

is larger and more certain, yet Victoria, except in time of drought, can supply all her own demands for oats, and have a large quantity available for export. The Victorian returns for 1900–1 show that the area under crop for oats was 362,427 acres, and the yield 9,575,472 bushels, an average of 26·42 bushels per acre. It is claimed that the oaten hay of Victoria is superior to that of New Zealand.

South Australia grows wheat largely and cheaply, and in Queensland barley fit for malting, and hops, are successfully grown. The evidence also proves that there are still large areas of land in New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland suitable for extending agricultural operations, and that such operations can be conducted with remunerative results.

Your Commissioners were informed that in New South Wales the whole cost per acre for producing wheat is on an average 15s.; in Victoria about 16s. This includes all charges, from preparing the land to completely harvesting the grain, which is stripped from the standing straw. The wages of agricultural labourers in Australia are much the same as in New Zealand, taking the average; but it must be remembered that the system of cultivation in New Zealand is much more elaborate than in Australia, and is necessarily more expensive: the yield per acre, however, is much larger.

The evidence shows that maize can be profitably grown in the States of New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland. In Queensland maize is generally used for horse-feed in lieu of oats.

Potatoes can be grown successfully in several of the States of the Commonwealth, notably in Tasmania, Victoria, and New South Wales. The potatoes produced in Tasmania and New Zealand are preferred, being of superior quality and keeping better than those grown in New South Wales and Victoria.

Onions are grown in large quantities in most if not in all the States of the Commonwealth.

The dairy industry is well developed and annually expanding in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, and South Australia, each of these States having a considerable surplus of dairy produce for export. During 1899 the value of the butter export from Victoria reached the large total of £1,404,830; and a Queensland witness before your Commission mentioned that during the past year 50,000 cows were milked in one district close to the border of that State, where a few years ago there were only a few milking cows, and that a similar extension is taking place nearer Brisbane.

Fruit of all the kinds grown in New Zealand can be profitably grown in the several States of the Commonwealth, as appears by the evidence attached to this report. The fruit grown in Australia is on the whole as good, and cheaper, than that grown in New Zealand.

In considering the extent to which our trade with Australia may be affected by the imposition of a protective Federal tariff, it must be borne in mind that £470,084 worth of our exports in 1900 went to heavily protected colonies, and of the £623,908 worth sent to New South Wales under free-trade conditions a considerable quantity represented goods for transshipment, while many of the items exported are not likely to be seriously affected by any probable change in the fiscal system. The tables appended to this report, showing the character of New Zealand exports to Australia, and summarising the agricultural statistics of the Commonwealth, furnish detailed information on this subject.

In the course of your Commissioners' inquiries some evidence was elicited with regard to the opening-up of new outlets for the trade of this colony. It was shown that full advantage has not been taken of the South African markets, and attention was drawn to a significant fact in connection with the shipments of New Zealand oats to Victoria—namely, that of the total amount of oats exported in 1900 to that colony, only 320 centals were taken for consumption in Victoria, the balance being transhipped to other markets. There were also large transhipments of New Zealand potatoes to Manila *via* Sydney.

*Manufactures.*—The question as to how far the manufacturers of this colony would be affected by federation is subject to various considerations. Very much depends on the Customs tariff which the Federal Parliament of Australia may decide to impose. If New Zealand joined the Commonwealth, although such tariff would not affect her as regards inter-State trade—which would be free