

DAIRY DIVISION

REPORT OF G. M. VALENTINE, DIRECTOR

From a productive point of view the season has been the most favourable for three years, particularly in the North Island. A mild spring, with good rains at intervals throughout the summer, provided excellent dairying conditions. In the South Island, especially in Southland, the spring was backward, cold and wet weather prevailing for some time. Conditions improved later, however, and production in the South Island should be at least equal to that of last season. In the South Canterbury and South Otago districts, severe floods were experienced in February. The flooded areas, however, recovered quickly, and the loss of production will not be so serious as was at first anticipated. The most serious result in these districts is likely to be the loss of root crops and hay, and the consequent shortage of feed for dairy stock during the coming winter.

OUTPUT

It is pleasing, after a period of steady decline in production to be able to report an increase in the quantities of butter and cheese graded for export. In terms of butterfat the increase was 24,219 tons, or 21.52 per cent. over the 1943-44 figure, which showed a decrease of 22,722 tons, or 16.8 per cent., from the 1942-43 figure.

Creamery butter received for grading for export during the year ended 31st March amounted to 119,781 tons, and cheese to 94,140 tons, as compared with 94,972 tons of butter, and 85,100 tons of cheese for the preceding twelve months, an increase of 24,809 tons of butter, or 26.12 per cent., and of 9,050 tons of cheese, or 10.62 per cent.

It is again pointed out that the figures used in this report are grading figures, not production figures, and, moreover, relate only to gradings for export. The provision of dairy products for the Armed Forces during the war years has considerably increased the quantities tabulated under the heading of local consumption, but these do not come within the scope of this report. The rationing of butter for the local market to 8 oz. *per capita* per week as from the end of October, 1943, would serve to offset this position to some extent.

EXPORT VALUES

The total value, for Customs purposes, of all dairy-produce exported from the Dominion during the 1944-45 financial year was £29,184,719, an increase of £5,171,425 over the 1943-44 valuation of £24,013,294. The products included under this heading are butter, cheese, casein, dried milk, milk sugar, and condensed milk and cream.

Taking butter and cheese separately, butter exported during the year was valued at £18,754,698 and cheese at £9,643,013. The values for the previous year were £15,487,668 and £7,974,547 respectively.

CREAMERY BUTTER

The average grade of creamery butter graded during the year under review was 93.402 points, as compared with 93.391 points for 1943-44. Of the 119,781 tons received for grading, 101,487 tons, or 84.72 per cent., was classed as finest grade, 18,094 tons, or 15.10 per cent., as first grade, and 200 tons, or 0.17 per cent., as under first grade. The comparative percentages for 1943-44 were 83.66, 16.03, and 0.30, so that butter qualifying for the finest grade increased by 1.06 per cent. and only about 15.27 per cent. failed to reach the finest class. Feed taint, which is confined principally to the Auckland Province, was again experienced for a short period, and this year was more general and persistent in the Opotiki district than elsewhere.

pH Testing of Butter.—The number of tests made during the year at the various grading stores were: Auckland, 1,571; Gisborne, 20; New Plymouth, 704; Wanganui, 206; Wellington, 1,395; Lyttelton, 187; Bluff, 14; a total of 4,097. The previous year's total was 3,951. (The pH test is used to determine the relative acidity or alkalinity of the butter, and thus assist in discovering the addition of excessive neutralizer to cream.)

The bacteriological and chemical examination of samples of butter was continued, the numbers handled at the various grading stores being as follows: Auckland, 1,358; Gisborne, 291; Napier, 6; New Plymouth, 795; Wanganui, 424; Wellington, 1,387; Lyttelton, 397; Dunedin, 6; a total of 4,664. The previous year's total was 4,034.

Testing Butter for Moisture and Salt.—Churnings of butter tested for moisture totalled 128,694, of which only 0.27 per cent. were found to exceed the legal limit of 16 per cent. allowed by the Dairy Industry Act, and were returned to the companies for reworking to bring them within the legal requirement. Churnings tested during the previous year were 110,164, of which 0.30 per cent. were over-moisture.

Some 127,082 samples were tested for salt, of which 0.36 per cent. failed to comply with the regulations. For the previous year 107,087 samples were tested, 0.25 per cent. failing to comply with the regulations.

WHEY BUTTER

Grading of whey butter again showed a slight increase, being 2,779 tons, as compared with 2,343 tons in 1943-44. Some 94.26 per cent. were classed as first grade, compared with 91.88 per cent. for the preceding year. Whey butter continues to be shipped to England, and the better qualities thereby assist to maintain the ration of 2 oz. butter per week.