

tons to Wellington). Several smaller shipments would have been much more suitable, but with ships and potatoes both so short it was necessary to take the only opportunities offering.

Both arrived two weeks later than scheduled, the s.s. "Sunnyside Park" at Auckland on the 12th September, 1945, and the Wellington shipment per the s.s. "Rondeau Park" at Wellington on the 17th September, 1945. Delays had been caused by bad weather aboard such large shipments of potatoes as 110,000 sacks and 45,000 sacks respectively, and by the "Rondeau Park" calling at Port Kembla for bunker coal. These delays, combined with faulty stowage and ventilation, caused some deterioration in both shipments, but the bulk landed in very fair condition, and, coming to a bare market, went quickly into consumption. Claims for 374 tons on ships' agents for the deterioration due to bad stowage and ventilation have been negotiated with the shipping company, and a satisfactory settlement has been reached. However, the total loss through wastage, including the shipping company's liability, averaged 6.8 per cent., a minor loss considering the magnitude of difficulties of the shipments and the urgency of consumers' needs.

These Australian potatoes cost, with freight and duty, substantially more than their New Zealand equivalent. However, in accordance with stabilization policy, they were sold at the wholesale and retail prices ruling for South Island potatoes of similar quality. Since potatoes were included in the wartime prices index this price difference would have had to be met out of War Expenses Account, whether the potatoes were imported by the Division or any other importer. Distribution was made through the usual wholesale and retail channels, and provided for the normal margins of profit. The potatoes supplied the whole of the North Island demand during the latter half of September and October, after which supplies of new potatoes in the Pukekohe, Poverty Bay, and other early areas began to come on the market freely.

As in previous war years, large contracts had been made for early potatoes in the North Island growing areas, when the United States Joint Purchasing Board early in September notified that they would need no more after the end of November. To reduce the contract area to one that would, as far as possible, accord with civilian requirements, meetings were immediately held with the growers, the merchants, and representatives of the Department of Agriculture in Pukekohe, Manawatu, and Hawke's Bay. A voluntary reduction of the area to be planted was proposed, the Division to pay such compensation as should be mutually agreed upon where anticipatory expenses had already been incurred. The committees succeeded in limiting areas not already planted, so that we were not faced in January, February, and March with the heavy surplus which would otherwise have been the case. Nevertheless, the early potatoes already in the ground before any limiting action could be taken gave some surplus during January and February, 1946, particularly from those districts where the climate made digging necessary as soon as the crop was ready for marketing.

Fortunately, we were able towards the end of January to ship to the British Navy in the East about 1,000 tons of potatoes from the Pukekohe area. In some other cases January contracts had to be held over to February, and February contracts to March, growers being compensated accordingly for any difference in price as between the month contracted for and the month of delivery. Certain quantities of potatoes so held over deteriorated owing to drought conditions during February. In such cases also the growers were compensated for losses incurred, and, wherever practicable, the potatoes were used for stock food. With the arrival on the market of the main North Island crop from Rangitikei and Manawatu districts, and with cooler weather in March, this temporary over-supply ceased.

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The area planted for the 1945 crop was 1,915 acres, the largest ever recorded for New Zealand and 892 acres more than the previous year. The yield was good, but continued wet weather made it extremely difficult to harvest it in sound, dry condition, and consequently keeping quality was poor. After large deliveries to the United States