

British Farms Decline.

No Other Country Shows So Marked a Falling Off in the Domain of Agriculture.

LONDON, Dec. 19.—The British Board of Agriculture, in its preliminary statement as to the produce and yield of the principal farm crops of the year 1906, presents estimates that are more than usually satisfactory, according to British standards. Excepting only hay from permanent grass, all of the crops noticed in the estimates have surpassed the average for the ten years from 1896 to 1905. The product per acre of this year's harvest as compared with the decennial average is conveniently set forth in the following table:

Crop	1906		
	1906	Avg. of 10 Years 1896-1905.	Comp'd with Av. Inc.
Wheat	33.88	31.22	2.64
Barley	34.58	33.04	1.54
Oats	40.55	38.92	1.63
Beans	34.73	28.52	6.21
Peas	30.21	20.61	3.60
	Tons	Tons	Tons
Potatoes	6.06	5.78	.28
Turnips and Swedes	14.22	12.96	1.26
Mangold	19.79	18.70	1.09
	Cwt.	Cwt.	Cwt.
Hay from clover, &c.	29.21	29.06	.15
Hay from permanent grass	22.61	23.49	*.88

The total production of some of the principal crops in 1906 was as follows: Wheat, 59,091,772 bushels, from 1,798,810 acres; barley, 60,553,977 bushels, from 1,751,238 acres; oats, 123,383,867 bushels, from 3,042,926 acres; beans, 9,970,892 bushels, from 287,073 acres; peas, 4,515,783 bushels, from 149,490 acres; potatoes, 8,428,711 tons, from 565,921 acres.

The bulk of the wheat was grown in England, Wales raising only 1,236,112 bushels, and Scotland just a little under 2,000,000 bushels. The average estimated yield per acre in England was 33.61 bushels; Scotland, 39.95 bushels; Wales, 28.56 bushels. Of the barley, Wales raised 8,020,608 bushels; Scotland, 7,584,801 bushels, and England, 49,933,593 bushels. England raised 81,532,511 bushels of the oats, Scotland 34,034,712 bushels, and Wales 7,816,634 bushels. England raised 2,439,063 tons of the potatoes, Scotland 846,223 tons, and Wales 143,420 tons. About three-quarters of the hay product was grown in England, the other quarter being contributed almost equally by the other countries. The hop crop throughout Great Britain is estimated at 245,688 hundredweight and the estimated yield per acre is 5.26 hundredweight.

The foregoing figures are not likely to prove awe-inspiring to American readers, but they tell a very important story about the agriculture of Great Britain when they are properly read and considered. The Board of Agriculture does not undertake an interpretation of the statistics it sets forth, but that work has been most impressively performed by the Agricultural Committee of the Tariff Commission. This committee, after a long and careful study of agricultural conditions in this country, past and present, recently published a report in which it set forth certain conclusions it had reached. Such of these conclusions as purport to be findings of fact may be accepted as reliable, for they are based on abundant evidence secured from 2,251 farmers and other agriculturists owning and holding about 1,900,000 acres well distributed over the country. Briefly stated the committee's findings are as follows:

1. The production of wheat in the United Kingdom, which in the period of 1841-45 was sufficient for 24,000,000 persons or nearly 99 per cent. of the population, has since that time steadily declined until home-grown wheat now feeds little more than 4,500,000, or 10.6 per cent. of the population.

2. With the single exception of oats in England, all other corn crops in the United Kingdom show considerable decline, though in no case to the same extent as wheat. Taking corn crops as a whole, the area cultivated has declined 3,000,000 acres, or nearly 40 per cent., in the last thirty years.

3. This serious reduction in corn cultivation has synchronized during the past thirty years with a decline amounting to over one-sixth in the area under green crops.

4. The area under grass has increased by nearly one-third in the same period; this increase has not sufficed to make up for the decline in arable cultivation, and the quantity of meat produced from home-fed stock has only increased by less than 5 per cent.

