

a great agricultural country and having large manufacturing plants as well, she can never hope to buy as much as she sells. Thirteen and a half million people cannot buy as much as fifty million, but they can produce food for Great Britain in large quantities. The key to the situation is the question of a more plentiful supply of dollars for the purchase of essential foods in friendly Canada.

Australia's Contribution to the British Diet

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Present position

In addition to the main food products, wheat and flour, meat and meat products, dairy products and eggs, dried and canned fruit, and sugar, Australia supplies a variety of miscellaneous foods which can be claimed to cover a greater range than those from any other single country exporting to the U.K. The aggregate of these miscellaneous products is considerable but, in lending variety to a monotonous diet, their importance is proportionately much greater. The more important of the miscellaneous products include edible tallow, copra, whale oil and other fats, fruit juices, jam, tomato products, cakes, puddings, honey and syrups.

Table 1. *Food imports into the United Kingdom from Australia in the first 10 months of 1949*

Foodstuff	Quantity (cwt.)	Percentage of total imports	Value (£'s sterling)
Dairy products:			
Butter	1,233,168	22	15,225,631
Cheese	365,657	9	2,657,880
Processed milk	80,838	10	370,562
Eggs	12,254,000*	7	1,429,728
Meat (including poultry and rabbits)	3,376,794	17	16,454,804
Grain:			
Wheat	14,530,628	18	19,444,170
Flour	2,245,432	21	4,308,563
Barley	1,420,384	28	1,626,580
Oats	1,104,887	100	1,176,495
Sugar	4,789,641	16	7,543,690
Fruit products:			
Wine	922,924†	16	441,159
Dried fruits	239,349	†	646,433
Canned fruits	495,232	†	1,756,023

* Dozen. † Gallons. ‡ Figure not available.

Australia also supplies a considerable proportion of the protective foods, as Table 1, giving the imports of the main products in the 10 months ended October 1949, clearly shows.

It is worth noting here that a quantity of grain sorghum for pig feed arrived in London last year, the first from the State of Queensland-British (Overseas) Food Corporation's holdings in Queensland which just a year ago, it was announced, were being enlarged by the acquisition of further properties, to be used for the production of stock feed for Britain and/or to raise pigs for export to Britain.

Of fruit juices, Australia is an important supplier. A wide range is available including such varieties as pineapple, raspberry, blackcurrant, orange, lemon and apple. These juices have proved popular with British cordial manufacturers. Substantial quantities of tomato juice, in addition to tomato soup, tomato sauce and ketchup, were imported from Australia in the last 3 years. Two items for which there is an almost unlimited demand, and of which very substantial quantities are being supplied, are fruit cake and Christmas puddings. Of fruit cake, the value of shipments last year was nearly £1,000,000 and Christmas puddings are being sent to this country at the yearly rate of about 8,000,000. Both are rich in dried fruits, as well as other wholesome and palatable ingredients, and only because of Australia's contractual obligation to supply dried fruit have limits had to be set on the quantities of cake and puddings which may be shipped. Only Greece and Turkey supply greater quantities of dried fruit than Australia, and supplies from other Commonwealth countries are meagre.

A notable addition to Australia's contribution to the British diet comes in the shape of gift food-parcels, of which, between 1940 and 1948, over 11,000,000 came to the United Kingdom. The greatest number, however, came after the war and in 1947 and 1948 the yearly total amounted to around 3,000,000. The parcels average somewhere between 7 and 11 lb. in weight and they are still coming in at the yearly rate of about 3,000,000.

Possible additional supplies

In a paper as short as this, it is hardly practicable to discuss in detail the possibilities of increasing production of such a variety of foods as has been enumerated, but that the possibilities exist, in a country the extent of Australia and with its vast natural resources, cannot be doubted. For example, imports of Australian poultry which before 1945 were almost negligible are now of the order of 9000 tons/year. Similarly, it is anticipated that, as a result of the agreement of the U.K. under a 9-years' contract to purchase the whole of Australia's exportable surplus, production of copra, particularly in New Guinea, will be considerably expanded.

The whaling industry, having been the subject of special investigation and assistance by the Australian Government, is another in which active steps are being taken to expand. Production, so far, has not been extensive, but it is likely to increase considerably within the next year or so when additional equipment will be available for coastal and deep-sea stations.

Another product which illustrates the diversity of Australia's potentialities is rice. Less than a quarter of a century ago, the whole of that Commonwealth's requirements used to be imported. For a good number of years now there has been a surplus of rice in Australia and considerable quantities have been exported. During the war years and for some time after, civilian consumption of rice in Australia was prohibited except for

limited supplies for hospitals and Asiatics in the country. Almost the whole production was sent to the natives in the south-west Pacific and to the Services. In 1949, some rice was again exported to the United Kingdom.

