

During the year there has been considerable activity with respect to the certification of various types of crops for seed production. This phase of the Department's work has resulted in two definite features—namely, an increased income for the farmers adopting the regulations laid down, and a general improvement in pastures consequent upon the use of certified strains of seed in laying down new pastures. The case of perennial rye-grass is particularly outstanding, the area offered for certification in the season 1932–33 being 25,000 acres, compared with 9,709 acres in the previous season.

THE GENERAL PRODUCTION VIEWPOINT.

From a general production viewpoint, the 1932–33 season has been remarkably good, increased output of the various commodities going a long way towards offsetting any easing in commodity prices. In view of our proven potential ability to further expand in supplies of exportable foodstuffs, the trend towards nationalism in consuming countries, as exemplified by discussion and in many instances action taken to limited markets through conscious control of imports, must be viewed with a considerable degree of apprehension by individuals and organizations connected with primary industries. It is evident that no efforts must be spared to find additional outlets for our produce.

THE INITIAL SMALL FARM PLAN.

In April, 1932, an amendment to the Unemployment Act, 1930, made provision for the settlement of unemployed workers on areas of cultivable land. At the request of the Right Hon. J. G. Coates, then Minister in Charge of Employment, it was agreed by yourself that the Department of Agriculture would administer this Amendment, adequate finance being made available for the purpose. The immediate supervision of the Act was placed in the hands of the Assistant Director General, the Farm Economics Section of the Department being made responsible for Head Office administration.

Field work in connection with the acquisition of land and the establishment of families was placed under the control of eight District Executive Officers, these officers being either District Superintendents of the Live-Stock Division or Fields Superintendents of the Fields Division. To facilitate control and to prevent overlapping of effort, the field staffs of the Live-Stock and Fields Division were amalgamated for this work, officers of either Division operating under the particular Executive Officer for the district concerned. This involved much strenuous work, and the zeal exhibited by all concerned in carrying it out is highly appreciated.

The experience gained by this Department during the first six months' operations clearly indicated that the power given under the amendment to the Unemployment Act was not sufficient to ensure rapid settlement. Steps were therefore taken to have further legislation framed, and in the early session of 1933 the Small Farms (Relief of Unemployment) Act was passed. Under the provisions of this Act, its administration was placed under a Ministerial committee and a Board of five members. The Department of Lands and Survey then became responsible for the acquisition of land and the settlement of unemployed, and the Department of Agriculture made arrangements to transfer control of established and partly established holdings to the new administration. The first meeting of the New Board was held on 12th March, 1933.

The Department of Agriculture was actively engaged on settlement for less than twelve months, and undertook the task in the first place without previous experience in the intricacies of land acquisition. It was, however, fully alive to the soundness of the principle of settling unemployed families in positions where they could earn something from the land and partially provide themselves with food, &c. Rapidity of establishment therefore became essential. Upon representation to the Department by a number of owners of large herds of dairy cows, provision was made to enable owners to erect share milkers' cottages and cowsheds, provisional upon the engagement of men then registered as unemployed. This avenue of absorption proved effective in expediting the placement of families.

When the Department of Agriculture ceased active operations in land acquisition in March, 1933, it was able to report a certain amount of progress even with the restricted conditions under which it had been working. The position at that time is summarized as follows:—

Number of families settled—

On small farms	367
Share milkers	214
	— 581

In course of establishment prior to settlement—

Small farms	121
Share milking	51
	— 172

Total	753
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