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GENERAL NOTES AND NEWS.

The decision of the City Council to close the Agents' Section of the Sydney Municipal Fruit and Vegetable Markets on Saturdays for a trial period of three months, commencing 7th June, raised some criticisms from growers' organisations. The Council has indicated, however, that it would be prepared to review the position at any time should circumstances warrant. Portion of the Markets will remain open as hitherto and the Division has accordingly arranged for one of its Marketing Officers to observe and report developments on Saturday mornings for the Minister's information, as a guide to future action.

Under encouragement from the Committee of Direction of Fruit Marketing in Queensland, some twelve fruit growers, it is reported, have undertaken to plant thirty-three acres of land with trees of suitable type from which supplies of timber for fruit cases could be obtained. It is proposed to submit particulars of the scheme to fruit growers' organisations in this State.

One aspect of the implementation of the docket system at Sydney Municipal Markets is the issue of discs and badges to retailers to facilitate identification by agents and to eliminate clerical work in the preparation of dockets. The Minister for Labour and Industry has agreed that his Department shall accept the responsibility for their issue. Owing to shortages of suitable material some delay is expected in the provision of the discs or badges but this Division is prosecuting enquiries with a view to manufacture at an early date.

The Katoomba branch of the New Housewives' Association is concerned at prices charged locally for fruit and vegetables and the fact that supplies from local farms and neighbouring districts tend to gravitate to the Sydney market rather than to meet local demand. As indicated in the October, 1946, Review, the question of decentralising marketing has been taken up with wholesalers and retailers at certain country centres including Katoomba. As a result, a small wholesale unit was established in that City, but, unfortunately, it is not now in operation. The question generally has also been discussed with the Vegetable Growers' Association of New South Wales since this is a phase of distribution in which the Association is becoming increasingly interested.

An officer of the Division visited the Nowra district in connection with a survey of agricultural and land-use potentialities in the northern portion of the Illawarra Region. This survey is being conducted jointly by the Illawarra Regional Committee, the Nowra Municipal Council and this Department in connection with the proposed Shoalhaven Irrigation Scheme.

According to information furnished by the American Consulate-General, official United States crop production figures issued on 1st June, 1947, show a Winter wheat yield of 1,093,071,000 bushels. Based on prospective plantings as reported in March last, a 316,822,000 bushel yield of Spring wheat is indicated.

The Egg Marketing Board is anxious to secure a modification of the decision of the Department of Road Transport with regard to the transport of eggs by road to Sydney from country centres. The Board is pressing for permits to be granted for a minimum period of twelve months in lieu of monthly permits which constitute the present practice. At a conference of representatives of the Railway Department, Department of Commerce and Agriculture, Egg Marketing Board and this Department, it was decided to grant the Board a permit covering a three-months period, 1st July-30th September, 1947, during which time the problem of transport of eggs from country centres would be the subject of further investigation as between the Railway Department and Egg Marketing Board.

The Commonwealth Government has decided to continue the Potato Contract System for a further twelve months period from November next. This decision is expected to have some bearing upon the future operations of the recently constituted Potato Marketing Board of New South Wales.
