

# EFFICIENCY AND QUALITY IN AGRICULTURE



**D**URING the past 6 months I have had many opportunities of meeting my fellow-farmers in a diversity of activities on and off their farms. It has been a particularly interesting experience to attend in my capacity as Minister of Agriculture conferences of most of the major organisations of the farming industry and to see in

operation the machinery of the several bodies that administer the interests of different sections of primary producers. One of my deepest impressions has been of the calibre of the men taking leading parts in the conduct of the business of these organisations, and the sacrifices of time they are prepared to make toward the advancement of the industry.

## Co-operation of the Industry

When some months ago the producer organisations gave me an assurance of their full support in the prosecution of the Government's increased production plans, I felt that we were on the threshold of a new era in co-operation in our agricultural development. The many instances I have had since of the strength of these organisations within their own spheres and the sound basis on which they are founded have given me new heart to face a period which may contain difficulties that will require clear thinking, mutual good will, and the co-operation of all sections of the industry to surmount.

## Eagerness for Better Husbandry

Our role as a major food-exporting country has been an easy one to play for some years when our total surplus production has been assured of a ready sale. It is a healthy sign that in spite of the comparative ease with which the fruits of the soil can be produced in New Zealand, with its adequate rainfall and equable climate, there is little evidence of an inclination to let Nature do everything for us. Farmers generally are eager to exert extra effort toward better husbandry and increased production, and avail themselves quickly and intelligently of advances in agricultural knowledge developed and tested in our research stations and disseminated by an efficient extension organisation.

## World Markets May Change

Reports of difficulties our representatives have met in Britain in conducting the primary produce price negotiations may have created anxieties in some minds. It may be salutary for us to be reminded after years of maximum demand at high prices for our products that the days of keen competition on the world's markets may soon return and that we may be approaching a period when our customers will be

offered increasing quantities of quality products by competitive sellers. These are conditions of which many of the older men in the industry have experience and wide knowledge that will undoubtedly stand us in good stead should there be a major change in the conditions of disposal of our primary products.

It is unfortunate, perhaps, that though Nature has been bountiful in this country in the conditions of soils and climate she provides favourable to livestock production, her gifts have not been diversified. Our economic eggs must continue to be placed largely in the one basket—the export of livestock products.

Our continued prosperity and the maintenance of our standards of living can be assured only by concentrating on efficiency and quality in production. There is no more discriminating buyer than she who buys for the larder. In times of scarcity food is readily saleable and quantity may assume greater importance than quality. Let quantity be assured, however, and quality becomes the deciding factor.

## Increasing World Population

World population figures have mounted rapidly in recent years and the cultivable area of the earth's surface has decreased. If food distribution problems that have concerned such organisations as FAO in recent years could be overcome and world economy could be geared to the solution, no food-exporting country need be concerned about disposal of surpluses. Although the thoughts of all men who have mankind's welfare, and even survival, at heart must be bent to such a solution, in the meantime we must hold our place in an imperfect world.

## Unused Potential of Farmlands

It is our present duty to use to the full the resources at our disposal. We would be failing in that duty if, while there are peoples in the world with less than the means of subsistence, we did not assure maximum production from our farmlands. I have frequently asserted that our full potential is yet far from being realised, and this conviction has been strengthened by a recent report of an economic survey in my own county of Akitio. This shows that production there could be increased by full application of present agricultural knowledge and improved management methods to the value of nearly half a million pounds. Similar surveys are being conducted in other counties as part of the increased production programme. With the support of the farming community and producer organisations, knowledge we are accumulating of the unused potential of our farmlands can be applied quickly and efficiently. If, with increased quantities, we also maintain a jealous regard for quality, we should have little to fear in the foreseeable future.

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