

to assess the true position, as the demand, owing to high spending-power and the absence of alternative food commodities, is considerably above pre-war. Whereas a pre-war price of 3s. per dozen wholesale drastically decreased demand, the same price has now a very moderate effect. Even with supply materially increased over pre-war levels, the market would still be seriously under-supplied during autumn and winter.

The payment of 3d. a dozen is largely a neutralization of marketing costs. Previously producers selling eggs locally have incurred negligible marketing expenses but gained the full wholesale or retail price, whereas to send eggs to egg-marketing areas has involved transport costs and service commissions. In practice, therefore, the 3d. a dozen subsidy has not greatly increased the producer's financial return. What it has greatly improved is the national distribution of eggs. Fewer reports that eggs are plentiful in country areas while city consumers have been forced to go without indicate that the subsidy has achieved its purpose.

QUANTITIES

The following figures indicate the increase in the quantity of eggs passing through marketing areas :—

	Dozen.
Year to 31st March, 1944	7,448,491
Year to 31st March, 1945	10,850,528

Eggs used in Wellington contribute substantially to these totals, for, since Wellington is a relatively non-producing area, eggs have been transferred to it in large quantities from other pools or marketing areas throughout the Dominion. These transfers to Wellington are as follows :—

	Dozen.
Hamilton	13,320
Auckland	42,150
Tauranga	48,180
Gisborne	41,370
Hastings	111,780
New Plymouth	137,970
Wanganui	97,950
Palmerston North	86,340
Carterton	210,660
Blenheim	32,017
Christchurch	442,830
Timaru	71,940
	1,339,507

Any actual increase in production over recent years is reflected most noticeably in the North Island. Whereas the South Island was once the granary of New Zealand and grains suitable for poultry-feeding were more readily and cheaply available there than in the North, to-day the importation of poultry-foods has placed the North Island producer on a more equal basis. However, reliance on imported grains, while responsible for the increased production of eggs in the areas where they were most needed, this year proved a source of deep concern to poultry-keepers. Cessation of shipments on account of drought in Australia threw the industry back on local grains at the beginning of the New Zealand harvest. New Zealand's own grain harvest, an expected record, was fully a month late, so that poultry-producers were living from hand to mouth and using any alternative foods available. This threw a large number of birds into early moult and retarded the young stock, reducing the normal seasonal flow of eggs and further aggravating shortage. Though consumers in consequence had to be rationed more heavily than was expected, the public in general appeared to appreciate the difficulties of the situation.