

CANTERBURY.

(J. F. QUINN, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Conditions during the past year have been unfavourable for all classes of farming in this district. During late autumn and spring, conditions were quite unsuitable for cultivation owing to the wet state of the ground, with the result that many crops were sown late and proved a failure owing to the dry weather which continued from October to February.

Sheep-farmers were affected by the drop in the price of wool, although the price of lamb has been fairly well maintained.

Pastoralists on high country had a fair season as regards weather conditions, there being no serious snow losses, and lambing percentages generally were good and wool-weights have been well maintained. All surplus stock from run-country has been selling at very payable prices, in many instances being up to last year's prices.

The dairy industry was badly affected by the drought during the summer months, which caused shortage of feed, resulting in a reduction in the output of butterfat, and with the low prices ruling these settlers are finding it difficult to meet their rent and interest charges, and in many cases it will be necessary to grant further relief by way of remission of rent.

Owing to the long continued drought many settlers were unable to get in winter feed, and as in many cases turnip crops have been a failure, the outlook for the coming winter is not promising.

OTAGO.

(N. C. KENSINGTON, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

So far as the pastoral and mixed farmer was concerned, the recovery of prices for wool and stock for the 1933-34 season gave a buoyant tone to the ensuing season, 1934-35; and, although wool prices dropped by about 50 per cent. and stock prices were easier, the previous season had put the settlers' accounts in a much better position. It also had the effect of showing that the land retained an equitable value from fair prices.

A fairly severe winter was experienced and several of the high-country runs showed losses above the average.

As mentioned, the 1934-35 season showed a drop in prices, principally as regards wool, but at the early part of the season the prospects were good for lambs and surplus stock. Forward sales were made in many cases at fair prices, but, unfortunately, in common with most parts of the Dominion, this district suffered from a dry spell for about three months, and as a result the usual purchasers for store stock were not forthcoming and prices dropped, while farming revenue for the 1934-35 season also dropped considerably.

In North Otago fair wheat crops were harvested and the price appears to show an increase on the previous season, but high winds and the dry spell mitigated against what promised to be a very plentiful yield. The turnip and rape crops in most parts of the district suffered through the dry spell and many failures have been reported. Fortunately, welcome rain fell at the end of February, and further rain in March has given promise of a recovery of feed for the winter.

The dairy-farmer is still in a difficult position, although the past season's prices may show a slight rise on the previous season. Where possible, more mixed farming is in evidence, and a general improvement in the revenue can be expected under this arrangement.

In Central Otago the fruit crop was heavy, following on the disastrous frost of the previous season. Prices were low, and the position of the orchardist remains one of hope and optimism. The prices realized, with the heavy overhead expenses of picking, packing, &c., leave little margin to recover rapidly from the crop failure as generally experienced last year.

SOUTHLAND.

(B. C. McCABE, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Climatic conditions have not been altogether favourable during the past season. The winter was severe and prolonged, and heavy falls of snow in the back country caused considerable losses of sheep.

A hot, dry summer was experienced, and butterfat-production suffered in consequence. This decline in volume, combined with the continued low prices received for dairy-products, has made the position of the dairy-farmer extremely difficult.

Sheep-farmers have experienced a fairly satisfactory season, as, although very low prices were received for wool, the price of fat lambs and surplus ewes has been maintained at a reasonable level.

Grain and grass-seed harvests have been good in many cases, and prices for these lines show an improvement over the last few years.

Rabbits have been more numerous than usual, the dry conditions favouring the spread of this pest, which is becoming an increasingly serious problem in Southland.

Receipts on account of rent and interest showed a further decided improvement.

Further concessions to dairy-farmers on high-priced land have been granted in a number of cases, the low price of butterfat leaving insufficient to meet full charges after living and working expenses were provided for.

A certain amount of club root and blight has been experienced in the turnip crop, but heavy rains at the end of March helped the position considerably, and there should be sufficient feed to carry stock over the winter.