

PART I.—A PRELIMINARY SURVEY.

CHAPTER I.—SUPPLIES.

(i) Home Production.*

The extent of home production of eggs in England and Wales cannot, in the nature of things, be accurately determined. Nor are figures available to show the quantities produced in any given area in this country. Further, apart from those kept at auction marts in producing districts, few records appear to be available of the supplies of English eggs received for distribution in the markets. In any event, a substantial proportion of the production raised in close proximity to consuming centres, as also a fair proportion of that raised further away, is distributed without recourse to market facilities.

Production in England and Wales for the year 1924 has been estimated at 1,800 million eggs.† This figure is based on the returns collected in that year of the number of fowls on agricultural holdings in England and Wales. Fowls of a year old or more totalled a little over 15 millions, and of these, about $13\frac{3}{4}$ millions would be hens. At an average annual production of 100 eggs per hen, the total production on agricultural holdings would be 1,375 million eggs. It is customary to make an addition of at least one third in respect of eggs from fowls kept by occupiers of one acre or less, including residents in towns and suburban areas.

It has been estimated that more than 80 per cent. of the eggs sold for consumption are marketed from the flocks of general farmers and small holders. A not unimportant section of these may well be classed as specialists, having regard to the nature of their supplies and to their superior methods, but the majority still regard poultry-keeping as a minor consideration, though it should be an important feature in their general farm economy. Supplies from these sources are, therefore, somewhat uncertain both as regards quantity and quality. The natural quality of farm-produced eggs, when marketed in good condition is, however, said to excel that of eggs produced under other circumstances.

Specialist poultry keepers, operating on a large scale, have grown considerably in numbers since the war, although, recently, poultry farming on what is known as commercial lines, has suffered some decline owing, it is said, to higher proportionate

* For latest production figures see "The Agricultural Output of England and Wales, 1925." Cmd. 2815.

† Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Agricultural Statistics, Part III., 1924.