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Officers of the Economics Branch recently inspected irrigated farmlands at Narromine, gaining considerable information regarding the economics of irrigation in the Lower Macquarie Valley.

Negotiations are being conducted with the Railway Department with the view to formulating some scheme whereby the quantity of produce in transit to the City Markets could be ascertained. It is also proposed to take the matter up with the Vegetable Growers' Association, as advance information of quantities consigned by rail would need to be supplemented by details of produce transported by road, if the service is to be made fully effective.

Arrangements have been made to enlist the aid of the field staff of the Division of Plant Industry in connection with the Markets Advisory Service recently established by the Division. The Service has proved most useful to growers in enabling them to improve the market get-up of their produce, and under the new arrangement it will be possible for first-hand advice to be tendered to producers through visits from field officers.

An appreciative letter has been received from the Rural Economist, Roseworthy Agricultural College, South Australia, congratulating the Division on the useful service which it is providing in issuing this Review, and on its work in pioneering the use in Australia of a satisfactory farm records system.

PRODUCTION TRENDS IN NEW SOUTH WALES.

ITEMS OF INTEREST FOR DECEMBER, 1946.

The favourable turn to the season which came with the good November rains has not been maintained since, except in a few isolated areas. The rainfall for December was below normal, and such storms as occurred were of a scattered nature. As a result pastures vary in condition from one locality to another, but the drought still remains unbroken over large areas, particularly the West and North-West.

In the main dairying districts of the Far North Coast, conditions are now serious; cattle are dying and hand-feeding is being carried out wherever possible. Comparative production figures for the whole State are as follows:—

						Butter.	Cheese.
						tons.	tons.
December, 1945	...	...	...	...	...	3,936	305
December, 1946	...	...	...	...	...	2,844	269
July-December, 1945	...	...	...	...	...	16,088	1,193
July-December, 1946	...	...	...	...	...	10,950	945

The season just over has been a very poor one for cereal crops. The final official forecast for the wheat crop was for 14½ million bushels of grain and 127,000 tons of hay, from sowings of 4,300,000 acres and 330,000 acres respectively. In some northern districts not enough was harvested to provide for seed this coming season. The present expectations are that there will be an increase in wheat sowings in 1947, but that there may be a further decline in barley and oats.

Maize-growing areas appear to have been among those benefiting from such rain as has fallen recently, and it has been suggested that the area sown is greater than for some years past.

The 1946 sugar cane harvest has now been completed and the tonnages crushed at the various mills have been as follows:—

	Tons.
Harwood	114,900
Broadwater	117,300
Condong	77,500
Total	309,700

Apples and pears are developing normally in most districts, and the crops should be fair to good. However, there have been failures in some districts due to drought last year, and also some recent hail damage. Peaches and other stone fruits show reasonably good promise, but fruit may be small. The prune harvest will be light, the Young district probably yielding only 350 to 400 tons. M.I.A. and Murray River vines are mostly looking well and the dried vine fruit pack should be good.

Egg production has been high so far this season, and Egg Board recordings from consignors and producer-agents for the twenty-five weeks ended 21st December amounted to 32.6 m. dozen, compared with 31.1 m. dozen for the corresponding period of the previous year. However, feed shortages have recently caused increased disposal of hens, and production from now on may reflect this.

Estimates of meat production figures for 1946, based on figures up to the end of November, are given below in comparison with previous years:—

	1944. Actual.	1945 Actual.	1946 Estimate.
	tons.	tons.	tons.
Beef and Veal	139,687	121,277	140,000
Mutton and Lamb	150,182	129,252	125,000
Pigmeats	30,284	25,863	24,000
Total... .. .	320,153	276,392	289,000