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Editorial.

A NEW MARKET SERVICE.

THE State Marketing Bureau of the Department of Agriculture has for many years rendered a useful service to the man on the land per medium of the daily broadcasting programmes which provide information as to supplies and price realisations on the fruit, vegetable, forage and livestock markets. In recent months this service has been improved, and the presentation brought more into line with modern radio methods. But it has long been apparent that something more was necessary—growers require advice on the condition of their products as they arrive on the market, what factors have been responsible for low realisations and what improvements in methods are necessary to cut the losses. The need is particularly apparent in the case of fruits and vegetables, and with the return of officers from the war it has now become possible to arrange for an experienced officer of the Bureau to develop this new advisory service to growers. Regular inspections are made at the City Markets as the produce is opened up for sale, detailed notes being taken as to type of package, grades, uniformity of pack and other features. Advice by telegram will be forwarded to country producer organisations, setting out details calculated to be of help to producers in improving the market standard of their commodities. Brief comment will also be included in the daily broadcasts, and where it is apparent that handling and transport methods have primarily been responsible for poor quality, the matter will be followed up with a view to effecting the changes desired. Co-operation will be arranged from time to time with field officers of the Department in staging demonstrations where necessary, in order that growers might be apprised of the best methods to be adopted in harvesting, grading and packing of fruits and vegetables for market. It is hoped, also, to arrange for the preparation of pictorial leaflets covering these several aspects, particularly in so far as vegetables are concerned. Altogether this new service, when fully developed, should prove most useful to growers, distantly placed as they are from the centre where the produce is sold. The method of “catch-as-catch-can” in preparing commodities for market is of no avail when competition is keen and the supply equals or exceeds the demand. The grower who observes the basic principles gets his reward in £ s. d., and there is no doubt that faulty methods contributed largely to the loss of 440 tons of vegetables which were condemned at the City Markets as unfit for human consumption during the six months ended December, 1945. In any case, inferior consignments have a depressing effect on prices for better-quality lines, and it is hoped that the new market service will in the end redound to the benefit of producers and consumers alike.

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