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## COMMENT ON THE REPORT

K. M. ARCHER

The interest of the Agricultural Economics Society in estimates of farm income and investment is welcome, and it is very useful to have the report of the Society's sub-committee on these and related matters.

I agree with the authors of the report on the need to collect better data on farm costs and investment. The annual "A. and P. form", filled in by all farmers, is generally agreed to be suitable mainly for the collection of detailed statistics of production, livestock numbers and acreage, rather than data on the expenditure of farmers. The alternatives, as the report points out, are to derive additional statistics from income-tax tabulations, or to collect what is needed by sample field inquiries.

Although it may perhaps be possible for the staff of the Taxation Commissioner to extract a little more data from income-tax returns, for statistical analysis, than is already being obtained, it is not considered practicable to obtain all the additional information needed from these returns. The best potential source therefore appears to be sample field inquiries.

It is hoped that an organisation will shortly be established to undertake field surveys in selected country areas throughout Australia, as an extension of the existing organisation within the Bureau of Census and Statistics which is carrying out regular population surveys in the metropolitan areas. If this is done, it could provide a basis for organisation of field inquiries on various rural matters, including possibly farm costs and farm investment. Experience with certain problems of continuous farm sampling has been built up in recent years through the operation of sample wool-clip surveys.

I agree also with the recommendation of the sub-committee in favour of having greater detail in published estimates, and more information on sources and methods. This has been my object in the new annual publication on national accounts which is in preparation, which will give estimates of national accounting aggregates, including farm income, in more detail than in the past and will include some notes on sources and methods.