

What the Colony offers the Farmer.

Contributed by Officers of the Agricultural Department.

FARMING in Southern Rhodesia generally takes the form of ranching or mixed farming with livestock on a smaller scale.

The principal commercial crops are maize, tobacco, cotton, ground nuts, sun-flowers and potatoes, and several of these are usually combined in all schemes of arable farming. Dairying is mostly practised on the smaller farms adjoining the urban or industrial centres or the railway line, but as an industry it is yearly becoming more firmly established.



Pure-bred Friesians at the Gwebi Experiment Station.

As a rule the Rhodesian farmer follows two or more of the lines mentioned above and the wisdom of adopting a policy of mixed farming is ever becoming better recognised. This practice enables farming operations to be carried out more economically by a better distribution of the work throughout the year, by the utilisation of waste or by-products and by the possibility of rotating the arable lands. Thus the maize grower will usually have one-fifth to one-sixth of his land under other crops and may find it profitable to fatten a certain number of bullocks, while, if dairying is an important line, a number of pigs may be finished off for the bacon factory and any surplus grain will be disposed of locally.

RANCHING.

The rancher proper in Rhodesia usually devotes his energies exclusively to cattle, and his need for extensive

grazing areas compels him to dwell at some considerable distance from the more thickly populated centres. The natural and unimproved grazing found on the wide expanses of veld at his command is good and plentiful. Even during the dry winter months, which are sufficiently mild to allow the cattle to roam day and night, and provided the holding is not overstocked, there is usually a sufficiency of natural food to maintain the stock in good order the year through.

Rhodesia is one of the finest cattle countries in the world, in which the initial difficulties of a new country have already largely been overcome. Many of the main problems in connection with cattle diseases have been solved, and much has been done towards ascertaining the best methods of management. The total number of cattle in the Colony on the 31st December, 1925, was 2,101,927, of which 1,006,086 are owned by Europeans.

The cattle industry has experienced a lean period during the past few years owing to the slump in prices, but export outlets are increasing and there are signs of better times in store. All the well-known breeds of cattle are represented in Rhodesia, Herefords at present taking pride of place with Shorthorns second and Frieslands third. As a general average it may be stated that the larger stock owners to-day carry on their land one beast to 15 acres, but the country is far from being fully stocked, and when



Messrs. Cole's & Mackenzie's three-year-old North Devon Bull, Champion at Gwelo Show.

fenced off into suitable sized paddocks, the ordinary veld will carry a considerably heavier stocking than when the animals are run on free range.



Dipping Day on the Ranch.

The dairy industry has developed into an important branch of farming. Rapid improvement is taking place in the dairy stock of the Colony. This is due largely to the enlightened policy of the South African Friesland Cattle Breeders' Association, who have, during the past four years, annually sent up pedigree bulls and females for sale without reserve at our principal Agricultural Show sales. The result of this policy is now beginning to be seen, and the Friesland breed has become deservedly popular throughout the Colony, with a consequent marked increase in the production of dairy products. Milk recording, too, is annually gaining in favour. There is a Government scheme of loans for the purchase of dairy stock and bulls. This scheme cannot fail to play an important part in the further improvement of dairy stock. Cheesemaking is, after the fresh milk trade, perhaps the most lucrative branch of the dairying industry. It is especially adapted to those farms situated at some distance from the railway, and where difficulty is experienced in transporting cream to the rail. Excellent cheese mainly of the Cheddar type, which finds a ready sale in the larger towns is made, and although this industry is of recent growth, the amount manufactured shows a steady increase.

THE PIONEER CROP.

The pioneer crop of Rhodesia and the one best adapted to the heavier virgin soils when first broken up is maize. As an agricultural product this crop has retained its premier position both in point of view of area devoted to it and of the value of the grain as a marketable commodity. Practically every part of this valuable plant is of use as food for man and beast, and so well is it adapted to the conditions of the country that, given good farming, failure is practically unknown. Yields of over 20 bags (200lb.) of grain per acre are recorded under favourable conditions. The average, of course, is much lower, the yield running to 8 to 12 bags per acre in the maize belt and less elsewhere, but with the greater use now being made of artificial fertilisers, the average yield over the whole country should soon show considerable improvement. The crop this year constituted a record. Something like a million bags were available for export. The area planted with maize in the season 1924-25 represented 69.6 per cent. of the total area under crops.

The maize produced in Rhodesia is of exceptional quality and purity, due principally to the fact that practically none but the type known commercially as "flat white" is grown in the Colony. These large-grained varieties, such as "Salisbury White," "Hickory King" and "Potchefstroom Pearl," are highly prized on the European markets for industrial purposes in the manufacture of starch, alcohol, etc., for which their purity and high starch content admirably suit them. For this reason there is an increasing demand for this class of maize, and the principal complaint of the home buyer is that it is not yet produced in sufficiently large quantities to warrant its exclusive use in their factories.

