

Could you give us any information as to what it costs to export eggs to the United Kingdom?—All I can say offhand is that last year it cost the Government 16s. per case on 7,500 cases to bring the price up to the guarantee, which was based on what was considered a paying-price to the farmer, or at least a reasonable price.

What was that per dozen?—There were thirty dozen per case at 16s. per case, which would work out at over 6d. per dozen.

What I want to get at is the freight, handling charges, and so on—what it costs to sell the eggs at Home.—I could not give that information offhand, but only by reference to figures in the office.

I suppose it would range at about 1s. per dozen?—Not quite so high as that.

It would be useful to know what it costs per dozen to ship them Home and sell them.—I could get that information for you, and give all particulars with reference to the export trade.

Is it not possible that we have to compete with Canadian eggs: although the output is smaller there, food is cheaper?—Canada is an importing country for eggs at the present time.

Is that done throughout the year?—They export a small number in the flush season, but they import a greater number than they export at the present time. Our big competitors are China and Egypt; Russia is coming on the market again; Denmark, and so on. The price of eggs at Home during the period when our eggs reach the market is gradually dropping. The price has been going down gradually since 1918, and it does not look as if the price is going to rise at Home, and therefore the export of eggs from New Zealand to Great Britain will become harder and harder as time goes on. It does not seem to be possible to build up an export trade advantageously.

Unless the price of wheat comes down?—The price of wheat will not make that difference. It would make a difference of only 1d. or 2d. a dozen, and that will not be sufficient to export under our present conditions.

Rev. Mr. Carr.] What is the position with regard to egg-pulp at the present time—is there much importation from China?—Egg-pulp is allowed to come into New Zealand under special license. There has not been any egg-pulp of any moment imported into New Zealand for some years past.

When you mention the number of eggs per bird produced on the average farm, would they be A-grade eggs?—I refer to all eggs, whether they be good, bad, or indifferent.

There is a certain amount of corn-meal, blood-meal, and meat-meal used for feeding poultry, but that would be used mostly by the recognized commercial poultry-farmer?—Yes.

On the other hand, I suppose, the back-yard poultry-keeper would feed the poultry on household scraps, and so on?—Yes.

With regard to the birds on free ranges, a certain amount of wheat would be required for them?—Yes, in every instance, I should say.

The poultry people have been negotiating with the Government for some years, have they not, in regard to getting facilities for obtaining cheaper wheat?—There has been an agitation for some years past in that direction.

They have also been asking for some assistance with regard to marketing eggs?—They have asked for assistance in marketing eggs, in so far as they have received an export guarantee.

Mr. Macpherson.] In the course of your general statement you mentioned that in the North Island, where there are a relatively smaller number of fowls as compared with the South Island with a larger number of fowls and feed obtainable at a more reasonable price, the North Island people are more than compensated for the difference in the cost of wheat. In other words, the North Island farmer gets a superior price for his eggs all the year round, relatively, to the South Island farmer?—Yes.

The difference is so high that it more than outweighs the extra price which the North Island farmer has to pay for his wheat?—It just about balances the position.

So that from a profit point of view the North Island farmer and the South Island farmer are on an equal basis?—Yes, particularly if there were some restriction, as it were, on the South Island eggs coming into the North Island, or if the South Island eggs cost more to bring into the North Island than the difference between the price of food in the two Islands. The position is made more difficult by a great number of eggs coming from the South Island into the North Island and competing with the product of the North Island poultry-keeper, who has had to pay more for his wheat than the South Island poultry-keeper.

As against that, it must be recognized that the South Island poultry-keeper is handicapped by reason of the cost of transport, handling charges, and so on; so that on a strict accountancy basis, from the profit-making point of view, the North Island poultry-keeper is doing relatively just as well as the South Island man, who buys wheat at probably 2s. a bushel less than the North Island poultry-keeper?—I should say their positions are practically equal.

Is not the position intensified in the North Island by reason of the absence of any co-operation amongst the poultry-farmers themselves, as against the organization in the South Island? Would it not be reasonable to assume that if the poultry-farmer in the North Island took the same trouble to organize as the South Island poultry-farmer—that is, by a little personal effort—the position in the North Island would be much better than it is at the present time?—I think the whole poultry industry, both in the North Island and in the South Island, is in great need of organization, and I do not intend to pass any opinion as to whether the North Island poultry-farmer is better off or worse off so far as organization is concerned than the South Island poultry-keeper.

With reference to the vast number of poultry-farms—that is, on agricultural farms—in the South Island, what data do you get to enable you to make comparisons? I know dozens of farmers in the South Island who make no returns of grain used, and, instead of the fowls getting $\frac{1}{2}$ bushel, it is possible they get $1\frac{1}{2}$ bushels. We will say that approximately 2,000,000 bushels of wheat are used for fowl-feed, but I feel certain that a great deal more wheat than that is used but is not accounted for.