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THE DISTRIBUTION OF FARMING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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The purpose of this article is to provide a brief description of the pattern of farming in New South Wales as illustrated by the diagram map which is to be found at the back of this issue. The map shows the approximate location and extent of the regions where the chief rural products are produced. Symbols have been used to indicate the centres of production and the relative importance of some of the less significant products.

On the basis of the type of farming carried on, the State may be divided into several regions, the dairying region of the Coast, the merino-mixed farming association of the Tablelands, the region of mixed farming based on wheat growing of the Slopes and eastern portion of the Plains and the extensive strong-wool merino region comprising most of the Plains, the Riverina and the Western Division. The statistical divisions of the State (illustrated in Diagram I) thus provide a convenient basis for describing the different farming regions.

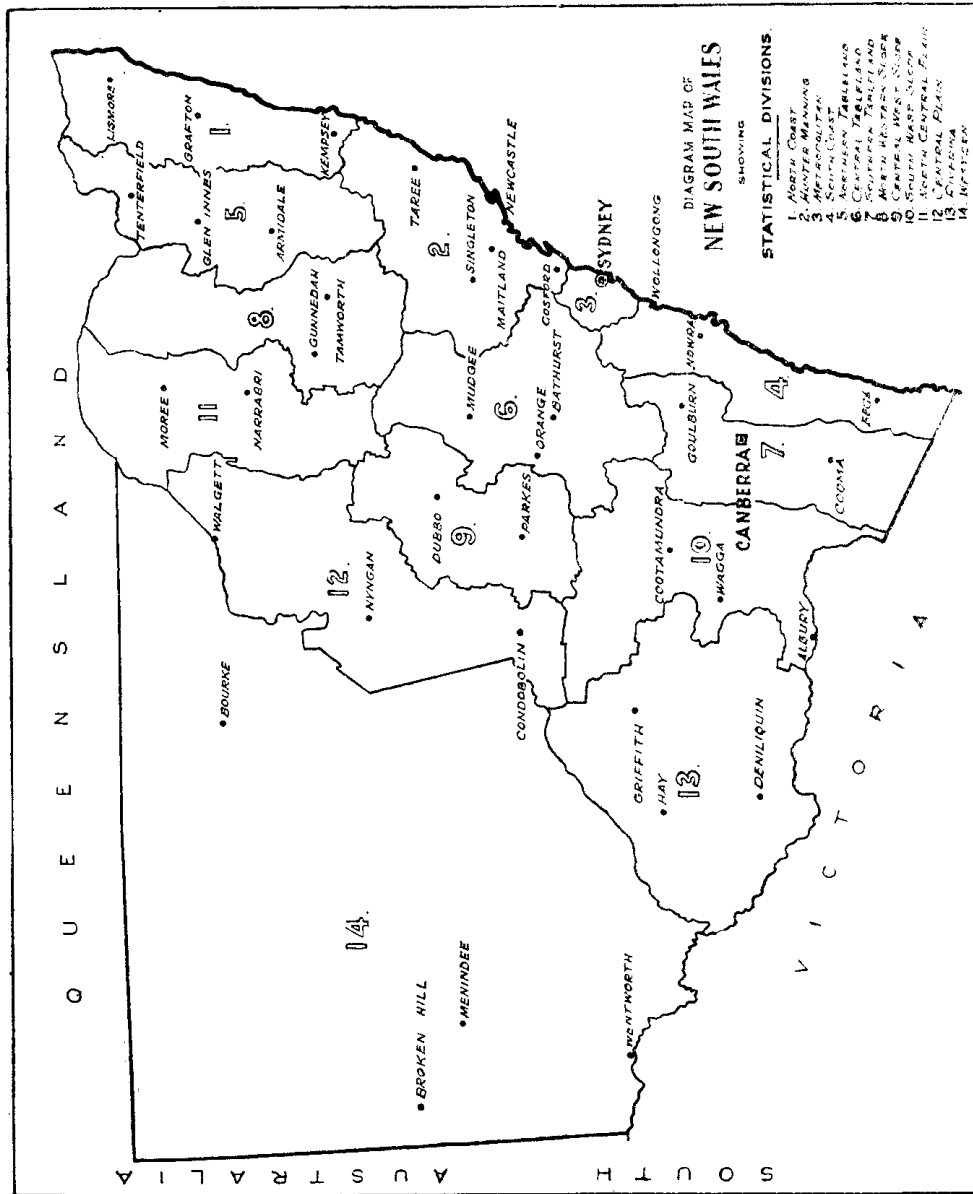
The locations of the various types of farming depend on the level of rainfall more than on any other single factor. Thus within these regions wherever water is available, either from private irrigation schemes along rivers or from large irrigation projects, the pattern of farming changes to a more intensive type.

