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GENERAL NOTES AND NEWS.

The current season's wheat crop in New South Wales has been officially forecast by the Division at 53,600,000 bushels of grain and 400,000 tons of wheaten hay. These forecasts were based upon conditions and prospects as at 22nd November, 1945.

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A petition addressed to the Governor has been received from growers in the New England district for navy beans to be declared a "commodity" under the provisions of the Marketing of Primary Products Act. This step is a precursor to a poll of producers being held as to whether or not a Marketing Board should be set up under that Act.

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The Fruit and Vegetable Marketing Advisory Committee at a recent meeting decided that an approach should be made to the Commonwealth Government urging that steps be taken to remove fixed price "ceilings" immediately from all fruits and vegetables with the exception of pome and citrus fruits. It was suggested that prices regulations for apples and pears be repealed as from 15th December and in respect of citrus from 15th April, 1946. The Minister for Agriculture has since represented the case to Senator Keane.

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After consultation with the Australian Broadcasting Commission, the market reports issued by the Division have been modified to meet the requirements of the new countryman's session, "The Rural Hour", which was inaugurated on 3rd December. This session is on the air daily from 12.15 p.m. from Monday to Friday on the National Relay, and is supplemented by a 9.30 a.m. "Sunday Session".

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The Chief of the Division recently attended a conference convened by the Water Conservation and Irrigation Commission to discuss possible future expansion of rice production in New South Wales.

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This Division is engaged in the preparation of a series of lectures on "Farm Management and Elementary Agricultural Economics" to be used in connection with the rural training of ex servicemen throughout Australia. The course will consist of forty lectures.

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Representatives of the Egg Marketing Board and the Poultry Farmers' Association came together at a meeting convened by the Chief of the Division on 11th December, to discuss together with Departmental officers resolutions of the recent Melbourne Conference on post-war production and marketing. This meeting was called with a view to suggesting to the N.S.W. Minister for Agriculture ways and means of implementing, so far as this State is concerned, various proposals put forward at that Conference.

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Recent inquiries by the Australian Government Trade Commissioner in India as to the possibilities of India and Ceylon as markets for egg powder of Australian origin are not encouraging as it transpires that ordinarily there are abundant and cheap domestic supplies of fresh eggs. A further factor is the local prejudice against the use of dried eggs which deteriorate rapidly when exposed to the atmosphere.

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N.S.W. butter production for November was 3,295 tons, slightly less than for the previous month, and some 10% less than for November, 1944. Progress total for the first five months of 1945-46 is 12,154 tons, compared with 12,303 tons for the first five months of 1944-45.

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The Federal Agriculture portfolio, established originally for the duration of the war, is to be made permanent. It has up to the present always been associated with the Commerce portfolio.

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The quantity of pigmeats to be supplied to the United Kingdom during 1946-47 under the "long-term" purchase agreement has been fixed at 30,000 tons.

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The budget of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation is expected to be about £1,500,000 annually.

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As the current harvest will be about 50 million bushels short of total home and overseas demands, it has been announced that wheat will continue to be rationed for stock feed during 1946, and that 30 million bushels have been allocated for this purpose. This is a reduction on the quantity available during 1945, but it should prove satisfactory in view of the improved food situation. Other grains and hay will be available, and because of the large milling programme there will be much more bran and pollard available. The revised price of feed wheat will be 4/6d at buyer's siding. Failure of the New Zealand crop means that Australia will probably be sending 5 million bushels to that Dominion.

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