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GENERAL NOTES AND NEWS.

Pome fruit growers in New South Wales have had to contend with one of the worst seasons for years. Hot and dry weather was experienced and wind and dust storms were of frequent occurrence. An official forecast recently issued by this Division places the total State yield of apples and pears at 380,000 and 322,000 loose bushel cases, respectively.

In November, 1944, our final official forecast of the State's wheat production in the current season (1944-45) was for a total yield of 17,978,000 bushels. It has been learned that total deliveries of New South Wales grain to the Australian Wheat Board now total 11,938,000 bushels, which, in addition to an estimated 6,000,000 bushels retained for seed, etc., make an aggregate of approximately 18 million bushels.

The Minister for Agriculture has been giving consideration to the introduction of a docket system in the agents' section of the Sydney Fruit and Vegetable Markets and has convened a Conference representative of the various interests connected with the growing and selling of such commodities. This Conference is to be held on 27th March, 1945.

Because of the shortage of wheat in New South Wales, it has been necessary to import supplies from interstate sources. Up to 14th March a total of 791,442 bushels had been received from South Australia.

A number of questions recently asked in Parliament related to complaints by consumers of the poor keeping quality of eggs now being marketed. At this time of the year, when hot, humid conditions prevail, it is not unusual for keeping quality to be affected. The Egg Marketing Board states that investigations have shown that there is a number of contributing causes, including shortage of labour, transport, inferior shell texture at this stage of the season, and the use of egg washing machines. Research aimed at eliminating certain undesirable features of washing machines, whilst still allowing of their use, is contemplated.

The Vegetable Growers' Association of New South Wales has been examining certain aspects of post-war planning, having regard to the difficulties which are likely to confront commercial vegetable growers when hostilities cease. Discussions have already taken place between representatives of the Association and officers of the Department of Agriculture.

The Fruit Inspector at Armidale reports that on 11th February a heavy hail storm was experienced at Kentucky South and that considerable damage was suffered in about 30 orchards. It is estimated that losses will range from 25 to 90% on the blocks affected.

The Division of Plant Industry considers, as a result of a survey, that the prospects of the vegetable crop during the Autumn months will be generally satisfactory. Prospects have improved considerably in most of the main producing areas following recent rains. This applies particularly to late peas in the Tableland district, French beans, cabbages, cauliflowers, silver beet and sweet corn. Present indications are, however, that some vegetables, notably onions, sweet potatoes and tomatoes, may be in short supply.

Recognising that the meat-producing industry will be confronted with many additional difficulties in the post-war years, representatives of the Graziers' Association, Farmers and Settlers' Association, Primary Producers' Union and Wheat-growers' Union, have recently conferred with a view to discussing plans for the stabilisation of the industry.

Butter production from this State is lagging a fair way behind previous seasons' figures. Production for the eight months to the end of February was only 22,258 tons, compared with 30,240 last year and a normal production of about 30,700 tons.

The main potato crop has responded well to the rains and good yields are expected from the 24,650 acres for which contracts were accepted from New South Wales growers. Good seasons have, in fact, been experienced throughout the Commonwealth and a record Australian production of 800,000 tons is forecast.

Normally three-fifths of the State's prune crop of 2,000 odd tons comes from the Young district. This year, because of a record dry season, only about 60 tons dried weight will come from Young. The Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area crop is likely to be slightly above the usual 800 tons.

For the 32 weeks of 1944-45 (up to February 19, 1945) eggs handled by the N.S.W. Egg Marketing Board totalled 35.5 million dozen, compared with 31.3 million dozen for the same period last year.