THE COASTAL REGION.

This comprises a relatively narrow strip of country lying between the seaboard and the Great Dividing Range. The region is characterised by high rainfall and a mild but fairly humid climate; the level of rainfall and temperature decreasing generally from north to south. On the North Coast the mean temperature for the year varies between 66° and 69° F., and the annual rainfall ranges from 34 to 80 inches. On the South Coast the mean temperature is from 60° to 63° F. and the rainfall varies between 30 and 60 inches.

The Coast is well provided with reliable rivers in contrast to the country west of the Great Dividing Range where there are relatively few reliable river systems. The northern rivers are subject to flooding from time to time, causing widespread damage to the surrounding low lying country and to townships which are often built on the banks of the rivers only a few feet above water level.

The coast is the most closely settled region of the State, particularly the northern half. Dairy farms, and farms where dairying is combined with agriculture, predominate. Other important types of farms are used for agriculture, for grazing and for poultry production. The bulk of the State's *dairy production* comes from this coastal belt. Dairying is found throughout practically the whole of the region which is capable of supporting any form of primary production at all.



Broadly the dairy producing country may be divided into three zones. North of Taree to the Queensland border is the chief butter producing area, south of Taree to Moruya (the Milk Zone) is the main source of supply of whole milk to the Sydney market, and south of Moruya to the Victorian border is a small area where butter and, to a small extent, cheese are produced.

Farm management practice varies throughout the region. On the Far North Coast pastures are relied upon almost solely, very little crop feed being grown to supplement grazing. In the Central and South Coast districts, on the other hand, the growing and conserving of crops to supplement pasture feed is practised to a considerable extent. Where crops are not grown on the farm, supplementary feed is often purchased.

Wherever possible, however, *maize* production is combined with dairying as a source either of green feed and/or cash income from the sale of grain. Maize is an important source of cereal green feed in coastal areas. A large proportion of the State's maize grain is produced in this region, the only other area of any importance being the Northern Tablelands.

Pig production is also combined with dairying on many farms. The approximate production of bacon at factories which are supplied from surrounding areas has been used to indicate the relative importance of pig production throughout the area. Fresh pork as well as bacon is produced. A small amount of bacon is produced in inland districts but the larger proportion comes from coastal districts. There is, however, an increasing tendency for pig production to be diverted from coastal to inland areas. This is the result of the increasing development of processed milk production and the consequent decline in skim milk available for pig feed. This trend has been accentuated in recent years by the high price of wheat used for feed.

Cheese is produced in some districts but has decreased in importance over recent years. Most of the State's cheese now comes from the South Coast. Cheese factories are situated at Lismore, Frederickton near Kempsey, and Taree on the North Coast, and at Hexham, Singleton and Richmond on the Central Coast, and at Braidwood, Nelligen, Bodalla, Eurobodalla, Central Tilba, Tilba Tilba, Bega, Kameruka, Moruya and Pambula on the South Coast.

Tropical fruit growing has developed to a considerable extent on the Far North Coast. Bananas are the most important of these and this region contributes the bulk of Australia's total production. Other tropical fruits such as pawpaws, mangoes, and pineapples have increased in importance in recent years. The main centre of production is the Richmond-Tweed district of the extreme North Coast. A less extensive but nevertheless important tropical fruit growing area is found in the vicinity of Coff's Harbour and Bellingen. The country near the mouth of the Macleay River is the only other area of any importance. However, small areas are found along the coastline from the Macleay to the Queensland border.

