

1928.

NEW ZEALAND.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1927-28.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

SIR,—

Department of Agriculture, Wellington, 15th July, 1928.

I have the honour to forward herewith, for your Excellency's information, the report of the Department of Agriculture of the Dominion for the financial year ended 31st March last.

The New Zealand agricultural year of 1927-28 may be fairly described as outstanding, the period having been marked both by increased production of our primary staples and enhanced market values for the produce. This dual movement was reflected in the Dominion's exports, which increased substantially in volume and value, the latter increment approaching nine millions sterling. The season's results are all the more remarkable in that they were achieved despite the handicap of abnormally drouthy weather conditions experienced for a more or less lengthy period during the main season in several of the principal dairying and fattening districts. The producing situation was restored by a very favourable autumn, to which the affected farming industries responded in a manner characteristic of this country with its great natural advantages.

A very satisfactory account can be given of almost every branch of farming. On the pastoral side our sheep stocks increased by over one and a third million head during the year, and now stand at the highest numerical level in the Dominion's history. Wool-production naturally followed this upward movement, and growers were further favoured by a market of surprising strength, which increased their returns by several millions. With a record lamb crop to work on the frozen-meat trade established a new peak in this section. Here again good and advancing prices for fat stock ruled during the season. With the help of pasture top-dressing and other favourable influences, there seems no reason why our flocks should not reach the thirty-million mark in the near future.

Cattle, apart from dairy cows, registered a slight decline in the last enumeration, but the output of beef for export showed remarkable recovery from the drastic shrinkage of the preceding season. With the better prices ruling for beef, prospects are more encouraging, and it is hoped that cattle-raising will regain its former stability, even if only to fill the requirements of pasture-management on the rougher grasslands.

The dairy industry embodies the most intensive and specialized unit of the larger farming groups in New Zealand, and stands pre-eminently for close settlement of the land; its fortunes are therefore of special interest and import to the whole community. The past year registered a further advance in the industry's