

17 DISTRIBUTION OF LIVESTOCK

Swan Hill and Mildura, and a large quantity of celery comes from South Australia.

The principal vegetable-growing areas within the metropolitan area are in the outer municipalities to the east and south-east. Moorabbin, Dandenong and Mulgrave have the largest areas under vegetable cultivation and together make up more than half Melbourne's vegetable garden. Here the sandy loam is easy to work, the area is close to the city, and a reticulated water supply enables growers to produce three crops a year compared with only one when relying solely on normal rainfall. Enormous quantities of organic manure have been put into the area in the past, thus increasing the fertility of the soil. However, settlement has encroached into this area also, raising land values, and many highly productive market gardens have been sold and subdivided as building lots, their owners having found it more profitable to sell out and move to more distant areas. The high productivity of the area for vegetable growing is mainly dependent on the constant supply of reticulated water, and its continued value for this purpose will largely depend on the ability of the authorities to continue to supply adequate water at reasonable cost.

To the north-east and north-west of the metropolis the vegetable growing areas are mainly in valleys of the water-



18 DISTRIBUTION OF FRUIT AND VEGETABLE GROWING AREAS

courses, such as the Maribyrnong River and Merri Creek. An increasing quantity of vegetables is now being grown in the Werribee irrigation district adjoining the planning area to the west.

Other Agricultural Crops: In addition to areas used for growing fruit and vegetables, there are some 15,000 acres under cultivation for other agricultural purposes, of which cereal and hay crops, mainly for fodder, account for 90% and nurseries and cut-flowers for the remainder. The nurseries and areas used for cut flowers are mainly established to the east and south-east of Melbourne, while the cereal and hay crops are fairly well spread throughout the rural areas.

Future Importance of Agriculture within the Metropolitan Area

From a town planning viewpoint the most important aspect of the foregoing analysis is the relative importance of the rural land within the planning area for future agricultural use. How important is it that land suitable for producing food should be especially reserved for that purpose? How much land should be retained for grazing livestock? How vital to the future urban development of Melbourne are any particular areas now used for some specific agricultural or other rural purpose?

It has already been shown that more than one-quarter of Victoria's supply of fruit, excluding oranges, is grown in the Doncaster, Nunawading and Ringwood areas to the east of Melbourne, while more than one-third of Melbourne's vegetables is grown in the Moorabbin, Dandenong and Mulgrave areas to the south-east. Both these districts are directly in the line of rapid urban development and are already suffering agriculturally from urban encroachment. The areas that are most valuable and which have been most intensively used for agricultural purposes near the city are among the areas now most sought after for home sites. This type of replacement, of course, has been taking place for generations. Most of Melbourne's original market garden areas are now residential areas. The question then arises as to just how important is it to retain any of these existing marginal areas for agricultural purposes. With the growth of modern means of fast transport, the large cities of the world have become less dependent on purely local supplies for fresh fruit, vegetables and milk. In the days of the horse-drawn vehicle Melbourne, like other cities, was largely dependent on its nearby market gardens, orchards and dairy cattle herds for all their products and the distance from the city of sources of supply was limited largely to the distance a horse-drawn vehicle could travel in a day. Today, however, with fast refrigerated transport by road, rail and air, the most perishable fruits and vegetables can be transported for hundreds of miles from centres best suited for growing the particular crop. This has been so developed in America that a substantial proportion of the fresh fruit and vegetables consumed daily in the large

east coast cities like New York comes from as far afield as California and Texas. The trend is towards large-scale growing of specialised crops in areas most suited for their individual requirements. This is already evident near Melbourne with brussel sprouts and some vegetables grown for processing. With regard to Melbourne's milk supply, it is quicker and more convenient to transport milk in bulk tankers from the rich dairy centres of Gippsland than to collect milk in smaller quantities from the diminishing dairy herds around the metropolitan area.

As regards vegetables and fruit, the rising value of land and increased rates and taxes, due to the encroachment of residential development and the potentialities of subdivision, have resulted in many fruit and vegetable growers finding it more profitable to sell their land and move elsewhere. The high value of the land has prevented new growers establishing themselves in these areas. The result has been a gradual decline in the quantity of land being used for these purposes and an increasing proportion of Melbourne's supply having to come from more distant sources.

This trend of development is accentuated by the fact that there is relatively little additional cost involved in transporting fruit and vegetables from distant country centres throughout Victoria than from metropolitan sources. Perishable fruit and vegetables picked one day can be available for the Melbourne market the next day from as far afield as the Murray Valley. In fact, when they are transported from distant country centres they are usually handled in bulk shipments by co-operative organisations, thereby reducing overall handling costs compared with those of the individual small



Dairy cattle grazing in the outer suburbs



A modern milk tanker arriving from Gippsland