

27. What seed do you grow?—Originally we started almost entirely with rye-grass. The rye-grass in the Hastings and Gisborne districts is of a standard growth, and New Zealand used to get most of its rye-grass from Hawke's Bay. Canterbury rye-grass seed is of a different class—it is larger, and not so attractive-looking. The farmers growing grain in the Sandon district supplied the local market. They found, however, that rye-grass was taking on very well, and that they could get a very good crop off it. Then it was found that there was a very large demand for crested dogtail. That is a grass-seed which fluctuates very considerably in price; sometimes it is fashionable and sometimes it is not. Much seed is sometimes exported. It seems to grow here naturally, and some farmers have found the growth of the seed very profitable. Italian rye-grass has done very well this year, bringing 7s. and 8s. a bushel.

28. I want you to explain to the Commission what market the extension will open up for goods from the north, or for goods from Sandon to the north?—Of course, goods from the north are governed very largely by what is the most profitable system of farming. It is a question of what the farmer considers will pay him best. If he finds it better to grow grain and chaff he will go in for that line of farming. There are always one or two pioneers in farming in New Zealand, and they give a lead as to what is the best system to adopt.

29. What do you say about the adaptability of the Sandon district for sheep-fattening for the northern market in its relation to stores?—The Sandon land has very greatly improved since I went there. Years ago it was covered with flax, toitoi, and fern. It took many years to break it in. It has a clay subsoil. As time went on it was turned over and cropped in various ways. At the present moment it is 50 per cent. better than when I knew it first. When the Sandon district was opened up a number of settlers came from the Hutt who wanted to extend their farms for their sons, and they entered into an arrangement with the Provincial Government to let them have 5,000 acres at £1 per acre. It was arranged by the settlers that they should have 180 acres in open country, 20 acres of bush for firewood, and an acre in the township. Therefore they had three different classes of land for which they eventually paid something less than £1 an acre on account of the delay in settlement from Maori troubles. The bush is still standing there, because they are using it for fencing and firewood instead of cutting it down and burning it.

30. *The Chairman.*] Do you grow any cocksfoot?—We do not grow very much of it. I do not know why, but I think it is because we have not been taught how to.

WEDNESDAY, 24TH MAY, 1916.

Sir JAMES GLENNY WILSON further examined. (No. 19A.)

1. *Mr. Skerrett.*] When the Commission adjourned yesterday you were referring to the question of the development of the northern market. May I ask you whether, in your opinion, that market is a permanent and established market?—I should say it must be an established market. We have evidence of that in the Taranaki District. There they had similar conditions to what we have here. They had a large amount of bush which was cut down and the land used for farming. Even now the demand continues in that neighbourhood for our produce.

2. We have discussed the general nature of the production of the district under consideration. I now want you to state fully the character of the mutual trade which could be developed between this district and the north if a railway connection is obtained at or near Marton?—Well, I must go back then to the business that the farmer does in his own particular neighbourhood—in the Manawatu County. I think it is an axiom in businesses of all kinds that the wisest thing you can do is to spread your risks, and so it is with farming. If a farmer devotes the whole of his farming to one particular product and that product goes down, we can see at once that his income will be very seriously curtailed. At one time I was almost wholly dependent on wool, and when the price of wool fell my income was reduced by half. In the Waitotara district I have known of instances where farmers would give the wool to any one who would shear the sheep and cart it away. It is one of the great benefits of the Manawatu County that we can spread our risks to a much greater extent than the hilly country can. Dairying is largely carried on in our county, and food is an article which is always likely to command a high price. There is always likely to be a demand in the older countries for food as compared with raiment. You can do without renewing your raiment, but you must have food. Butter is a product which, to my mind, might easily cease to develop in the same direction as it is going now. If the Irish people were to stop shooting one another and devote themselves to making butter I think they could supply the whole of the British Empire with that article. The land there is specially suited for carrying on that business. The grazing-land, mostly limestone, in Ireland is well known for its value. Ten years ago there was not a factory in Ireland, whereas to-day there are thousands. If the development in that direction in Ireland takes place, as I expect it will, the demand for our butter will very largely decrease. There is no doubt that the business of dairy-farming is an extremely trying one. The farmer has to put in very long hours, he has to be up early to get the cows in, and he has great difficulty in getting labour. He is practically tied to the business day after day, Sunday and Saturday, for eight months in the year, and therefore as soon as a man is able to get out of that class of farming he does so. The likely trend of farming in our county in the main is that the man who goes out of cows always goes into sheep. He finds that sheep-farming requires very much less work and is profitable. In the Feilding district they have probably one of the most exceptional districts for sheep-fattening in this country. The lower flats of the Oroua are extremely valuable, and they are making a speciality of that class of farming in that neighbourhood. They find it better not to breed sheep there, but to buy ewes elsewhere. They are brought down to