

well below regulation minimum requirements, so that such prices cannot strictly be compared with those ruling either previously or subsequently, unless first increased by 2d. per box. If, in addition, the subsequent recovery of white-pine prices to their previous level is taken into account, equivalent to almost 3d. per box, and a similar amount added to cover extra freight costs, to-day's price is not only reasonable but cheap.

Never before have the interests of the dairying industry been so well protected. It has a standard super-fine container hailed by the British markets as the world's best; it has the Dominion's white-pine supplies conserved for its own use, with exports virtually eliminated by a reduction from over 20,000,000 to only 2,000,000 board feet per annum; it has white-pine prices determined on a fair production basis and not on a much higher export parity basis; it has, for the first time in the history of the trade, ample stocks of well-seasoned timber in the box-plants, and likewise adequate stocks of boxes in reserve against unforeseen fires and shortages; and last, but not least, it has one of the world's cheapest boxes when quality, exacting requirements, and value of contents are considered. It may be mentioned that the present box costs less than 4 per cent. of the value of its contents as compared with double that percentage for many other boxes and their contents in both the export and domestic trades.

*(c) Organization of the Supply of other Containers for the Export Produce Trades.*

The supply and prices of cheese-crates were again the subject of review by the Government Timber Price Committee. Due to the consolidation of Timber Workers' awards in March, 1938, a slight increased cost of production had to be faced by cheese-crate manufacturers, and necessitated an increase of 1d. in the price of export cheese-crates for the 1938-39 season over the previous year's prices.

The quality of some cheese-crate battens again left much to be desired. It will be recollected that when local shortages of insignis pine occurred some five years ago temporary approval was given to the use of rimu, matai, miro, and totara for cheese-crate battens. Not unexpectedly brittleness and lack of strength of the totara led to its almost immediate disuse, but the remaining species, although inherently unsuitable for the purpose, have continued in general use in some localities. More recently, however, grading stores in both New Zealand and Great Britain have been extremely critical of crates constructed with rimu, matai, and miro battens, and the complaints in regard to excessive breakages have now become so serious that the use of these species should be discontinued, more especially as an adequate supply of insignis pine for the whole of the Dominion's requirements will soon be available.

The supply of export fruit-cases was again organized by the New Zealand Fruitgrowers' Federation in co-operation with the Government Timber Price Committee and the New Zealand Boxmakers' Association. The policy of the New Zealand Fruitgrowers' Federation in arranging for an appreciable percentage of the season's manufacture to be undertaken during the off-season months of the year has resulted in economizing boxmaking costs due to uniformity of operation and avoidance of overtime at periods of peak demand.

With a reduction in the annual production of white-pine in the North Island from approximately 30,000,000 board feet to almost half this figure over the last three years, a shortage of staves for the manufacture of tallow and pelt casks has tended to develop amongst North Island freezing companies, but is being met by specifications revision, and by the shipment of supplementary supplies from the South Island. Provided cask-manufacturers make known their requirements well in advance of the season, no serious difficulty can arise in meeting their requirements.

Prior to the introduction of the Import Control Regulations exporters of tinned meats and certain other products have used imported cases for their export trade, these containers, due to the granting of drawback, being admitted on an equivalent duty-free basis. Investigations are now in progress to determine the practicability of manufacturing the cases locally, and it is anticipated that by rigid economies in production-costs a case equal in quality to the imported will be available at a competitive price.