TOBACCO.

Tobacco was first grown in Southern Rhodesia in 1899, though it was not until some years later that the crop assumed any importance. It has been stated on good authority that Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland are the only countries where tobacco of corresponding quality to the American bright Virginia leaf can be grown, and the superior merits of Rhodesian bright leaf are now becoming well recognised in the United Kingdom. The types principally produced are bright flue-cured leaf, heavy fire-cured leaf, and Turkish tobacco. Until the current year the season of highest production was 1923-24, when the total yield was 3,426,390 lbs. of Virginia leaf and 452,070 lbs. of Turkish. The yield this season, however, is estimated at between five and six million pounds weight, of which quantity about three million pounds will probably be exported to the United Kingdom.

The Government of Southern Rhodesia is taking an active part in fostering the tobacco industry and has established an experimental station near Salisbury on typical tobacco soil, where variety tests, spacing experiments, fertiliser trials and rotation trials are being carried out with tobacco. A limited number of young Rhodesians are enrolled each year on this station as apprentices for a two-year training course in growing, curing and handling the crop. Free board, lodging and rough farm clothes are provided. Established and new growers have the benefit of the expert advice of Government Tobacco Specialists.

BENEFIT OF PREFERENCE.

The grant of a preference of one-fourth of the Customs duty on Empire-grown tobacco has enabled Rhodesian leaf to gain a footing on the Home market and an unlimited market exists there at satisfactory prices for all the leaf of suitable quality we can grow. The stabilising of the preference for a period of ten years is a token of the continued good-will of the Imperial Government towards the Colonies and has given a stimulus to the tobacco-growing industry of this Colony.

The marketing of tobacco in Southern Rhodesia is well organised under the Tobacco Warehouse & Export Co., Ltd. The shareholding in this company is confined to tobacco growers and it is operated on purely co-operative lines. The company controls the great proportion of all the Virginia tobacco grown in Southern Rhodesia and has recently erected a spacious and well-equipped warehouse in Salisbury, where tobacco is received, graded, conditioned, packed, classified and marketed.

There is every indication that the tobacco-growing industry in Southern Rhodesia is on the eve of very big developments, a corollary of which will be the speeding up of the settlement of the Colony.

COTTON.

The possibilities of Southern Rhodesia as a cotton-growing country are in process of being tested, but sufficient information has been obtained during the past three years to justify the opinion that in a normal year cotton can be grown successfully over large sections of the country lying at the lower altitudes. Cotton has been grown with varying success at intervals for many years in the Colony.



Matabeleland Cotton Ginny.

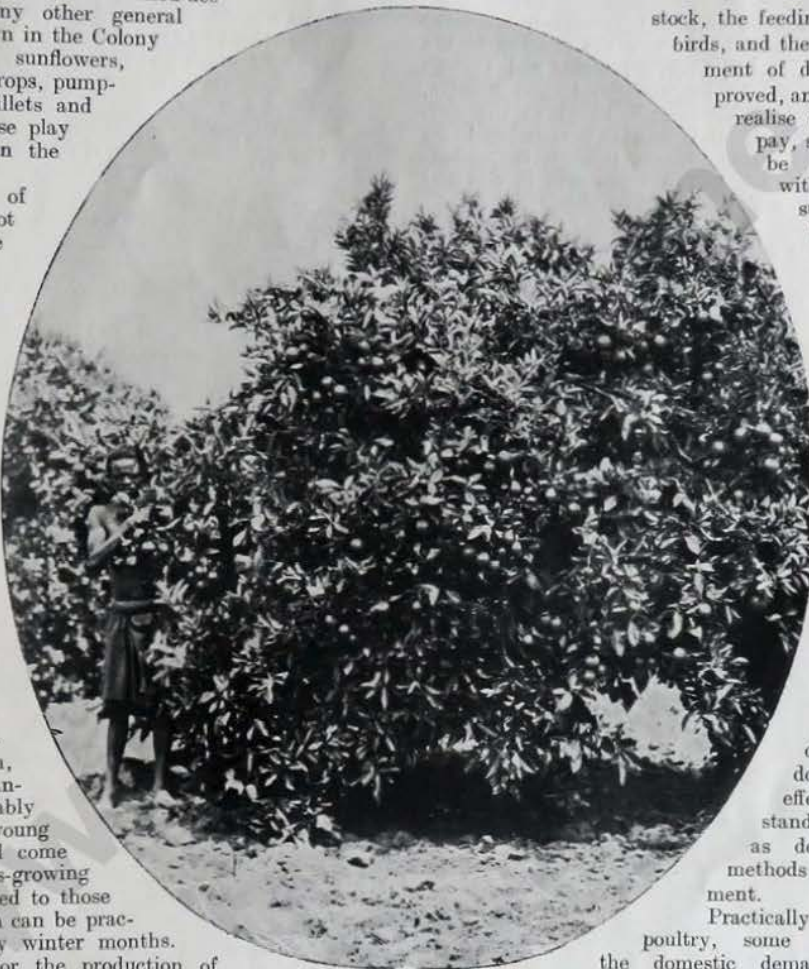
but it was not until the season 1923-24 that it was planted on any extensive scale. That year proved to be a season of scanty rainfall, but good yields were obtained from an area of 3,947 acres and satisfactory prices were paid for the lint. Encouraged by this success the acreage was increased next year to 62,858 acres, with unfortunate results to many farmers, for the season proved to be the wettest on record and cotton suffered accordingly. Farmers, however, have not lost faith in the crop and a large acreage is again down to cotton this season. In common with other parts of the Empire, this Colony has received valuable assistance from the Empire Cotton Growing Corporation, which has helped to erect ginneries in various parts of the country and has also provided specialists to advise the farmers. A Government cotton breeding station has been established at Gatooma under the control of these specialists where much valuable research work is in progress. One of the earliest results of the work undertaken at the Gatooma station will be the supplying of farmers with better and more suitable seed.

