

DAIRY DIVISION.

REPORT OF W. M. SINGLETON, DIRECTOR.

THE SEASON.

With the exception of the North Auckland and Bay of Plenty Districts weather conditions during the season have been very unfavourable from a dairying standpoint. A cold dry spring followed by almost drought conditions up to mid February militated against good pasture-growth, which resulted in a considerably lessened production of butterfat. Owing to warm soil conditions and good rains towards the end of February and onwards pastures have made a remarkable recovery, and grass is now plentiful. Root crops are below the average, but in most districts good hay and ensilage crops have been harvested, which should ensure dairy cattle coming into profit next season in fair condition.

PRODUCTION.

Owing to the exceptionally dry weather conditions prevailing during the flush months of the season, the production of butter and cheese shows a considerable reduction. For the year ended 31st March, 1935, 132,415 tons of butter and 94,049 tons of cheese came forward for grading, compared with 142,287 tons butter and 105,088 tons cheese for the previous year, a decrease of 9,872 tons of butter (6·93 per cent.) and 11,039 tons cheese (10·5 per cent.). Reduced to a butterfat equivalent the decrease equals 12,473 tons, or 7·84 per cent.

CREAMERY BUTTER.

Creamery butter forwarded for grading during the year totalled 130,859 tons, of which 101,707 tons, or 77·72 per cent. were graded finest, 27,272 tons, or 20·84 per cent. first grade, and 1,880 tons, or 1·44 per cent., under first grade. Exports of the latter are now so disposed of that it is not expected to come into competition with the higher grades.

During the exceedingly hot weather experienced over the summer months, difficulty was experienced in supplying milk and cream of a consistently high grade, but despite these drawbacks the butter manufactured has been of consistently high quality, the average grade for the year being 93·141, as compared with 93·097 for the previous year. An increase in the daily delivery of cream has greatly assisted in enabling a good quality of butter to be made. During the season approximately 70 per cent. was delivered daily.

The condition of some of the butter packages in use has given cause for complaint on arrival in Britain, chiefly owing to the thinness of the timber allowing dust and sawdust to gain entrance and cause damage to the butter. The more general use of a substantial type of container is therefore highly desirable. Some of these light containers facilitated mould growth on the butter, and some loss was sustained.

WHEY BUTTER.

The quantity of whey butter graded during the year was less by 235 tons than for the previous year, the totals being 1,576 and 1,811 tons respectively. The quality of this class of butter could be greatly improved by more efficient handling and treatment of the whey cream, and by churning at lesser intervals. Exports to Britain are disposed of through the same channels as second-grade creamery, and therefore do not compete with the higher-quality creamery butters.

CHEESE.

Of the 94,049 tons of cheese graded during the year, 20,512, or 21·88 per cent., were classified as "finest," 70,605 tons, or 74·99 per cent., first grade, and 2,932 tons, or 3·13 per cent., under firsts. Although cheese of a good commercial quality has been manufactured, the standard has not been quite so high as for the previous year, the average grades being 92·035 and 92·086 respectively. Owing chiefly to the abnormal climatic conditions, the season has been one of the most difficult experienced from a cheesemaking point of view. During the earlier part of the season considerable difficulty was experienced with the erratic working of starters. As the season advanced this difficulty to a great extent disappeared, but drought conditions intervening brought further troubles, with a milk-supply deficient in solids and most difficult to handle generally. During the hot weather many cheeses were detrimentally affected in quality in curing-rooms which had no means of controlling temperatures, these often ranging from 70 degrees to 80 degrees F. The installation of the requisite insulation and plant to control temperatures adequately in these rooms should therefore be given immediate attention.

Cheese made from pasteurized milk totalled 88 per cent., and wax-coated cheese 71 per cent.

EXPORT VALUES.

Prices for dairy-produce, principally butter and cheese, have shown considerable fluctuation during the year, the average being slightly lower than for the preceding year. In addition exports of butter and cheese have been less by 1,983 tons butter and 1,315 tons cheese. This is reflected in the total value of all dairy-products, which is less by £745,694 than for the previous year, as indicated by the Customs values of exports of butter, cheese, dried milk, casein, condensed milk, cream, and milk sugar, which total £16,142,160 and £16,887,854 respectively.