

Premium on Porkers

THE announcement by the Minister of Agriculture of the adjustment of the official pig-meat price schedule to provide for a premium of 1d. per pound on porker-weight carcasses was the outcome of negotiations initiated by the National Pig Industry Council. The policy underlying this decision and the adjustments in the production system which it is hoped it will produce are dealt with in this article by A. Longwill, Superintendent of the Pig Industry, Department of Agriculture, Wellington.



FOR the first time since 1941, when a policy of increasing baconer production for export was embarked upon as part of the war effort and a premium for baconer-weight carcasses was instituted, the situation has changed and an incentive to farmers to produce a higher proportion of porkers has been provided by the payment of a premium on porker-weight pigs. The premium in favour of porkers, which operated from May 15, is 1d. per pound throughout as against the corresponding grade in baconer-weight pigs.

What is the reason for this change of policy in regard to pig meat and how best can its objectives be achieved?

Basis of Policy

Before the war, when New Zealand's pig production was about 1,000,000 carcasses, porkers accounted for 600,000 carcasses and baconers for 400,000. The premium in favour of

porkers under free marketing conditions was usually about ½d. per pound, and under these conditions producers found it financially attractive and convenient, under a feeding system involving dairy by-products, to turn more than half the total pigs off as porkers.

In pre-war years New Zealand exported up to 30,000 tons of pig meat annually, porker and baconer weights accounting for almost equal shares of the total tonnage. However, the porkers suited the highest-price markets of London and the south of England much more nearly than did the baconer carcasses, which were used mainly in Scotland and the north of England. The goodwill built up on the Home market by New Zealand dairy-fed porkers was such that it can be of considerable importance in any effort to rebuild exports on a sound basis.

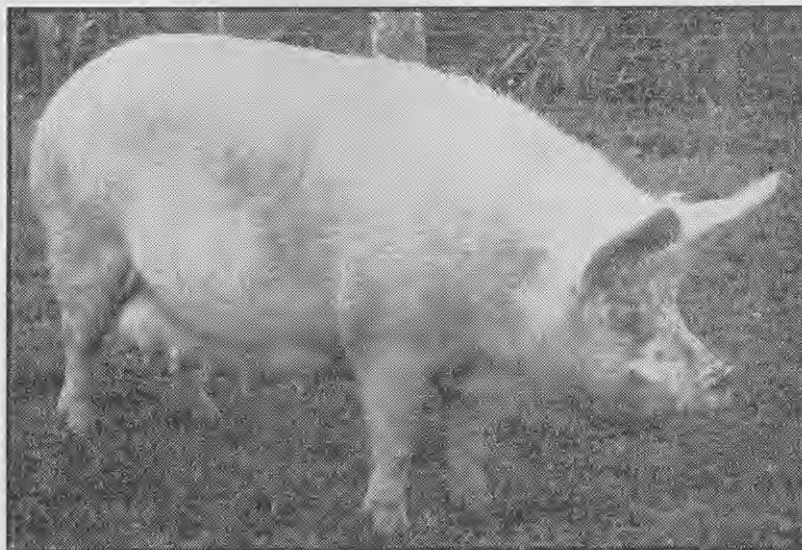
That this is necessary is indicated very clearly by recent export figures. New Zealand's pig-meat exports last year were only 8841 tons, 5749 tons of baconers and 2227 tons of porkers, together with 865 tons of cuts. Most of the baconers were heavy, overfat pigs judged by normal market standards. The average weight of the porkers also tended to be heavier than that normally in greatest demand. It must be remembered that the acute fat shortage in Britain has been largely overcome and the consumer cannot be expected to pay 2s. or more per pound for pig meat which is more than half fat when cooking fats can be bought for 8d. per pound. The result must be that the consumer will become more selective, particularly as far as degree of fatness is concerned. All countries supplying the market are becoming more conscious of this, and those which take the first steps to supply what will be taken up most readily will reap their reward. The overfat baconers exported at present are only harming New Zealand's reputation for pig meats on the Home market.

Porkers do not, on the whole, have the same tendency to overfatness as baconers. However, though porkers are likely to be of acceptable quality the quantity being exported is exceedingly small and British people are seldom able to buy pork. The average annual consumption of fresh pork has fallen to 1lb. per head, or less than a tenth of pre-war consumption.

It is estimated that Britain will have sufficient bacon by 1952 and, as the quality of New Zealand supplies is not, on the whole, as good as that from the other supplying countries, it is obvious that it is wisest for New Zealand, as far as the export market is concerned, to concentrate on porker production.

Rebuilding the Market

As pork is a fresh meat, the market for it is not likely to be saturated as early as the bacon market, and more time is therefore available to re-establish a market for porkers. To do this



[Newline Film Studios Ltd. photo.]

Farmers should plan to have an extra sow mated as soon as possible for November farrowing.