

CO-OPERATIVE EGG-MARKETING IN SOUTH INDIA

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF A SUCCESSFUL SOCIETY

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WITH the object of developing poultry-keeping as a cottage industry, the rural leaders of the Y. M. C. A., Martandam, South India, introduced pure bred fowls in the neighbouring villages in the year 1924. They combined their work with intensive propaganda until a large proportion of the peasants began to rear improved breeds. Consequently, the Y. M. C. A., was confronted with the problem of marketing their eggs. With this object in view, a co-operative society was formed in 1924. It had a membership of 12 at the beginning, and was registered five years later.

From 1929 to December 1935, the Y. M. C. A. successfully managed this society. At the beginning of 1936, the members of the society showed an inclination to take over the management themselves. Realizing that such a change would make members more self-reliant, the Y. M. C. A. gladly responded to their request and handed over the entire business to the society including a reserve working capital of Rs. 504.13.0. This amount formed the basis of the business capital of the newly formed society.

A building near the main road and in close proximity to the Y. M. C. A. was rented as the society's office. The marketing operations are carried on here on Mondays and Thursdays. A business manager, a clerk, and a peon are employed on monthly

salaries to conduct the routine work of the society. A business committee of five members and a managing committee of seven attend to the business aspect and the propaganda side, respectively, of the society.

Eggs are bought from members and non-members. Members get a bonus at the end of the year; non-members are given only the price of the eggs they supply. Each member is entitled to borrow a sum of Rs. 25 from the society for which interest is charged at the rate of 8 per cent. per annum. Loans are given only for the improvement of poultry and for the purchase of equipment. Generally, the expenses incurred on such improvements do not exceed Rs. 10, and as far as possible the society gives loans of only Rs. 10 to each member. This loan is repaid from the sale of eggs, at the rate of Re. 1 per mensem.

The value of shares each member can buy does not exceed Rs. 5. For the convenience of the members this amount is collected in 20 instalments of annas 4 each. Interest received on share money varies from 6 to 9 per cent. A system of thrift has also been introduced, by which every member is expected to deposit with the society one-half anna from each rupee he gets from the sale of eggs. This amount is paid back to the members at the end of the year.

Non-members who bring eggs are mostly school children. They are encouraged to keep one or two hens for themselves, and get monthly payment for the eggs they supply. This money has to be utilized for their clothing and school fees. They are thus helped to support themselves even when they are very young. If such a child wishes to become a member of the society, an elder member of the family is admitted into membership, and the child continues to bring the eggs as before.

Only two grades of eggs are taken and marketed. Eggs weighing $1\frac{3}{4}$ oz. and over are graded as A, and those between $1\frac{1}{2}$ and $1\frac{3}{4}$ oz. as B. This restriction has made the people rear only those birds which lay heavy eggs. Each egg is carefully tested in water, wrapped in attractive tissue paper, packed in bamboo baskets and sent by train to various customers in different parts of South India. To some customers in the Travancore State, where convenient traffic arrangements are not available, they are sent by post.

The baskets required for packing the eggs are made by some very poor families among whom basket-making has become a subsidiary cottage industry. On an average they receive Rs. 250 annually by the sale of baskets.

The progress of the society since 1929 and the distribution of proceeds are worthy of attention.

Year	No. of Members		Shares taken	Eggs taken	Business for the year			Amount paid to the Villagers				
					Rs.	as.	p.	Rs.	as.	p.		
1929	..	12	..	27	..	100	0	0	..	59	3	3
1930	..	21	..	51	..	3,893	12	1	..	2,057	5	2
1931	..	43	..	63	..	5,051	13	8	..	3,572	10	0
1932	..	54	..	74	..	4,872	2	0	..	3,366	2	3
1933	..	57	..	77	..	6,066	13		..	3,793	1	10
1934	..	71	..	98	..	6,752	14	7	..	4,258	1	2
1935	..	78	..	106	..	7,073	0	0	..	4,683	6	9
1936	..	141	..	176	..	7,432	9	0	..	4,753	6	9
Total	..	141		176		41,243	0	5		26,543	5	2

The proceeds of 1936 were distributed as follows :—

	Per Cent.
1. To the producers	.. 54
2. Postage transport charges	.. 21
3. Printing, packing	.. 10
4. Salaries and Establishment	.. 9
5. Profit	.. 5
6. Miscellaneous	.. 1

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