

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL.

Wellington, 20th August, 1935.

THE HON. THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE,—

I beg to submit the following report on the work of the Department for the year ending 31st March last, including the usual divisional reports, statement from the Phosphate Commission, and detailed reports on the activities of the Chief Chemist, the Plant Research Station, and the Veterinary Laboratory.

THE AGRICULTURAL AND PASTORAL POSITION.

In respect to production, despite unfavourable weather in large areas of the Dominion, the gratifyingly high standard attained in the 1933-34 season was closely approached in the 1934-35 season, when decreases in the production of such major lines as butter, cheese, frozen beef, cereals, and apples were offset to some extent by increases in respect to other important lines such as frozen lamb, mutton, and pork, preserved milk, and sheep-skins. However, despite the highly satisfactory manner in which farm-production was maintained there was a sharp decline in the value of the exportable surplus; in terms of New Zealand currency, the exported farm-products listed in the table relative to overseas trade published by the Government Statistician amounted to £39,404,963 for the year ended 30th June, 1935; the corresponding figures for the year ending 30th June, 1934, were £45,695,416: the decrease of £6,290,453 is approximately 13 per cent. Some minor farm-products included under the general item "other New Zealand produce" are omitted from the above totals. The decrease was due principally to the difference in the values of the wool exported in the respective years—£6,327,793 in the year ending June, 1935, in comparison with £13,287,458 in the corresponding previous year. In this connection it is of interest to note, however, that in 1934, the end-of-season (June) stocks held in New Zealand were 29,000,000 lb. less than the corresponding stocks in 1933, while in 1935 the estimated stocks held at the end of June were 37,000,000 lb. greater than those held a year previously, so that the difference in the values of the wool exported in the respective seasons diverges substantially from the difference in the values of the wool actually produced in those seasons.

The weather conditions varied widely throughout the main districts of the Dominion. In North Auckland abundant rainfall was reflected in abnormally heavy growth of pastures: in the remainder of the Auckland province the year was satisfactory from a fattening point of view, but somewhat unsatisfactory for dairying because of hot, dry summer conditions. Generally in the southern half of the North Island results both in dairying and in sheep-farming suffered firstly from a cold spring and secondly from dry summer conditions, to which may be attributed a decline in the production of butterfat and in the average weight of fat lambs slaughtered for export. In the South Island generally, the weather conditions and the effect of these on farming were analogous to those in the southern half of the North Island, although in parts of Otago a fine warm spring followed by satisfactory summer conditions for the greater part of the season enabled lambs to thrive at the outset, and resulted in the quality being well maintained although average weights were lower.

OUTSTANDING FEATURES OF THE YEAR.

Included among the outstanding features of the farming industry for the year are:—

1. A decrease of 4·831 per cent. in the production of butterfat for the twelve months ending July, 1935, as compared with the corresponding period of the 1933-34 season—this is correlated firstly with the fact that an interim estimate of the average butterfat-production of all dairy cows in 1934-35 is 210 lb., whereas the final estimate for 1933-34 was 220·8 lb., and, secondly, with the fact that there was a decrease of £1,413,014 in New Zealand currency in the value of butter and cheese exported during the year ended 30th June, 1935.
2. An increase of 247,139 cwt. in the weight and £1,473,854 in the value of frozen lamb exported during the year ended 30th June, 1935.
3. An increase of 88,646 cwt. in the weight and of £363,319 in the value of the frozen pork exported, which for the first time has reached an annual value of over £1,000,000 in New Zealand currency.
4. A decrease of approximately 21,000,000 lb. in the weight and £260,000 in the value of fresh apples exported.