurization of milk for cheesemaking, and (2) the longer maturing of the cheese, both on the curing-room shelves and in the cool store while awaiting shipment. The working arrangements between the cheese companies and the Imperial Government stipulated that such cheese as was sold for filling these contracts should lie for fourteen days on the shelves before being cased. This requirement was considered so beneficial that steps were taken to have it continued. An Order in Council dated 21st October, 1920, makes provision in that direction, and the cheese companies have endeavoured to give effect to this requirement, although in a few instances lack of curing-room space made such an effort extremely difficult. It is generally recognized, however, that the regulation affords more protection to the industry generally, and was therefore desirable.

The quality of our cheese has been well maintained during the past season. Some districts, however, have shown little, if any, improvement in the better brands, but have shown a reduced percentage of second grade. Supplies of milk increased so much at a number of cheese-factories that a night shift was required. This necessity, with its attendant disabilities, was not found conducive to the manufacture of produce of such good quality as would have been the case under normal conditions. Dry-weather conditions during the late summer and autumn are considered to have altered the relation between the milk constituents to a degree which in some districts necessitated a more or less marked variation in manufacture. Before the need for the change was recognized, some cheese was manufactured which was not quite equal to the usual standard. In other districts, however, the managers have improved the body and texture of some brands, and openness and cracked rinds have been somewhat less in evidence.

Pasteurizing Milk for Cheesemaking.

Probably in no other country in the world has the pasteurization of milk for cheesemaking been adopted to an extent equal to that in this Dominion. During this season twenty-one cheese-factories installed pasteurizing-machines, while of the Dominion total of 389 cheese-factories 172 were using pasteurizers. The output of these factories represented 36,576 tons of our total production of 61,514 tons. Taken generally, the effect of pasteurization has been decidedly advantageous, as it has been our experience that cheese made from such milk cures more uniformly, and retains a cleaner flavour during the maturing process. There are, however, managers, directors, and suppliers who act as though the pasteurizer will overcome all defects in the milk-supply. Disappointments in this direction have been all too frequent and costly to a number of dairy companies.

Cool Storage of Cheese.

The congestion of cheese at New Zealand ports during the period of the war was responsible for an extension of cool-storage facilities at each and every cheese-grading port. Save at Auckland for a short period this autumn, the accommodation has been sufficient for this season's requirements. Just recently ordinary storage has been resorted to at that centre, but, as the hot summer weather has been followed by much cooler climatic conditions, no deleterious effects from such ordinary storage are anticipated.

During the season cheese in store at Dunedin has received excellent treatment. Mechanical refrigeration has been installed, and the cooling, in addition to a good circulation of air, has enabled the cheese to be held in better condition than hitherto.

No improvement has been effected in the conditions under which cheese from Patea, and sometimes New Plymouth, is held while awaiting loading into the export steamer in Wellington. The Wellington stores could not afford space for such transhipment cheese, as the cheese from the Wellington District taxed their capacity to the utmost.

GRADING OF DAIRY-PRODUCE.

The grading of butter, cheese, and casein has been carried on without change in the personnel of this portion of the staff. As a result of the development of the industry a very considerable increase in this work has been occasioned during the season. The grading has been conducted on the usual lines, and leaves little room for comment.

Since 1916, owing to shortage of refrigerated shipping-space, it was found necessary to grade cheese at a few private cool stores erected by certain dairy companies. Owing to the fact that during the current season more space was available at gazetted grading-stores, a continuance of this practice became unnecessary and was therefore discontinued.

Throughout the season some nine grading conferences were held under the auspices of the New Zealand Factory-managers' Association. Practically without exception these were well attended by dairy-company directors and factory-managers. Five of these meetings were held at grading-ports, where the actual work of grading was viewed by the factory representatives. Three of the conferences were held at dairy factories in the Dannevirke, Kairanga, and Pahiatua districts respectively. For these conferences samples of cheese were collected from surrounding factories, and after these had been graded by officers of this Division, matters pertaining to cheese-quality and the industry generally were discussed. It is considered that such conferences tend to produce uniformity in the product, and raise the general standard of quality. This activity of the New Zealand Factory-managers' Association is certainly praiseworthy.