

WELLINGTON.

(H. W. C. MACKINTOSH, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Throughout the year just closed weather conditions were most erratic. Following on a favourable autumn the winter was cold, and wet weather conditions prevailed throughout spring and summer. The plentiful rainfall produced a rank growth of grass which assisted butterfat-production but militated somewhat against the best results from early fat lambs. In most localities very few lambs were sold before Christmas, and it was well on in January before the flush were ready. In the dairying districts of southern Wairarapa, which usually dry up badly in hot summers, there has been an abundance of rain, and the longer growing period has made considerable difference to production. In the wetter northern areas of the Wairarapa the season, although good for dairying, has proved rather too wet, and returns will no doubt be about the same level as the previous season. In many cases haymaking operations were hampered by wet-weather conditions and less than the average amount of hay was saved. In other cases, however, where the winter was relatively mild farmers have been able to carry over reserves of hay from last year and stock should be sufficiently provided for this coming winter.

The guaranteed price for butterfat has had the effect of stabilizing the prices for dairy stock, dairy cows averaging about £8 or £9. Well-bred run or station cattle commanded high prices, while yearling steers of this class in some localities realized as high as £7, with a correspondingly high price for beef cattle.

Sheep-farmers have experienced a good year, prices for both wool and stock having been much better than for some time past. Fat-lamb prices have been good and altogether the pastoralist should be able to meet his commitments and have something over for top-dressing and maintenance of buildings, fencing, &c. It is pleasing to note that many settlers are painting their houses and farm buildings. The better prices obtained for butterfat, wool, &c., have encouraged many farmers to top-dress their pastures, and a consequent improvement in revenue returns has been manifest. There is still room for more to be done in this direction, but this work will no doubt be undertaken more generally when its advantages are more widely realized.

The prices ruling for farm produce have created a keen demand for land, and any worth-while areas coming into the market are well applied for.

NELSON.

(P. R. WILKINSON, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

The 1936-37 season has again been remarkable for the amount of summer rain right through the summer months with an absence of the usual dry, warm spells.

Owing to the wet season lambing percentages were lower than for many years and the mortality amongst young sheep was very high in most localities. There was an abundance of summer feed, and sufficient winter feed is available.

Hop-growers have had a bad season owing to much wet weather, the returns having dropped at least 25 per cent. on last season.

The apple crop has been only medium, caused through unfavourable weather conditions. The total export for the season will be in the vicinity of 604,000 cases. The market opened up on the low side for cookers, but dessert varieties about equal the prices paid last year. The growers, however, should be materially assisted by the guaranteed prices.

Heavy frosts in the early part of the year caused considerable damage to tobacco crops in part of the district.

MARLBOROUGH.

(G. I. MARTIN, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Generally the farming community in this district has experienced a good year.

The continuance since last season of a reasonably fair rainfall over most parts of the district has removed the fear of drought, and this, coupled with a sound export price for lamb and the high prices obtaining for all classes of wool, has been reflected in a more confident and spirited activity in the market for store sheep.

Those engaged in agricultural farming have recorded good average yields, but there would seem to be a tendency for those on the lighter and poorer lands to persist in this type of farming to their disadvantage. In this respect there is still a marked absence of the use of lime and fertilizers, and though the benefit accruing from their use is generally appreciated the high cost of both in this district limits their application.

An increased area has been grassed down this season and this can be attributed partly to a general rise in the price of wool and sheep and a realization that continued cropping does not pay.

Dairy-farmers have shown no appreciably increased outputs on last year, despite a favourable season, and it is to be hoped that, when charges are brought into relation with the producing capacity of their holdings, settlers will be in a position to make a more liberal use of lime and manure.