

FARMING.

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diff In general the farming land of this parish is of a light nature overlying gravel and owing to its geographical situation - sheltered by the hills of Ross-shire on the West and North-west, and by Sutherland hills to the North, the rainfall is quite abnormally low. This gives generally good stock rearing conditions and indeed the parish is noted for the high quality of its sheep, lambs and calves. Of recent years, however, the financial returns from this type of farming have not been keeping pace with increasing costs and whereas on all farms and crofts sufficient land was always cultivated to provide for stock there is a tendency nowadays for holdings to be amalgamated and for modern machinery to take the place of non-existent labour. Smaller units tend to buy their feed requirements off the bigger farms.

Quite considerable quantities of malting and feeding barley are grown the latter being handled in bulk and shipped to destinations such as Ireland and West Germany. This is done through a farmers co-operative agency and is proving very successful.

To take the place of root crops interest has in the last year or two turned to the production of high grade seed potatoes. Being remote and being virtually virgin country as far as potato growing is concerned the area is well adapted to this business. This again is handled by the farmers co-operative society and various varieties of potatoes are grown and markets found in England. Agricultural officials concerned with this trade all express great satisfaction with the quality of seed potatoes produced.

A few farms specialise in growing a variety of potato which is in regular demand in South Africa. This area is the source of the parent stock which is multiplied in the north-eastern part of Aberdeenshire from where it is prepared in a central dressing plant and shipped in 40lb cardboard cartons to South Africa. The fact that South Africa because of hot climatic conditions has to have fresh seed each year, assures this/

this outlet for the foreseeable future. One of the most difficult sides of potato growing in this area is shortage of casual labour but again to an increasing extent machinery is taking over. Some quite ingenious labour saving systems can be found in the area.

Sparseness of population and distance from consumer markets limits the production of fat-stock although a small number of farms do produce at any rate part of the local requirements. The calf and lamb crops of the district are recognised for their high health standard and find markets largely in South Scotland and Northern England from where buyers return year after year, although some steps are being taken to market these animals on a co-operative basis.