In few parts of the world can such a wide range of crops be grown as in Southern Rhodesia. Practically all temperate and sub-tropical crops and fruits flourish and in some instances yield in greater abundance than in their native habitat. Ground nuts in particular grow well in Rhodesia, and on land suitably farmed returns of 20 to 30 bags (80lb. net) are not uncommon. This crop will often yield profitably on light sandy soils which, without

improvement, are too low in fertility to grow maize. Ground nuts are becoming of increasing importance in this Colony, and it is expected that after supplying the needs of the local oil factory there will be a considerable quantity of this season's crop available for export.

Space does not permit of a detailed description of the many other general crops which are grown in the Colony such as potatoes, sunflowers, beans, linseed, hay crops, pumpkins, buckwheat, millets and so forth, but all these play an important part in the farm economy.

A great variety of fruits is grown, not only those that are usually common to semi-tropical climates, but also apples, pears, peaches, apricots and plums. Several of the best deciduous fruit-growing areas are as yet unsettled or are too remote from the railway for present development. Export is confined to citrus, of which some 60,000 cases were sent overseas last year. It is anticipated that 100,000 cases of oranges will be exported this season, which figure will annually be considerably increased as the young trees already planted come into bearing. Citrus-growing in Rhodesia is confined to those areas where irrigation can be practised during the dry winter months. Water is essential for the production of commercial fruit as it requires to be ripened uniformly for the European market at the season when prices and demand are high. Orange growing in Rhodesia, if properly conducted, is a profitable enterprise, and with the remarkable facilities which the Colony has to offer, it is a specialised line of farming with great promise.



Orange Tree in Fruit.

The poultry industry in Rhodesia has made remarkable progress in the last few years, and there are now 1,989 keepers of poultry in the Colony owning a total of 164,519 birds. The number of owners who keep more than 150 birds is 283. The quality of stock, the feeding and housing of the birds, and the prevention and treatment of diseases, have all improved, and poultry keepers now realise that to make poultry pay, suitable methods must be employed, combined with proper care and supervision. The poultry industry has developed to the extent that the Colony now produces more eggs than it can consume, and an export trade has been established. The marketing of eggs is principally conducted by the Egg Circle, a co-operative body with depots at each of the principal towns of the Colony.

Egg-laying tests are carried out periodically by the Department of Agriculture, and these undoubtedly have had the effect of improving the standard of birds, as well as demonstrating proper methods of feeding and treatment.

Practically every farmer keeps poultry, some mainly to supply the domestic demand for eggs, but many more to augment the farming income. The industry is being established on sound lines, and there is every reason to hope that, in due course, a large export trade in eggs will be built up, not only to other parts of Africa, but overseas as well.

OUTSPAN.

Dusk, and release from the yoke for the road-weary span ;
Now are the creak and the groan of the wagon wheels still ;
Rest, and a flickering fire for the comfort of man,
As the wavering cry of a jackal floats down from the hill.

Night, with its glitter of stars and its turmoil of thought,
Its dreams and its fancies, its dread of the end of the road,
Regrets for the perils unfaced and the battles unfought,
For the harvests unreaped or ungarnered, the furrows unhoed.

Dawn, and renewal of hope and renaissance of will
To conquer the drifts and the quagmires that cumber the way ;
To dare the ascent and to win to the crest of the hill
And to bury the terrors of night in the toils of the day.