Production of *vegetables* is usually combined with fruitgrowing on the North Coast. This is the main source of supplies of early beans, peas and tomatoes for the Sydney market. Main producing areas include the Tweed, Bellingen, Coff's Harbour, Macleay, Port Macquarie and

Taree, Maitland, Port Stephens, Wyong and Gosford districts on the Central Coast also supply early vegetables to the Sydney market. In the intensively farmed land of the Sydney Metropolitan Area and adjacent districts vegetables are produced in large quantities. In the Metropolitan Area, production is chiefly from market gardens. In the Gosford, Wyong, Windsor and Richmond districts vegetable growing is often combined with fruit growing.

Further south, the Moss Vale district is an important vegetable growing area. The country just east of the Dividing Range between Mittagong and Braidwood is typical of the Tablelands rather than the Coastal region. The same applies to the Dorrigo district on the North Coast. In addition, vegetables are produced generally around the larger country towns to meet local requirements.

Early *potatoes* are produced on the coast. The main crop potatoes, which provide the bulk of the State's production, are grown on the Tablelands. New South Wales does not produce sufficient potatoes to meet her requirements, relying mainly on imports from Victoria and Tasmania to make up the deficiency. On the coast, potatoes are grown mainly in the Clarence River districts of Grafton and Maclean, in the Dorrigo and Bellingen districts, in the Hunter River district near Maitland and, on a smaller scale in the Moss Vale district.

The coast contributes considerably to the State's total production of fruit. Production of *citrus* is concentrated in the coastal area between Newcastle and Sydney and in irrigation areas the most important of which is the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area. In the coastal region production is centred in the Wyong-Gosford district, the alluvial flats of the Hawkesbury River, the Kurrajong-Richmond-Windsor district and the Metropolitan Area (chiefly Hornsby).

Pome and stone fruits are less important on the coast. Main districts are Richmond, Windsor, Kurrajong, the Metropolitan Area, Picton and Penrose.

Sugar cane is produced in the Clarence, Richmond, and Tweed River districts of the Far North Coast. Cultivation of cane for sugar production is of considerably less importance in New South Wales than in Queensland. Cow cane, a variety of sugar cane, is grown on dairy farms on the North Coast as a green feed for dairy cows.

Lucerne is grown to some extent on the coast although the most important areas are inland. It is usually found on the rich river flats. Small amounts are grown along the Tweed, Richmond and Manning Rivers where it is used mainly as green feed for dairy cows. However, in the Hunter River Valley considerable areas of lucerne are grown for hay or chaff as well as green feed. The Hunter River Valley also produces *grapes* for wine-making. The only other important vine-growing districts are on the irrigation areas of the Murrumbidgee and Murray Rivers.

Due mainly to climatic conditions, *sheep* are found to a limited extent only on the coast. The only area where sheep form an important feature of the farming enterprise is the Upper Hunter River in the country bounded roughly by Merriwa, Scone and Singleton. Rainfall is lower here and conditions are more similar to the Tablelands. *Oats*

are grown for grain as well as for green feed in this country. On the rest of the coast, although oats are cultivated extensively for green feed production, very little is grown for grain.

The coast north of Maitland is an important *beef* producing area. A certain amount of beef is produced on the outer edge of the coast, mainly as culls from dairy herds. Further inland from the coastline, cattle are grazed on larger station-type properties for beef production only, and these comprise the main source of beef production on the coast. Some beef is produced on the South Coast but to a less extent. The beef cattle there are run in association with dairy cattle or are culls from the dairy herd.

The extent of *poultry* production, which has not been indicated on the map, depends on the population of the district. Eggs are produced mainly close to cities and towns which provide the market for the products of the poultry farm. Thus egg and poultry meat production is concentrated in the Sydney area where the large urban population provides the chief market.

THE TABLELANDS.

This region of the State consists of large areas of rugged country as well as extensive plateaux. Thus a relatively small area only is suitable for cultivation. Rainfall ranges from 25 to 40 inches each year, higher rainfall generally being received in the northern portion. Furthermore, the headwaters of the main rivers provide the region with a good water supply.

