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Building Expansion.

Permission was recently given to proceed with the Tamworth and Lidcombe buildings, and was promptly acted upon. Work at Tamworth is being expedited as this floor will be urgently needed for extensive pulping and refrigeration. At Lidcombe, a contract has been let for levelling the site, and here, too, every effort is being made to facilitate an early start on the building. The recent steel strike, however, will prevent the structure being ready for the forthcoming flush season. It is anticipated that temporary premises will shortly be more freely available, and by the 1946-47 season it is confidently expected that there will be full relief from congested floor handling operations, especially in the receivals section.

Conclusion.

In 1945-46, production, despite curtailment from feed shortages, will show a substantial increase on the pool now under review. Forecasts for 1946-47 vary, but a further increase in production must be provided for.

GENERAL NOTES AND NEWS.

The Australian Broadcasting Commission has received letters from numbers of listeners containing complimentary references to the value of the market report supplied by this Division which is included in the "Rural Hour" broadcast. This session was inaugurated late last year and is "on the air" between 12.15 p.m. and 1.15 p.m. each week day.

Millet crops in New South Wales in 1945-46 are expected to yield much better than last year when drought affected production. An official forecast by this Division places prospective yields of broom millet fibre this season at 21,700 cwt. compared with a recorded yield of about 9,500 cwt. in 1944-45.

The Minister for Agriculture proposes to take the necessary steps to provide for an increase in the number of elected (producer) representatives on the Egg Marketing Board from three to five. This is considered desirable owing to the extension of the area controlled by the Board, the large increase in production in recent years and the magnitude of the Board's business. The next ballot for the election of producer-representatives will be held in October of this year.

The Queensland Department of Agriculture has under consideration the question of instituting a system of collecting, recording and broadcasting prices of primary products for the benefit of producers in that State. The Assistant-Director of Marketing, Department of Agriculture, Queensland, who was recently in Sydney, was afforded every opportunity of investigating this Division's service in that connection which has now been in operation for many years.

At a poll held on the 22nd March, growers of navy beans in New South Wales cast an overwhelming vote in favour of the establishment of a Navy Bean Marketing Board, under the provisions of the Marketing of Primary Products Act. Arrangements are now in train for a ballot to be conducted for the election of producer-members to the Board.

A meeting of the Fruit and Vegetable Marketing Advisory Committee appointed by the New South Wales Minister for Agriculture, was held on 27th March to consider proposals submitted by the New South Wales Fruit Shopkeepers' Association that a Committee, representative of the various trade interests should fix the wholesale prices of fruit and vegetables. The suggestion was that prices could be fixed weekly, twice weekly or as might otherwise be determined. A resolution to this effect moved at the meeting was rejected but a motion in the following terms was subsequently carried unanimously:—

“That the present system of marketing of fruits and vegetables which allows of such wide fluctuation in price over a short period, as now occurs, is unsatisfactory and demands investigation, and that this matter be referred to the various organisations represented on the Committee for consideration.”

Officers of the Department took part in discussions at a Commonwealth-wide conference of officials in Melbourne early in April, when post-war production and marketing of wheat, potatoes, and grains other than wheat were dealt with. Reports and recommendations from the Conference were forwarded for consideration by the Standing Committee of Agriculture and the Agricultural Council which met later in the month at Canberra.

Commonwealth and State authorities are at present co-operating in a survey of the apple and pear industry in all States. The survey will cover such matters as existing acreages and tree numbers, tree health, proportion of non-bearing trees, present and likely future yields, age of trees, and replanting policy.

An officer of the Division attended a Commonwealth-State Conference held in Melbourne on March 26th and 27th to consider horticultural planting policy in relation to War Service Land Settlement. The acreage considered available in the light of the market outlook for the various types of fruit was set out in a submission drafted by the Commonwealth Bureau of Agricultural Economics, and States put forward their views on the acreages within these totals for which they had suitable land and settlers available.

As a result of the trend towards the production of fat lambs, fewer merino sheep are now being pastured in Australia than for many years. The quantity of merino wool grown this season is estimated to be 2,197,160 bales compared with 2,693,000 bales in 1938-39. By way of contrast the crossbred clip is likely to be about 693,840 bales compared with 590,000 bales in the last pre-war year.

In the course of an address to the Annual Conference of the Wheatgrowers Union the Minister for Agriculture, Mr. Graham, referred to the proposal to establish country killing works and asked producers of stock to co-operate by supporting their local slaughtering centre. He revealed that the building of 70 new refrigerated railway trucks was planned to aid food production.

During the war, and particularly during 1944, mortgages and overdrafts of primary producers have been reduced by more than £60,000,000. Statistics show an increase in the income of primary producers in every range from £250 upwards. (Statement by Federal Attorney-General, Dr. Evatt.)

Export wheat in Australia is now worth 10s. 4¾d. a bushel bagged basis, on trucks at ports.

In a message to a special Senate investigating committee the President of the United States, Mr. Truman, said that as a result of a careful review of the entire world wool problem it appears that it will be desirable, from a national viewpoint, to have the Government absorb losses on sales of domestic wool rather than raise additional trade barriers against imports. Foreign wool is at present underselling the American product after paying tariff duties. Executive agencies are now sounding out interested foreign Governments concerning their willingness to enter into an international agreement "to provide for a more unified supervision of world wool marketing and price policies."

SALES OF LIVESTOCK AT HOMEBUSH, SYDNEY

March, 1946.

SHEEP.

Increased Numbers Yarded.

Improved supplies of sheep and lambs were available during March, when the yarding increased by 54,119 head on the previous month's offering, to a total of 240,391 head. Despite this increase the supply of mutton and lamb was short of trade requirements. Some indication as to the supply position in the past is apparent in the five-year average March total for the period 1941 to 1945, which was 341,641 head.