

BAE LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY SURVEY DATA

BAE BEEF AND SHEEP OFFICERS*

Summary

The attention of non-economists who may be associated with particular livestock industries is drawn to the fact that scrutiny of the data presented in the BAE Australian Sheep Industry and Beef Cattle Industry Surveys (ASIS and ABCIS) may provide useful benchmarks in relating their own work, be it research, administration or management, to the ever-changing economic status of these industries.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Agricultural Economics (BAE) conducted in 1972 and 1973 a second Australia-wide investigation of the economic status of the beef cattle industry as one of its sample surveys of rural industry. Data were collected for a sample of beef cattle properties for the four years to 1971-72. The survey data are being processed progressively on a State-by-State basis and some of the results have been published (BAE 1973a, 1973b). The remainder are in the course of preparation and will be published as they come available (BAE 1973c, 1973d, 1973e).

To perform this type of work the BAE depends upon the co-operation of many people, foremost among whom are the livestock producers who participate in the surveys on a voluntary basis. Their accountants, woolbrokers, solicitors, and bankers also provide valuable voluntary assistance during surveys.

II. THE TYPE OF DATA AVAILABLE

This communication is intended to draw to the attention of Society members the type of data which becomes available on completion of BAE livestock industry investigations such as the Australian Beef Cattle Industry Survey (ABCIS) and the longer-established Australian Sheep Industry Survey (ASIS). The former was conducted first in 1966 based on a sample of 342 beef producers to cover the three years to 1964-65. Since that time the beef cattle industry has expanded so fast that the latest survey, in order to provide estimates with acceptably low sampling errors, was based on a survey of 850 producers. The ASIS has been conducted continuously since 1952-53, even to being done as an annual monitoring exercise over the last few years (BAE 1971, 1973).

The surveys, although orientated towards providing mainly such assessments of economic or financial performance on livestock-producing properties as various returns/cost relationships, net income levels, and rates of return to farm resources, also have to cover, for the purposes of complete resource assessment, many technical aspects of production which are akin to the everyday issues dealt with by research workers, extension officers, and commercial producers.

The data have proved their value in a variety of economic analyses, the outcomes of which have provided a better understanding of the effects on the economic status of producers or industries of changes in such factors as farm size, herd or flock size, enterprise combination, fertilizer

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applications, level of property improvement, various herd or flock management and nutritional practices, **labour** use, and prices of such inputs as **labour**, fertilizers or services. Usually, the implications of such research is recognized at government level in the formulation or revision of rural policies.

Nevertheless, despite the orientation of the surveys towards economic and financial matters, the availability of data covering technical relationships at commercial level, such as information on pasture types and area, livestock breeds, numbers and herd or flock composition, nutritional practices, marketing methods, forms of production, reproduction rates **and other** details should not be ignored, as it is these details which would provide to industry representatives a basic picture of the industries which their efforts are intended to serve.

From scrutiny of such data and the results of cognate economic analysis, useful guides to future industry research may be **obtained**.

BAE survey results are usually calculated at regional level: in the case of the **ABCIS** the beef-producing areas of Australia are broken into 26 regions, each one relatively homogeneous with respect to climate and production patterns. In the **ASIS** the three zones - known respectively as the High Rainfall, Wheat-Sheep, and Pastoral Zones - have proved to be a useful classification.

III. REFERENCES

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