Conclusions.

It seems then that further expansion of fat lamb raising in Australia will depend largely on the relative returns from alternative enterprises such as wool and wheat. If the fat lamb industry remains as profitable as it has been during the war, production will continue to expand. That it shall remain as profitable will depend on the demand both at home and abroad for our lamb. Some increase in demand in Australia will result if there is a rise in population. However, expansion of markets overseas would be the means of providing a stable basis for a larger fat lamb industry in Australia.

Acknowledgment.—In the preparation of this article, information compiled by the Commonwealth Bureau of Agricultural Economics has been freely drawn upon.

AUSTRALIAN EGG INDUSTRY CONFERENCE.

HELD IN SYDNEY ON 12th-14th NOVEMBER.

The Commonwealth-wide conference on post-war stabilisation of the Australian egg industry, convened by Dr. H. J. Hynes, was held in the conference room of the Department of Agriculture, Sydney, on 12th-14th November. The following were present:—

Messrs. H. Souter, R. C. Blake and C. W. Sayers (Commonwealth Egg Controller's Office).
Mr. J. Richardson (Commonwealth Department of Commerce and Agriculture).
Dr. H. J. Hynes and Mr. E. Hadlington (N.S.W. Department of Agriculture).
Messrs. A. A. Tegel, N. D. Carter, R. Harrison, G. L. C. Brocklehurst, E. F. Whitbread and W. R. Whiting (N.S.W. Egg Marketing Board).
Mr. P. Ryan (Victorian Department of Agriculture).
Messrs. H. Cotton, R. E. Huggins, C. A. Hurst, C. Sleigh, S. A. Outerbridge (Victorian Egg and Egg Pulp Marketing Board).
Mr. H. K. Lewcock (Queensland Department of Agriculture and Stock and Queensland Egg Marketing Board).
Messrs. C. J. Nielsen and O. M. Dart (Queensland Egg Marketing Board).
Mr. C. F. Anderson (South Australian Department of Agriculture and South Australian Egg Board).
Mr. G. K. Baron Hay (Western Australian Department of Agriculture and Western Australian Egg Marketing Board).
Mr. W. L. Hoops (Western Australian Egg Marketing Board).
Mr. F. W. Hicks (Tasmanian Department of Agriculture).
Mr. T. M. Young (representing the Tasmanian poultry producers).

Agricultural Council Decision.

In his opening remarks the chairman (Dr. Hynes) drew attention to the decision of the last meeting of the Australian Agricultural Council held in August, 1946, in the matter of egg industry stabilisation, and stated that the report and recommendations of the Standing Committee of Agriculture on this subject were adopted by the Council, except for a slight alteration, as follows:—

Aspects surrounding the production and marketing of eggs in the post-war period were considered by the Agricultural Council at its twenty-sixth meeting, held in Sydney in February, 1946. At that meeting the Council unanimously endorsed the principles underlying the recommendations of the Lapstone Conference of State Egg Marketing Boards governing the orderly marketing of eggs on a Commonwealth-wide basis through the medium of a Federal company composed of members of State Egg Marketing Boards. It was also agreed that, where State legislation was deficient to give effect to these marketing principles, States would introduce the necessary amending legislation to existing marketing acts.

Since that meeting of the Council, difficulty has been met by certain Egg Marketing Boards in implementing these recommendations, and the Standing Committee draws the attention of the Council to the position as it exists at present in the various States, viz.:—

New South Wales.—The Egg Marketing Board has failed to secure the endorsement of the poultry industry to the proposed central marketing authority. An amendment to the State Marketing Act would be necessary to enable the New South Wales Board to become a member of the company, and the Minister for Agriculture has advised the Egg Marketing Board that legislation will not be introduced unless he is assured that the producers are in favour of any such amendment.

Victoria.—An amendment to the State Marketing Act is required. The necessary amending legislation has been passed by the Legislative Assembly, but consideration of it was deferred by the Legislative Council, which will not meet again until early in October. The industry in Victoria is in favour of the amending legislation.

