

351. But not for butter?—No, not for butter.

352. Probably they have not come into use for that purpose?—No, I do not think they have used them.

353. *The Chairman.*] Do you look forward to a large increase in the export of dairy-produce?—I am hardly in a position to speak on that point. The annual trade returns for the Port of Lyttelton show last year's increase in value as £22,346; the value of dairy-produce exported for 1888 was £30,127; for 1889, £52,473.

Mr. A. J. MCGREGOR, M.H.R., examined.

354. *The Chairman.*] We know that you are from Akaroa, and that it has been the great centre of dairy industry for a long period?—Yes; I have had experience for about twenty years in Akaroa.

355. We are anxious that you should give us any information you possess as to the best means for fostering the industry and for arranging for satisfactory accommodation at the harbours?—My knowledge is principally in regard to cheese-making at Akaroa. We make every year about 800 tons of cheese on what is known as the Cheddar system. It has not been a profitable industry for the last two or three years owing to the lowness of price, and that is to some extent caused by the inferiority of the quality. I think the reason for what I call the inferiority of the quality, or what should more correctly be called the want of uniformity, is that butter is now being turned out by the dairy-factories and by people who give more attention and skill to the manufacture of the article. The most of the makers down in Banks Peninsula make their cheese exactly as their grandfathers and grandmothers did. Another reason, I think, for the poverty of the quality of the article is the depreciation of the breed of cattle. Sufficient attention has not been given to getting the right sort of dairy-cows or the sires of dairy-cows—the right sort of bulls. There is also another matter which I think is rather an important one—the extraordinary variety in the colour and size of cheese. I may say that we depend now entirely on the export market. The local market for cheese is Dunedin or Christchurch. We sell to the merchants of those places for export either to other colonies or London. The great variety of shapes, weights, and colour has been found a great drawback to the sale of cheese on the London market. I think it is very desirable that in the larger bays on the Peninsula dairy-factories should be established. From the hilly nature of the country and the bad roads it is difficult to get milk to any common centre. At the bays known as O'Kain's, Le Bon's, and Pigeon Bay there are quite enough settlers and cows to warrant the establishment of factories, and it is very important that a Government expert should make visits to the different settlers and give them instruction in the most modern and scientific way of manufacturing the article. In some of the dairy-farms the appliances are of a very primitive description, and the buildings are hardly suitable for the production of first-class goods. At present the price is not a paying one, and there is a tendency for dairy-farmers occupying 400 or 500 acres to sell off their cows and go into sheep-farming. I have little doubt that there is no part of the colony better suited for dairy-farming and for growing grasses for cattle-feeding than Banks Peninsula. We can run a larger number of cows per acre than in any other part of the colony.

356. What grasses are generally used in your district?—Almost in every case cocksfoot. Of course the clover comes naturally; we do not sow clover.

357. You mentioned that the cattle generally are inferior at Akaroa?—I do not say inferior, only not so good as they might be for dairy purposes.

358. What cattle do you recommend should be introduced?—Ayrshires. More care should also be taken in the winter feeding of cattle. A large number of them die during the winter.

359. Are we to understand that the feed there is grass alone?—Yes, grass alone. There are hardly any roots at all. I think it very desirable to introduce root-crops.

360. That would provide winter feed?—Yes, it would provide the winter feed that I refer to.

361. What is your opinion about the system of grading cheese?—I think it would be a desirable thing to do.

362. Do you think that an offer by the Government of any bonus for the production of good cheese would assist in developing the industry?—I think that is very doubtful. What would develop the industry most of all is a higher market price, which would make it worth one's while to go in for the industry. I do not think there is much in the system of Government bonus.

363. You say in your evidence that a Government expert should visit the district?—Yes.

364. What class of expert?—One who has a special knowledge of cheese-making.

365. You consider that the farmers of Akaroa would receive any suggestions?—Yes; I am sure they would. They are anxious to do so. An application was made some months ago to the Government with this object in view. They find they are falling behind in the race, and simply as a matter of self-preservation they find that they must do something. They look to expert information as being able to assist them. I made the application for them.

366. How do you send in your produce?—The produce is all packed in wooden cases made of white-pine, and containing about two or three large-sized cheeses. Of the smaller size cheese there would be five in a case.

367. It is sent away by steamer?—Sent by steamer to Lyttelton for shipment to London, or for consumption in Dunedin. There are never more than two cheeses put in one case for shipment to London.

368. What is the range of size?—They range from 10lb. to 60lb.

369. What is your opinion of the best size?—The best size for the London market is about from 50lb. to 56lb.

370. *Mr. Walker.*] Are they shipped by the producers or by the storekeepers?—They are generally shipped by the storekeepers, but recently many of the farmers have taken to shipping