Farming on the tablelands of the Great Dividing Range is based mainly on sheep and cattle grazing. However, farming is generally of a mixed type, crops such as oats and maize for grain, potatoes, peas, navy beans and, on the western edge, some wheat being combined with the raising of livestock.

On the Northern Tablelands the *sheep* run are mainly fine-wool merinos. Parts of the Central Tablelands are purely merino areas, whilst other parts produce both wool and second-cross fat lambs. The lambs are mainly second-cross produced for export. (Second-cross lambs are produced by mating merino-longwool cross ewes and long wool rams. They are produced on first-class fat lamb country.)

Sheep grazed in the Southern Tableland area are mainly for fine wool production. Some fat lambs are produced as well as wool in the Crookwell-Goulburn-Yass district, around Canberra and Queanbeyan, and in a small area around Bombala.

Beef cattle are found throughout the whole of the tablelands but are more concentrated on the Northern Tablelands which is one of the main beef-producing areas of the State. The Northern Tablelands are also quite important *maize*-producing areas supplying about a third of the maize grain of the State. Maize is produced in the districts surrounding Tenterfield, Emmaville, Glen Innes, Inverell, Guyra, Armidale and Kentucky.

Emmaville, Deepwater, Glen Innes and Guyra are important centres of production of *green peas*. Other vegetables are produced to a small extent but peas account for more than half of the total acreage under vegetables in the Northern Tablelands.

Even larger areas are under peas on the Central Tablelands, whence comes about half of the total production of the State. Production is concentrated in the districts of Oberon, Blayney and Orange, and, to a less extent, Bathurst and Running Stream. The large-scale production of peas, as found in these tableland districts, was developed during the war. The need for large quantities of vegetables for processing for the Services led to considerable progress towards mechanisation of the vegetable industry. Peas were required for canning and the introduction of mechanical pea viners made possible the large-scale production of peas necessary to meet canning requirements.

The Northern and Central Tablelands provide the main source of *potatoes* grown in New South Wales. The acreage planted each year varies, but is usually greater in the Central than in the Northern Tablelands. Guyra is the main potato district of the Northern Tablelands, while smaller areas are found at Armidale and Nowendoc. On the Central Tablelands potato production is greatest in the Blayney, Oberon, Crookwell, Roslyn and Taralga districts.

Stone and pome fruits are also important products of the Tablelands. In this region pome fruits are of greater importance. The chief fruit-growing district is Orange on the Central Tablelands, but fairly extensive areas of fruit are found near Tenterfield, Kentucky, and Uralla, on the Northern Tablelands, and Bathurst, Oberon, Running Stream and Capertee on the Central Tablelands.

Lucerne is grown to some extent on the tablelands. Some is grown as grazing lucerne but the larger part is cut for hay or chaff and sold. Lucerne hay is generally grown on the rich river flats or where plenty of water is available. Main areas are Inverell, on the Northern Tablelands, and Mudgee on the Central Tablelands. On the Southern Tablelands considerable areas are grown on station properties under irrigation.

Although *butter* is produced on farms for home use, comparatively little butter is produced on a commercial scale in areas other than the coast. Butter factories of small capacity are situated at Tenterfield, Tamworth, Blayney and Crookwell. Any other centres of production on the tablelands are relatively unimportant.

The eastern fringe of the wheat belt just touches on the western edge of the tablelands. Oats for grain and green feed and hay are grown mainly in the fat lamb areas.

THE SLOPES.

The undulating nature of the slopes and an annual rainfall of from 20 to 30 inches make the area ideally suited to agricultural pursuits.

The slopes comprise the major part of what is known as the "wheat-belt." Lamb and mutton production is combined with wheat to form the basis of the farming in most districts. The bulk of the State's *fat lambs* is produced on the slopes. In general, the better rainfall areas of the easterly section of the slopes are devoted to the production of export (second-cross) fat lambs, together with wheat. Further westwards and away from the rivers the type of sheep management changes. Fat lambs are produced but they are first-cross lambs (*i.e.*, they are produced by mating merino ewes with longwool rams). Wool

is produced from the merinos and the extent to which wool and meat are produced is largely dependent on the relative returns for these products. The North- and South-western Slopes are important areas of beef production. Cattle are also run in various parts of the Central-western Slopes but beef production is of less importance in this region.

