

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL.

Wellington, 18th July, 1934.

THE HON. THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE,—

I beg to submit the following report on the work of the Department for the year ending 31st March last, including the usual divisional reports, statement from the Phosphate Commission, and detailed reports on the activities of the Chief Chemist, the Plant Research Station, and the Veterinary Laboratory.

THE AGRICULTURAL AND PASTORAL POSITION.

In respect to production the season 1933-34 has been quite satisfactory to the farming community. This may be attributed partly to the fact that there is taking place a continuous improvement in the standard of our farming efficiency, partly to the fact that we are now obtaining more freely and more extensively the fruits of past endeavour in such matters as live-stock improvement, drainage, improvement of pastures, &c., and partly also to the fact that the weather conditions throughout the year generally were satisfactory, with the exception of northern parts of the South Island, where drought conditions prevailed—the weather in autumn, winter, and spring generally was relatively mild, and copious summer rains were experienced in the majority of the main districts.

The following are among the outstanding features of the farming industry for the year:—

1. There have been substantial increases in production in both dairy-farming and sheep-farming, although in the latter some of the increase was utilized in the building-up of the Dominion flocks and so is not reflected in the returns of killings for export.

2. Though the season has not been so favourable for grain-growing as the previous exceptionally favourable one, the threshing returns, as yet incomplete, point to the yields per acre being somewhat above the average. For example, the average yield of wheat per acre as ascertained from returns received up to the 24th May was 33·17 bushels, while the average yield for the ten-year period 1923-32 was 31·04 bushels an acre. Although the wheat crop declined both in acreage and yield per acre in comparison with the previous year, the 1933-34 harvest, supplemented by the substantial stocks of wheat in hand from the previous season, provides ample wheat for the normal requirements of the Dominion, and will possibly give a surplus. The average yield of oats based on threshing returns received up to the 24th May was 45·74 bushels, while the average yield for the ten-year period 1923-32 was 40·16 bushels an acre.

3. There has been a substantial expansion in pig-keeping. This expansion is reflected not only in an increase of 32 per cent. in the number of pigs slaughtered, but also in a substantial increase in the number of breeding stock to form the basis of the 1934-35 pig-raising operations. The extent of this increase is not as yet definitely known, but it is estimated to be sufficient to enable the production of pig-flesh to be still further increased substantially if market conditions warrant this.

4. There is a series of gratifying developments which perhaps are not of great significance taken singly, but which, when taken together, seem to constitute welcome evidence that despite difficult and at times even discouraging circumstances the farming community in a wise and foreseeing manner is consolidating and sometimes indeed strengthening its position in important respects that seem likely to be of assistance in the future.

CURRENT TRENDS TOWARDS EFFICIENCY.

Among the developments of the year indicative of a striving after greater efficiency in our farming is the much freer use of certified seed of important pasture plants. For instance, the 1933 harvest of certified perennial rye-grass was an abnormally heavy one; a portion of it was exported; a portion of it was carried over into the 1934 season; but much the greater portion of it was sown on the farms of the Dominion. Certainly a considerable incentive to the much heavier use of the certified seed was its substantially lower price in comparison with previous seasons, but, nevertheless, the certified seed was used in preference to uncertified seed, which was available at a still much lower price.

Another recent development in farming which generally is worthy of commendation is an upward movement relatively in the use of fertilizers. This is indicated by the fact that in