Queensland.—While the Queensland Government endorses the scheme, the Queensland Egg Board has indicated that it is not prepared to endorse the original marketing scheme through a central authority unless such scheme is embraced by New South Wales. It would be necessary to introduce amending legislation to the existing Queensland Act in order to provide for the marketing of eggs through a central organisation.

South Australia.—The South Australian Government and Egg Marketing Board have endorsed the Lapstone scheme for the marketing of eggs through a central authority. Existing legislation in this State meets the position.

Western Australia.—The Western Australian Government and Egg Marketing Board adhere to their previous endorsement of the Lapstone proposals. Existing legislation will enable these to be implemented.

Tasmania.—The Tasmanian Government has passed marketing legislation, and an application has been made for the setting-up of an Egg Marketing Board. It is understood that an amendment to one section of the Act would be necessary to enable the Board to participate in the central marketing scheme, and the Tasmanian Government would be agreeable to consider the introduction of such amending legislation.

The Standing Committee adheres to its previous recommendation regarding the necessity for regulating the marketing of eggs through a central authority, embracing the following principles:—

(*a*) Control of eggs by the central authority whether by ownership or otherwise.
(*b*) Uniform price throughout Australia.
(*c*) State Egg Boards to be responsible for local marketing; and
(*d*) State Egg Boards to arrange for the handling, processing and export of eggs under direction from the central authority.

The Standing Committee, however, points out that under the scheme as proposed, there will be difficulties in arranging finance in the event of production being so great that the whole of the surplus cannot be absorbed by the export market, or of the central authority being unable to handle successfully the whole of the eggs coming forward in Australia. In this event consideration would have to be given to control of production.

The Standing Committee is of the opinion that, unless some plan embracing the principles set out above is adopted immediately after the expiration of the National Security Regulations, there will be chaos in the industry, a collapse in prices to at least the net Australian realisation on export of approximately 1s. 4d. per dozen f.o.b., which returns to the producer approximately 1s. per dozen at the farm, and a breakdown in the operation of the State Egg Marketing Boards because of their inability to finance their operations without Government guarantees.

Unless uniformity can be obtained to enable the central company known as "Egg Boards of Australia Limited" to operate with the necessary financial backing as from the 1st January, 1947, the Standing Committee recommends that the Department of Commerce and Agriculture be requested to examine means whereby a system of marketing similar to that now in operation under National Security Regulations may be continued for at least another twelve months. In view of the many aspects involved, this recommendation must be implemented unless the New South Wales egg producers advise their Government by the end of this month (August) that they are in favour of the New South Wales Egg Board becoming a party to the Lapstone scheme.

(The Agricultural Council noted a reservation by New South Wales that that State was not wholly in favour of all the proposed functions of the central authority but would indicate its attitude after a poll of growers had been held in October, 1946; in the meantime, the Commonwealth to explore the possibilities of alternatives regarding control of exports and financial aspects of the proposed scheme.)

Since the meeting of the Agricultural Council, action along two lines has taken place: (*a*) A conference of representatives of egg marketing boards and Agricultural Departments of N.S.W., Victoria and Queensland was held in Melbourne on 10th-11th September to consider an Australian egg equalisation plan, this as an alternative scheme to "Egg Boards of Australia Ltd."; and (*b*) the Commonwealth Controller of Egg Supplies prepared and circulated an extensive report on the present egg control plan and possible alternative schemes for consideration following lapse of National Security Regulations on 31st December, 1946.

Egg Boards of Australia Ltd.

In discussion on the present position of, and attitude of States to, Egg Boards of Australia Ltd. (a company registered in Sydney some months ago, the agreement between State Boards and the company, however, not having been signed) it was apparent at the Sydney conference that neither State departments nor egg marketing boards were unanimously in favour of the proposal, largely because of the wide powers accorded the company under the draft prospectus. Under this plan, all eggs falling within the jurisdiction of State boards would be sold to the central company which would decide as to how and where the commodity was to be marketed. Each board would become an agent of the company, taking instructions from the central directorate. Strong objection was voiced in certain quarters to this scheme on the

score that boards would then cease to act as principals in the marketing of eggs produced in their respective States, as required by existing legislation.

