

Despite the difficult season for farmers generally and the heavy stock mortality in some districts, the year's returns from Native land undertakings show a still further increase over that of previous years. The total receipts amounted to approximately £414,000, of which the Department's proportion in repayment of loan liabilities was £257,408, in comparison with £223,876 for the previous season, being an increase of 15 per cent. The principal items, with the preceding year's figures shown in parentheses, are as follow : Butterfat representing the Department's proportion only, which is usually 40 per cent., £116,360 (£93,841); wool sales, £34,324 (£22,903); proceeds from live-stock sold, £89,907 (£93,991); and sundry receipts, £16,817 (£13,141). The volume of dairy production has increased from 3,957,000 lb. to 4,362,926 lb. of butterfat, or, in other terms, from 2,151 tons to 2,370 tons of butter during the year under review. The wool-clip from all pastoral activities directly controlled by the Board of Native Affairs—development schemes, Native Trust, and Maori Land Board stations totalled 4,746 bales, as against 3,486 bales for the previous year; while on the East Coast Trust farms an additional clip of 2,634 bales of wool was produced.

During the year under review grants from the Employment Promotion Fund amounting to £415,000 were made available through the Department, and in utilizing these funds the Board has continued its policy of absorbing unemployed Natives on productive work on Native lands. The majority of these workmen were engaged on farm development schemes, but in those districts where there were Maoris who could not be placed on these projects or on Native housing construction, productive work was provided on Native-owned lands, and especially on those properties in which the Board is directly interested, particularly Maori Land Board, Native Trust, and East Coast Trust stations, and holdings under mortgage to the Department. As a certain proportion of the lands at present being developed may be classed as marginal, work on this type of country has been made possible by these grants from the Employment Promotion Fund, subsidies ranging from 50 per cent. to 100 per cent. being authorized according to the nature of the properties under cultivation. With the exception of labour on housing construction, all subsidized work was carried out under contract system based on the principle of enabling an efficient workman to earn standard wages. In cases where returns from farming operations were found to be insufficient to maintain a reasonable standard of living for Native settlers, the Board has provided assistance during the winter months by way of subsidized contracts, with the object of increasing the productivity of holdings. On Native scheme lands the number of Maoris assisted throughout the year was three thousand, while approximately one thousand were employed on other Native properties. The Board believes that good value is being obtained from moneys spent on the promotion of Maori employment, inasmuch as the Natives have been engaged on productive work on their own lands, and particularly work, which from the point of view of national wealth, will ultimately reflect itself in increased production and exports.

The more progressive Maori farmers have shown a desire to avail themselves of the facilities for herd-testing, and it is encouraging to see this feeling extending throughout those schemes where dairying is being carried out. The Herd-testing Associations have co-operated splendidly with field supervisors in the establishment of testing groups, and, wherever they have been formed, the great interest that is being taken by the members, and also by other settlers not already included, is noticeable. As the number of dairy cows being milked by Maori settlers to-day is over thirty-four thousand, the need for herd-testing is apparent, and is being encouraged by the departmental officers.

In co-operation with the Department of Agriculture, experiments with sheep were conducted on the Waimiha scheme and the Tawanui station, in the King-country, in combating "bush sickness" and "Mairoa dopiness," respectively, by top-dressing the pastures with cobaltized superphosphate. Details of the unqualified success of this trial are presented later in this report. These successful and convincing experiments are of considerable significance, and the results indicate a possible solution of the problems connected with "bush-sick" and "deficient" lands.