

The poultry plant at Ruakura State Farm is also being remodelled with the object of specially demonstrating the possibilities of poultry-keeping as a sideline on general farms.

Attention may here be drawn to the very imperfect and often quite misleading relation between statements of exports of produce for any one year ending 31st March and actual production in the nearest agricultural year or season. This is due mainly to the period of the official year splitting two seasons. A case in point this year is that of frozen beef. Statistics of exports show a considerable increase in the shipments of this product for the year ended 31st March, 1926, as compared with the preceding twelvemonth, whereas the actual slaughterings of beef in the 1925-26 season of the frozen-meat industry (1st November to 30th June) show a heavy decrease. In this instance large quantities of beef killed in the 1924-25 season, but shipped after 31st March, were credited to the 1925-26 exports. The twelvemonth ending 30th June is a very much better period for the survey of exports and production.

With the obvious passing-away of so much of the virgin fertility of the land and the shrinkage of new areas of fertile country for bringing in, the vital importance of adequate manuring practice in the grassland farming dominant in New Zealand is becoming more generally recognized among our farmers. The Department is closely studying the matter from the scientific and experimental side, while the Government is giving earnest consideration to the wide question of supplies and costs of fertilizers, and proposals aimed at reducing prices to the producer are now under discussion. In regard to legislation, a Fertilizers Act Amendment Bill is being prepared for presentation to Parliament, and greatly improves the existing measure in several directions.

Agricultural education has had a large share of public attention during the year in connection with reports by the Board of Agriculture, the University Education Commission, and Sir Frank Heath respectively. After very thorough consideration, demanded by the important issues involved, the Government has come to the decision to establish an agricultural college of full standing and rank near Palmerston North. While this institution will undertake both higher research work and training for degree standard, it is intended to also make strong features of shorter diploma courses and special short courses for farmers. It is further hoped in time to make the Palmerston North institution a nucleus for other related educational activities.

Preliminary statistics of the census taken this year apparently show that the urban population of the Dominion continues to increase in greater degree than the rural. The best means of dealing with this problem is to maintain agriculture in a strong and prosperous condition. Assurance of a fair return for their capital and work will in this country always find men ready to take up land or carry on in farming. The assurance of such a return involves, of course, problems of great complexity, extending even to international issues in the case of a country depending so largely on its exportation of primary products. Agricultural science in its widest scope, rural finance, marketing systems, incidence of taxation, roading and other transport, postal and telephonic facilities, schooling, and home economics all have their share in developing a strongly based rural community. It will be realized that not only one but many Government Departments are directly concerned, and that the maximum degree of co-ordination is essential.

The part taken by the Department of Agriculture in this extensive work is well presented in the reports of the Director-General and heads of branches, which also form a record of much excellent service. Reference is also made in these reports to various sections of primary production which have not been touched on in my present brief review, but which have their due place in the agricultural organization of the Dominion.

I have, &c.,

O. J. HAWKEN,

Minister of Agriculture.

His Excellency the Governor-General.