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Commonwealth Contributions and British Requirement of Bacon

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In 1938 our total supplies of bacon and ham were 10,727,600 cwt., of which 1,507,100 came from Canada and 552,500 came from Eire. Australia and New Zealand between them sent us about 300,000 cwt. of frozen pork which was manufactured as Empire bacon in the United Kingdom. Commonwealth supplies thus accounted for 22% of our total supplies.

During the past 12 months our total supplies of bacon have been about 6,000,000 cwt., of which 804,000 have come from Canada, 24,000 from Eire, and about 150,000 have been manufactured from frozen pork sent by Australia and New Zealand. South Africa also has sent about 10,000 cwt. of frozen pork and bacon. Thus Commonwealth supplies have dropped to 16% of our total supplies.

The present position is that we now have a 5 oz. ration but, to maintain this for 12 months, slightly over 10,000,000 cwt. would be required, and on this basis Commonwealth supplies would drop to about 10% of our total requirements, instead of the 22% of 1938.

What is the cause of this drop in supplies from Commonwealth sources? With Canada it is simply our inability to finance our purchases on a dollar basis. There is no doubt that Canada could easily double her present supplies and thus exceed her 1938 figure. Eire has only just started to send us bacon again, and she may well send us about 100,000 cwt. in the next 12 months, but even this is only one-fifth of the 1938 figure. This drop must be attributed to lack of feeding-stuffs for the pigs and a higher standard of living in Eire, so we cannot expect to see the 1938 figures reached for some years.

The drop in the supplies of frozen pork from Australia and New Zealand may be attributed to several causes, all acting in the same direction. First must come the uncertainties about the demand for frozen carcasses in the United Kingdom during the war. The result was a loss of confidence, and numbers of producers killed off their sows. Secondly, there was a man-power shortage. For example, in New Zealand there were fewer people engaged on farms in 1947 than in 1930. It is an astounding fact that in 1947 fewer than 120,000 men were engaged on over 86,000 farm-holdings. Thirdly, as we have heard, supplies of skim-milk for pig feeding are growing less; and fourthly, the populations of both dominions are increasing in numbers.

Thus, the supplies of bacon from Commonwealth sources are unlikely to increase as fast as supplies from home production, and supplies from European sources are already increasing. There is, however, one new possibility in the future, the production of pigs as part of the grain-sorghum scheme in Queensland. It is too soon as yet to estimate the potentialities of this scheme, but one word of caution is necessary. Sorghum can be used to replace only such foods as maize in the fattening of pigs. Adequate supplies of protein-containing foods for sows and weaners will, therefore, be the limiting factor in this form of pig production. The success of the scheme will thus depend upon one or both of two factors, the discovery of new supplies of feeding-stuffs containing animal protein, and the more efficient use of present supplies. There is no doubt that feeding-stuffs containing animal protein have been used very wastefully in the past and could be used far more efficiently in the future. The discovery of cheap sources of vitamin B₁₂ also would help with the large-scale production of store pigs for fattening on sorghum.

Commonwealth Contributions and British Requirement of Fruit

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The supplies of fruit which have been mentioned in the papers presented to this meeting, and which might be imported into Great Britain include: apples from New Zealand; apples, dried apples, and fruit pulp from Canada; fruit juices, tomato juice, and fruit cakes from Australia; grapes, deciduous fruits, citrus fruits, canned fruit and fruit juices from South Africa (Heywood, 1950; Hopkirk, 1950; Robertson, 1950; van der Post, 1950). Rather than try to comment on the individual items mentioned, it may be best to consider the supplies of fruit which have been available in the past and some of the factors which may affect supplies in the future.

Before the war there were few restrictions to the importation of fruit into Britain, and supplies depended on production overseas, the availability of suitable shipping, and the ease with which fruit could be sold in the wholesale markets. Figures for pre-war imports which can be obtained from *Fruit* or *Fruit Supplies* compiled by Intelligence Branch, Imperial Economic Committee, and published yearly by H.M. Stationery Office, show the great quantity and variety of fruits which were available throughout the year, mainly because England drew her supplies from all the producing countries of the world and imported 45% of the total deciduous crop, and 35% of the total citrus crop, exported from the principal producing countries. During the war imports of fruits were restricted by the lack of suitable shipping and by government regulation, and consumption per head fell from 92 lb. in 1939 to 19 in 1941. The latest figures for the supplies of fruit available in Britain show that there has been a partial return to the prewar pattern of imports but that, whereas in 1936 consumption was 84 lb./head, of which only about one-quarter was home grown, in 1947 the corresponding consumption was 76 lb., of which about one-half was home grown.