



The Grading of Dairy Produce

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THE necessity for grading dairy produce before export to safeguard the reputation of the national product in overseas markets was recognised toward the end of last century in New Zealand, which was the first country in the world to inaugurate a system of compulsory dairy produce grading. It was begun in 1894, when the Dairy Industry Act provided for the compulsory grading of all New Zealand butter and cheese intended for export. The grading and grade-stamping of butter in accordance with the Act was begun immediately, but though an official inspection of cheese was made, and the manufacturer was supplied with a copy of the grader's report, grade-stamping did not come into operation until six years later.

WHEN first suggested the grading proposal had few advocates and was subject to much opposition. However, the then Secretary of Agriculture, Mr. J. D. Ritchie, foresaw the benefits to be gained from the systematic classification of dairy produce, and despite much criticism the work was eventually undertaken with the strong support of the Hon. J. McKenzie, then Minister of Agri-

culture. It was primarily for educational purposes and to keep dairy factory managers informed of the quality of their produce.

After the inception of grading a gradual improvement in the general quality of butter and cheese became noticeable and those engaged in manufacture began to recognise its advantages. Within a few years a marked improvement was apparent, and many who had been opposed to the system became its most ardent supporters.

The system soon obtained the confidence of the overseas trade, who quickly recognised it as a protection to both buyers and sellers, and for many years the graders' certificates, commonly known as grade notes, have been accepted as the basis of the purchase and sale of New Zealand dairy produce. Competitors also recognised the value of grading and quickly followed suit. Queensland was the first to follow in 1904, then other Australian States, Canada in 1923, South Africa in 1930, and finally the Irish Free State. On the Continent of Europe Denmark began grading in 1906, followed by Sweden, Finland, and other Baltic States; before the Second World War the U.S.S.R. had introduced a grading system.

Since the New Zealand Government introduced its policy of marketing butter and cheese, and since the inauguration of the Primary Products Marketing Department, all butter and cheese for export has been paid for on the grading and classification as determined by the dairy produce grader. During the year ended July 31, 1946, 101,373 tons of creamery butter, 2604 tons of whey