

SMALL FARMS SCHEME.

The Small Farms Scheme has now been under the administration of the Small Farms Board for a little over one year, and the results may be classed as satisfactory having regard to the falling prices of dairy-products and to the fact that the fall has not been reflected in the prices asked for land. The main difficulty met with by the Board has been that of acquiring suitable land at prices in keeping with productive capacity.

Small Farm Scheme.

Dairying has been the principal basis of calculation in subdividing land for small farms, but each settler has had the option of developing such side-lines as suited the particular property and his own qualifications. Most settlers, however, have confined themselves almost entirely to dairying.

In view of the state of the dairying industry, however, the Board has recently considered it desirable to give more encouragement to mixed farming or lamb-fattening on a small scale, under intensive farming conditions. This type of farming leaves the settler in a position to increase or reduce his activities from year to year in any particular line according to market fluctuations.

It should not be inferred from this that the Small Farms Scheme has been confined solely to dairying and sheep-farming in relatively large holdings. A number of 5-acre lots has been provided in localities deemed suitable—the settlers to grow fruit, to go in for market-gardening and poultry, and to keep one or two cows for household purposes, and perhaps a few pigs. As examples, the Richmond Block, near Napier (thirty-eight settlers) and the Karamu Block, near Hastings (nineteen settlers) may be quoted. Others have been established in localities where seasonal work is obtainable.

At the beginning of last financial year the number of men settled under the original Small Farms Scheme was 753, of which 265 were “share milkers,” and 488 were settled on individual holdings of the type popularly known as “10-acre farms.” During the year it was found necessary for various reasons to close twenty-five of these small holdings and, in addition, four were removed from the “share milking” list.

The progress made under the administration of the Board is illustrated by the following figures of the position as at the end of May, 1934 :—

Progress recorded.

	Number of Holdings.	Total Area. Acres.
(1) Individual holdings settled up to 31st May, 1934	321	20,495
(2) Blocks in course of development or the development of which has been approved (including Ahuriri Lagoon)	554	35,850
(3) Number of share milkers approved ..	59	..

In addition to the above, the Board has now under negotiation the acquisition of approximately 24,981 acres, estimated to provide 269 holdings.

One of the subsidiary objects of the Small Farms Scheme has been to provide work immediately for unemployed men, apart from those settled on individual properties, and approximately seven hundred men are at present engaged on land-improvement and development work.

LAND DEVELOPMENT.

Satisfactory progress has been made with the development of various blocks under the supervision of the Lands Development Board. As a result of the activities in this connection, an area of approximately 21,600 acres of previously unproductive land has now been laid down in grass, and, upon completion of the development work which has been authorized, some three hundred new holdings will have been created. The total expenditure to the 31st March last on development purposes was £305,000, which amount included the cost of the surface development of twelve blocks and the survey and roading of thirty-four blocks, containing 292 sections where the settlers themselves have attended to the development with assistance from the Board by way of loans.

Land development.