5. Whereas, home-fed meats represented 85 per cent. of the total consumption thirty years ago, they now represent 55 per cent. only.

6. The importations of dairy produce have increased about 140 per cent. during the last thirty years, and dairy farmers in most parts of the United Kingdom have been led to devote themselves more and more to milk farming, in which foreign competition has not developed to any extent.

7. The dependence of the United Kingdom upon imported food supplies of all

kinds has increased from £124,000,000 to £205,000,000 since 1875, and, allowing for the fall in prices, the volume of food imports is estimated to have increased during the same period by 130 per cent., or nearly four times as much as the increase in population.

8. The foreign producer, especially of wheat and meat, has not only supplied the increased British home demand due to increased population and increased consuming power of the population, but has also taken from the British farmer a large part of the market upon which, having no export trade, his existence depends.

9. Agriculture in almost every branch shows a great decline, despite a very large increase in the population and a consequent increase in the demand for agricultural produce.

10. There has been a general fall of prices during the last thirty years, due to monetary and other causes affecting nearly all commodities, and fluctuations of this character are to be anticipated in the future. But the prime cause of the decline in agriculture is the greater fall, especially in the case of corn, in agricultural prices than in prices generally.

11. In the case of agriculture the effect of the fall in prices has been accentuated by other causes, such as (a) the greater relative increase in the burden of local and imperial taxation upon the land; (b) transport conditions; and (c) the inability of the Board of Agriculture to aid the British farmer as his foreign competitors are aided.

12. The position of the United Kingdom is absolutely exceptional. No other country shows so marked a decline of agriculture; no other country depends to so large an extent upon importations from abroad for its food supply; in no other country has the balance between agriculture and manufacturing industries been so completely disturbed to the disadvantage of agriculture. This remarkable decline of agriculture is not alone a menace to national security, but by restricting the home market must have a most prejudicial effect upon the general industry of the country.

Americans who have had no previous inkling of these facts will be able to appreciate fully for the first time how dependent this country is upon other countries for the food it needs for man and beast. The British people do not even keep themselves in eggs and butter. Far-off New Zealand is sending thousands of tons of butter to this country, and eggs are coming all the way from South Australia. "No other country," says the committee, "depends to so large an extent upon importations from abroad for its food supply," and without doubt the statement is absolutely true.

The committee naturally includes in its report a number of recommendations for the remedying of the deplorable state into which British agriculture has fallen, but it is hardly worth while to summarize these recommendations in this connection. The situation itself is the thing that will interest American readers.

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New Pacific Lines.

MANUFACTURED products from Japan and raw products to Japan are to be carried in Japan bottoms. Japan has a number of highly prosperous steamship companies. The Japan Mail Steamship Company is the fifth maritime corporation in the world as to size. At its semi-annual meeting on Nov. 28 this company paid a regular semi-annual dividend of 5 per cent. and a special dividend of 1 per cent. Its net profit for the half year was 1,244,386 yen. This company has placed orders for the construction of six steamers each of 8,600 tons, and all to be operated on foreign lines. Their construction will be completed in 1908. They will be paid for from the company's special reserve fund. Of the six steamship lines plying from Tacoma and Seattle to Japan, one line from Vancouver, B. C., and one from Portland, this Japanese company is the only one which maintains a fortnightly service. These lines, together with three from San Francisco, constitute the regular services across the Pacific. The Japanese line to Puget Sound, it is almost unnecessary to say, carries the largest part of Japanese exports of teas, silk, and mattings, and her imports of flour, lumber, and manufactured goods. Several of the largest flouring mills on Puget Sound have explicit orders to ship only by the Japanese line.

The Toyo Kisen Kaisha, operating a first-class line to San Francisco, already has one steamer plying to Chile and will open a regular line next year with Hongkong, Nagasaki, Kobe, Moji, and Yokohama as ports of call. Some of the steamers will continue their voyage from Chile to Brazil. At Nagasaki are building three 12,000-ton steamships for the San Francisco route.