

PART VI.—DISTRIBUTION.

The process of dispersing assembled produce over time and space on its way to, and according to the needs of, the ultimate consumer is the process of distribution.

CHAPTER XIV.—IMPORTERS, COMMISSION AGENTS, AND WHOLESALERS.

(i) Importers or Port Wholesalers.

It is convenient to begin this section of the Report with a brief review of the functions of the importer who receives supplies of eggs for disposal that have been assembled in other countries. Importers are concentrated at the ports, but a few merchants with direct overseas connections are also to be found in one or two of the more important inland towns. In London, most of the large importing firms are established in and around Tooley Street. Here supplies are handled from almost every exporting country of the world. Importers sometimes operate their own collecting stations abroad and are the absolute owners of the supplies they handle; for this purpose many English merchants have built up extensive organisations in producing countries such as Denmark, Holland, Belgium, Egypt and China and, by their business ability, have done much to improve the egg industry in those countries and to raise the standard of the produce shipped. Others receive consignments which are realised to best advantage, the price ultimately paid to the exporter being understood to be a "fair market price," according to grade and condition, after allowing for the importer's profit and for services such as credit, if, as is frequently the case, the shipment has been financed by the importer on this side. A fixed rate of commission is unusual for such quasi-agency transactions, while the fact that the price returned to the exporter for any particular parcel depends on ruling prices rather than on the actual price realised, gives the importer a varying margin which may be large or small, according to circumstances. A number of large commission houses do, however, conduct a strictly agency business and return whatever price is realised for consignments sent to them for disposal. Importers handling supplies from the United States and Canada are mostly the representatives of American or Canadian packers. Australian and New Zealand eggs are handled chiefly by the Overseas Farmers' Co-operative Federation. Supplies from South Africa are, in the first place, handled by the representatives of the shippers, who hand them over to a few of the Tooley Street firms for disposal.