Meat. It is in the production of meat, however, that Australia is being looked upon to make the greatest contribution to the diet of this country which, by tradition, is a nation of meat-eaters. Even so, the prewar consumption of meat per head in the U.K. was very much lower than consumption in exporting countries. According to a recent White Paper (Ministry of Food, 1949), consumption of meat in the U.K. in 1948-9 is provisionally estimated at 69.8 lb. (total edible weight), or only 64% of prewar. The prewar figure given in the White Paper is 109.6 lb. and in the years from 1940 to 1948-9, the latter being provisional, as follows:

1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1948-9
98.8	85.6	89.6	86.4	96.1	86.6	89.9	82.0	73.8	69.8

These figures suggest that in the last 10 years no shortage can have been more acutely felt than that of meat. In fact, there is grave concern on the part of those engaged in the meat trade that the rising generation is being accustomed to do without the grills and the family joints which, at one time, played so prominent a part in the daily life of the people of this country. The figures point also to the great opportunity which awaits producers of meat here. Sir Henry Turner, Director of Meat and Livestock, Ministry of Food, has told us that before the war the annual consumption of carcass meat, not including bacon, amounted to about 2,100,000 tons. Of this quantity, approximately one-half of the beef, one-third of the mutton and lamb and seven-eighths of the pork, amounting in all to some 1,100,000 tons, were home produced. This left 1,000,000 tons to be imported, rather more than 83,000 tons monthly. Compared with prewar, there are 2 million more people to feed and, Sir Henry Turner estimates, to provide the average prewar consumption which, compared with Australia, New Zealand and Argentina was low, would require an additional 600,000 tons, half as much again as was produced locally before the war and nearly twice as much as is being produced now. But on previous occasions Sir Henry had said that one of the objects of the Ministry of Food was to provide for an increase over the prewar consumption of meat. In spite, however, of the opportunity awaiting home producers it is almost certain that substantial improvement in meat supplies in the near future will depend on imports from overseas and, if it be assumed that shipments from Argentina will not exceed the minimum provided for in the current Anglo-Argentine trade treaty, from Australia in particular.

The only country of the three main exporters of beef, mutton, lamb and pork whose supplies have increased since 1938 is New Zealand, who for the first 10 months of 1948, and 1949 was, by a comfortable margin, the biggest supplier. But outstanding as New Zealand's achievements have been, production in that Dominion cannot continue indefinitely to expand. Imports from Argentina, which, before the war was far and away the biggest supplier, in the same years, were less than those from New Zealand and only 69 and 65% respectively of the 1938 figures. Imports from Australia during the war years and since have also been below the 1938 figures. During the war years they

reached their lowest level, but this was mainly because Australian meat was diverted to the supply of United States and other allied Services in the Pacific. In 1946, they were still under 150,000 tons, but supplies at that time were very much feeling the effects of a series of bad years climatically in the course of which some 30,000,000 head of sheep were lost. Later years have witnessed a steady if not marked recovery and this, in view of phenomenally high wool prices, is an encouraging sign. The sheep population, which in 1946 fell to 96,000,000, the lowest point since 1924, is again well over the 100,000,000 mark, probably over 110,000,000, and it would appear that a great increase in the production of mutton and lamb is possible in the near future. It is well to remember, however, that in addition to seasonal and climatic conditions, the export surplus of mutton and lamb is dependent to a marked extent on wool prices and it may not be generally realized that the world still turns to Australia for something like two-thirds of its total requirements of fine wool. This, of course, is a factor which has no direct influence on beef, production of which has not kept pace with local consumption in recent years. Nevertheless, it is in the increased production of beef that the best prospects are presented. There are vast areas in Australia which, because they are not suitable for the production of wool, remain to be developed for cattle. Development of out-back areas, particularly of Western Queensland, the Northern Territory and the north-west of Western Australia is a long-term job but measures, with that end in view, are being taken. Moreover, measures to step-up production in the near or immediate future are being actively promoted. Factors standing in the way of achieving the objective of additional contributions on Australia's part to Britain's diet are those common to other countries, namely shortages of labour and materials, particularly steel, to which must be added the vagaries of the climate. These if not peculiar to Australia, at times press heavily.

Conclusions

A marked increase in the production of mutton and lamb, in the absence of adverse climatic conditions over the greater part of Australia, is possible, but depends largely on the relative values of meat and wool.

A marked increase in the production of beef is to be looked for in the outlying areas which are scheduled for development. It is possible, however, that various measures being taken to step up production in established areas may yield immediate or early results.

Australia has never had a great surplus of pig-meat and, despite the fact that an increase in pig-meat is potentially the most rapid of all, it is doubtful whether production can be stepped up to any considerable extent while a shortage of labour persists.

Though unfavourable seasonal and climatic conditions can only be overcome in limited degree, irrigation schemes already developed, railways, roads, top-dressing of pastures and better management of stock are playing increasing parts in minimizing their ill-effects.

In the years to come, the vast Snowy Mountains hydroelectric undertaking alone is expected to effect a transformation of the economy of the whole south-eastern part of the Commonwealth of Australia.

REFERENCE

Ministry of Food (1949). *Food Consumption Levels in the United Kingdom* [Cmd. 7842]. London: H.M. Stationery Office.