The newly-elected Egg Board of New South Wales pointed out at the conference that it was firmly opposed to Egg Boards of Australia Ltd. The Queensland Board was likewise opposed, while the Victorian Board much preferred the alternative, equalisation scheme.

Australian Egg Equalisation Committee Ltd.

Following the discussions in Melbourne in September, arrangements were made by the Victorian Egg Board for draft memorandum of association, articles of association and agreement to be prepared by the Board's solicitors in connection with the proposal to set up a company, "Australian Egg Equalisation Committee Ltd." These were available for examination at the Sydney conference, and were amended during the course of the discussions. The basis of the equalisation scheme is as follows:—

1. The Committee to purchase from each State board the entire egg surplus over immediate local requirements in shell, the boards to be untrammelled in the disposal of all eggs in shell for immediate local consumption.
2. Surplus eggs, whether for export, pulp or winter storage, to be handled by the boards at the direction of the Committee. The boards would thus act as agents for the Committee in dealing with the surplus, and would receive allowance and commission for the handling and processing thereof.
3. An equalisation charge per dozen to be imposed on total production at a uniform rate throughout Australia, such moneys to be collected by the boards and remitted to the Committee which would use them for equalisation of price and costs of administration.
4. Uniform wholesale prices for eggs to operate throughout the States on a basis determined by the Committee subject to any price control existing.
5. The Directors of the Committee to comprise a representative of each State egg board together with one appointed by the Commonwealth Government.

Conclusions of Conference.

Conference agreed that once the revised prospectus of the proposed Equalisation Committee had been prepared, following further consultation with the solicitors, each State egg board should be provided with a copy of the documents for final consideration and adoption. Messrs. C. A. Hurst and S. A. Outerbridge, of the Victorian Egg Board, were appointed a subcommittee to consult further with the solicitors in regard to amendments adopted by conference. Messrs. A. A. Tegel and W. R. Whiting, of the N.S.W. Egg Board, were appointed a subcommittee to confer with the Commonwealth Bank in regard to financial aspects of the scheme. Most boards favoured the scheme.

It is anticipated that the final draft of the proposals will be ready for consideration by Commonwealth and State Ministers of Agriculture at the next meeting of the Australian Agricultural Council, possibly in January, 1947.

It was decided that the Commonwealth Government should be requested to transfer to the Equalisation Committee, when formed, surplus funds under the control of the Egg Controller.

Conference recommended that costs involved in bringing the equalisation scheme to fruition should be borne equally by the several egg marketing boards in Australia.

Finally, it was resolved by egg boards at the conference that a communication should be sent to the Commonwealth Government requesting extension of operation of the present egg control scheme till 30th June, 1947, pending finalisation of the industry's equalisation plan for marketing of surpluses under producer control.

Mr. Outerbridge was appointed secretary to act on behalf of State egg boards in attending to details incidental to finalising matters for presentation of the scheme to the Agricultural Council.

H.J.H.

FARMERS' LICENSING ACT—SOUTHERN RHODESIA.

With a population of approximately 85,000 Europeans and 1½ million natives and an area of about 150,000 sq. miles, Southern Rhodesia is essentially a primary producing country, farming and mining being among its principal activities. Tobacco is its main agricultural export, but small quantities of beef and pig products and other produce are exported.

A delegate from Southern Rhodesia, the Hon. H. V. Gibbs, attended the recent conference of primary producers held in London in May of this year, as a representative of the Rhodesia National Farmers' Union, and it is through his courtesy and that of Mr. R. C. Gibson, General President of the Primary Producers' Union of New South Wales, also a delegate, that a copy of the Farmers' Licensing Act of Southern Rhodesia is available for review.

In the course of his remarks at the conference, Mr. Gibbs stated that the National Farmers' Union is a compulsory union and the only officially recognised body of farmers in the Colony, with which the Government negotiates all agricultural policy. Some few years ago, it appears, the Government was requested by a majority of farmers to introduce the Farmers' Licensing Act under which membership and subscription to a National Farmers' Union became compulsory. In continuation, Mr. Gibbs added, the Union, since it has been able to speak with one voice on behalf of all farmers in the Colony, has been the medium through which certain agreements have been negotiated with the Government to stabilise the farming industry over a period of years in the local market.