

FARMING IN CANTERBURY . . .

full. Canterbury producers still gained a premium over their rivals, yet they feared that the margin might tend to narrow and all would be on a uniform level. Their opposition to compulsory Government grading in 1900 was based on this fear.

In 1901 prices for fat lambs on the Addington market ranged from 12s. 6d. to 14s. 6d., but by 1905 they were up to 17s., a price which must have caused much jubilation. The backwash of the world-wide depression in 1908 and 1909 was felt by 1910, when prices had dropped to between 9s. and 12s., but recovery was rapid then and in 1914 the price ranged from 15s. to £1. In 1910 the Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Association called a conference of meat producers, freezing companies, and exporters to discuss ways of improving the overseas marketing of New Zealand meat and to air grievances generally. No particular results came of the meeting, most of the discussion centring round a remit submitted by the Scargill branch of the Farmers' Union, which suggested that a farmers' co-operative company be established to consign and market all New Zealand's meat. The remit and the support given to it are interesting as foreshadowing some of the post-war marketing schemes.

The steady returns and steadily rising prices for dairy produce as well as the rapid advances made in dairying districts in the North Island led some Canterbury farmers to turn more to dairying, especially on the heavier land. The Department of Lands and Survey in its reports always gave an approving nod to any settlement which had started a creamery. Perhaps it was thought that regular milk cheques meant more secure rents. In spite of these exhortations, dairying remained of secondary importance, the number of dairy cows increasing from 36,000 in 1900 to 52,000 in 1910.

The wheat grower did not altogether share in the optimism of his fellows, though there would not be so many farmers after 1900 who depended entirely on wheat. Prices were not encouraging, rising from 2s. 4d. a bushel in 1900 to 4s. 2d. in 1903, dropping to 3s. 1d. in 1905, and picking up to 4s. 7½d. in 1908. From then until the outbreak of war prices ranged from 3s. 9d. to 4s. The South African war gave a boost to oats prices, but this could not be sustained for very long.

Difficulties of Wheat Grower

Shortages of labour and rising wages were held up as reasons for the wheat growers' difficulties. The progress of

closer settlement would have reduced the number of agricultural workers available, as all who could would have taken up land of their own. Between 1900 and 1914 secondary industries did not expand much, so they could not have denuded the countryside. In 1900 the usual wage for a farm labourer was about 20s. a week, with keep. By 1910 this had risen in some cases to 25s., but after that the rise was more rapid.

By 1914 the wheat grower was already beginning to think of some kind of assistance, the duties on wheat and flour, which had lasted from the 1870's, not being much help, but there was a strong prejudice against protective duties on food, and at that time there would not have been any agreement among the wheat farmers themselves.

As with many other things, the appearance of the country did not alter much between 1900 and 1914. More maturity, the rough corners gradually smoothed down, a succession of ploughed and grassy paddocks surrounded by gorse hedges, more plantations—all these were obvious. The countryside was pierced by quiet country roads often between high hedges and bumpy and badly surfaced by today's standards, and along them passed drays, spring carts, and gigs, with an occasional wagon and a traction engine; more rarely a noisy early-model motor-car spluttered along, a forerunner of the changes of the future.

Fruit Crop Estimates for November, 1950

THE following estimates of the fruit crop for November, 1950, in 000's of bushel cases, are provisional and revised monthly for the period November to March and are summarised from information supplied by field officers of the Horticulture Division, Department of Agriculture.

FRUIT	DISTRICT										Total
	Auckland	Gisborne	Hawkes Bay	Manawatu Wanganui	Wairarapa	Nelson	Marlborough	Canterbury North Otago	Central Otago		
APPLES—											
Ballarat	37	7	59	2	1	7	3	8	1	125	
Cox's Orange Pippin .. .	7	3	50	1	1	126	12	16	11	227	
Delicious	11	8	80	2	4	152	24	18	40	339	
Dougherty	19	4	50	—	—	23	1	—	—	97	
Granny Smith	61	3	80	2	3	76	2	2	4	233	
Gravenstein	17	—	30	—	—	53	1	1	1	103	
Jonathan	7	—	40	—	1	242	24	12	32	358	
Sturmer	1	5	150	5	16	334	26	48	32	617	
Other varieties	77	5	124	3	6	139	20	48	46	468	
Total	237	35	663	15	32	1152	113	153	167	2567	
PEARS—											
Beurre Bose	5	1	3	—	—	8	—	—	—	17	
Louise Bonne de Jersey ..	—	—	15	—	—	—	—	—	1	16	
Packham's Triumph	6	—	4	—	—	3	—	—	—	13	
P. Barry	2	1	15	—	1	4	—	1	—	24	
W. B. Chretien	7	—	50	—	—	34	—	2	8	101	
Winter Cole	1	1	65	—	2	31	1	5	3	109	
Winter Nellis	1	—	30	—	—	10	—	2	5	47	
Other varieties	11	1	9	2	—	11	1	7	4	46	
Total	32	4	191	2	3	101	2	17	21	373	
OTHER FRUITS—											
Peaches	57	5	238	1	—	51	6	8	67	433	
Apricots	—	—	4	—	—	1	—	11	130	146	
Nectarines	—	—	20	—	—	1	—	—	18	40	
Plums	31	5	51	1	1	16	2	10	30	147	
Cherries	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	5	11	19	
Quinces	1	—	8	—	—	9	—	—	1	19	

CEREAL PRODUCTION

The change-over to a genuine system of mixed farming and the end of the "bonanza" farming did not take place suddenly. Though the first frozen-meat shipment had left Canterbury in 1883 and 10 years later more than 500,000 carcasses a year were being dispatched, wheat acreages were still very large in some years, the largest of all being in 1891-92 with 279,000. But the area in wheat had begun to fluctuate according to whether farmers directed their efforts toward cropping or fattening, and it was obvious that wheat exports would not again play the part they had in the late 1870's and early 1880's. The effects of the predatory system of "bonanza" farming were felt, however, for some time to come, for yields reached their lowest level in 1891-92, the year with the record area. For Canterbury it was only 23 bushels an acre. Compared with some of the reputed yields 20 or 30 years earlier, this was a very heavy decline.

The recovery following the adoption of a better system of crop rotation is apparent from the averages (for New Zealand) from the six 5-year periods 1890 to 1920:—

YIELDS OF WHEAT

Period	Bushels per acre
1890-91—1894-95	22.2
1895-96—1899-1900	25.9
1900-01—1904-05	32.9
1905-06—1909-10	29.9
1910-11—1914-15	29.4
1915-16—1919-20	26.7

The recovery, especially in the period 1900-03, is very marked, wheat over those years probably being grown on the most suitable land. The use of marginal land tended to bring yields down. By 1910 the trend toward