

It is pleasing to note that the traffic increased substantially under all heads, this no doubt being an indication of the general return to prosperity throughout the Dominion. As indicated above, the tonnage for goods and live-stock traffic for the current year is the highest since 1931, and the revenue the highest since 1930.

A detailed comparison of 1937 with 1936 is as follows :—

Traffic in agricultural products increased by 110,327 tons. Grain traffic showed an increase of 79,856 tons and £37,412 in revenue. This traffic was, however, only normal, the position being that the returns for the previous year were unusually low on account of a bad season in 1935 and a late season in 1936. The revenue from root crops showed a substantial increase of £9,012 (17·92 per cent.), the increase in tonnage being 21·4 per cent.

Animals and their products increased by 49,845 tons. The number of cattle forwarded increased by 30,515 (7·49 per cent.). The sustained demand for cattle on account of the potentialities of the chilled-beef trade and the improvement in economic conditions causing a firm demand in the local markets were the main factors in the satisfactory showing.

Sheep increased by 480,290 (5·26 per cent.). Owing to a late season last year the deliveries to the freezing-works were prolonged. The conditions were somewhat similar this year. Marked increases were shown during April and May, while in February abnormal movements were experienced, the traffic in one week during this period reaching record figures.

Pig traffic increased by 43,844 (6·54 per cent.), and this increase compares very favourably with that of previous years. Export figures for the year show an increase of 4·64 per cent., whilst killings increased by 4·47 per cent.

Frozen meat showed a decline of £4,147 compared with last year, but chilled beef increased by £4,610. Butter showed a substantial increase, the increase in revenue being £8,538 (5·42 per cent.), while the tonnage improved by 8,396 tons (5·72 per cent.). Practically the whole of the increase was in the North Island. In the case of cheese traffic there was an increase of 5·5 per cent. in tonnage and 5·86 per cent. in revenue. The returns in this case were satisfactory when regard is had to the fact that during the past three years a decrease was recorded on each occasion.

Fat, skins, tallow, &c., showed an increase of 11,121 tons (38·92 per cent.) and £7,869 in revenue (28·68 per cent.). Killings increased by 5·84 per cent. only, and it would appear that the big increase under this head is mainly due to shipping fluctuations.

Wool traffic was normal this year. During 1935 there was a pronounced falling-off in the traffic on account of low prices, the clips being held over in anticipation of conditions improving. Prices firmed considerably in 1936 and most of the stocks on hand were forwarded for marketing, leaving only a small carry-over. This year the prices for wool were excellent and all available stocks were rushed to the sales, leaving no carry-over whatever.

In products of mines, coal showed an improvement of 144,462 tons (9·71 per cent.) and £62,506 (8·27 per cent.) in revenue. These figures show an improvement on the very low level established during the years 1934 and 1935, but the figures are still well below those of the pre-depression years.

Agricultural lime increased by 48,339 tons (19·59 per cent.) and £16,123 (18·22 per cent.) in revenue, traffic in this commodity having shown considerable improvement this year. The higher prices received for farm products and the improvement in economic conditions, together with the payment of guaranteed prices for dairy products, had a beneficial influence on this industry.

The products of forests increased by 37,769 tons. The timber carried was 452,375 tons, compared with 420,799 tons for last year, an increase of 31,576 tons (7·50 per cent.). The main increase occurred in the North Island, which recorded an improvement of 22,316 tons.

The quantities of native and imported timber carried during the year were as follow :—

		1937.	1936.	Variation.	
		Tons.	Tons.	Tons.	Per Cent.
New Zealand..	..	434,204	407,323	+26,881	6·60
Imported ..	..	18,171	13,476	+ 4,695	34·84

In the "benzine, cement, and manures" group benzine carried in tank wagons again showed a substantial increase, the amount involved being £21,797 (11·06 per cent.). The revenue from benzine, kerosene, &c., in containers increased by £7,166 (25·63 per cent.). The rapid growth of motor transport no doubt accounts for the development in benzine traffic.

With regard to cement, the activity in the building trade continues to increase the volume of this traffic. The improvement for the year was 9,237 tons (19·20 per cent.) and £8,099 in revenue (15·50 per cent.). The main increase occurred in the South Island.

The results from manure traffic during the year were very satisfactory, an increase of 83,307 tons (12·56 per cent.) and £48,161 in revenue (15·18 per cent.) being recorded. This increase can no doubt be attributed to the change in economic conditions and to rising prices for farm products. During the period of the depression conditions were such that the manuring of farm lands fell into arrears, but with the improvement in conditions a more intensive application of fertilizers is being made with the object of bringing farms up to their highest point of productivity.

Assembled motor-cars show an increase of £18,719 (63·07 per cent.), of which £16,006 was recorded in the North Island.

Machinery traffic showed an increase of £9,959 as the result of the year's operations, this increase being no doubt a reflection of the increased activity in new construction works throughout the country.

The traffic in miscellaneous goods amounted to 1,365,277 tons, against 1,229,147 tons for the previous year, an increase of 136,130 tons (11·08 per cent.), which is very satisfactory.