Except for a small area around Tumut, Batlow and Tumbarumba on the South-west Slopes, *wheat* grain is a major product of the entire slopes. Here, too, oats are produced for grain as well as being grazed or cut for hay to a considerable extent.

Extensive areas of *lucerne* are found on the slopes. Production mainly follows the river systems of the Macintyre, Gwydir, Namoi, Macquarie, Lachlan and Murrumbidgee Rivers. A large proportion is cut for sale as hay, but there are also considerable areas of grazing lucerne. The Forbes-Canowindra district is the main source of lucerne hay in the State.

Fruit production is of considerably less importance on the slopes than on the tablelands. However, there are two quite important areas on the South-west Slopes at Young and Batlow. In the Young district fresh stone fruits including cherries and prunes are the chief fruits grown. At Batlow production of apples and pears is concentrated on.

A small amount of *pig* raising is found in the country surrounding Wagga Wagga and Cootamundra where bacon factories are situated.

On the rich river flats near Gundagai and Tumut farming is relatively intensive. As well as fat lambs, oats, and lucerne, maize, butter and vegetables are produced.

THE PLAINS.

Further west to the central portion of the State the country gradually levels out to form the plains which are divided into the North-central Plain, the Central Plain and the Riverina.

The annual rainfall is low and fairly unreliable and the lower courses of the western rivers provide an inadequate and unreliable water supply. Irrigation schemes have intensified the farming in a few areas. Although sheep grazing is the main enterprise, a large proportion of the better rainfall areas are devoted to agriculture.

The western fringe of the wheat belt is found in these regions. The western limit of the wheat belt does not remain fixed from year to year. Depending on the seasons and the price of wheat the western limit of wheat growing fluctuates within a certain area.

In the North-central Plain most of the country is devoted to *wheat-sheep* production similar to the western section of the North-west Slopes. Lamb production is of a "marginal" type, that is, the lambs are first-cross types and the relative importance of wool and lamb production depends on the relative return from the two products at any one time. In general the further west, the more important wool production becomes, until at the western edge merinos are run almost entirely.

The Central Plain is almost entirely devoted to sheep grazing, the western edge of the wheat belt more or less coinciding with the eastern border of this Division. Throughout both the North-central and the Central Plain Divisions *beef* cattle areas are scattered.

A fairly important section of the wheat belt comes within the Riverina Division. Excluding the Irrigation Districts, which will be discussed separately, production in the eastern and south-eastern portion of the Riverina consists mainly of wheat, oats, wool and meat (first-cross lambs and beef). The western half of the Riverina merges into purely sheep country.

From the western fringe of the wheat belt, as it occurs in the plain country, west to the South Australian border is the dry flat country of the Western Division which is sparsely populated and is suitable only for extensive grazing of merino sheep. Wool is the only product of consequence in this vast section of the State.

IRRIGATION AREAS.

Although relatively small in extent, these areas, and the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area in particular, contribute an important part of the State's production.

Main products of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area are rice, fruit, (citrus and stone with some pome), dried fruits, wine grapes, vegetables, fat lambs, wheat and oats. Rice is also produced in the Wakool Irrigation District on the Murray River. Export fat lambs are also raised in this district. Main products of the Berrigan Irrigation District, which is also on the Murray, are fat lambs, wheat, oats, butter and grazing lucerne.

Along the banks of the Murray River are irrigation settlements which produce most of the State's dried vine fruits. Most important of these are the Curlwaa and Coomealla Irrigation Areas near Wentworth at the Junction of the Murrumbidgee and Murray Rivers. Other important centres of dried vine fruits production are Goodnight, Koraleigh, Barham, Barooga and Corowa. Citrus is also produced to a small extent at Goodnight, Koraleigh, Barham and Tocumwal.
