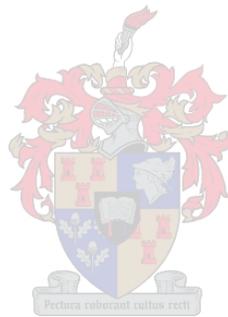


**The State, Farmers and Dairy Farming in Colonial Zimbabwe
(Southern Rhodesia), c.1890-1951.**

by

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*Dissertation presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (History)
in the
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at
Stellenbosch University*

Supervisor: Prof Sandra Swart

March 2015

Declaration

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am authorship owner thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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Abstract

This thesis uses dairy farming in colonial Zimbabwe/Southern Rhodesia as a lens to explore the intersection of economic, social and environmental factors in colonial agriculture from the 1890s until 1951, when a new regulatory framework was introduced for the industry. It examines the complex and fluid interactions between the colonial state and farmers (both white and black), and the manner in which these interactions shaped and reshaped policy within the context of the local political economy and the changing global economic conditions. It examines the competing interests of the colonial state and farmers, and how these tensions played out in the formulation and implementation of dairy development policy over time. This thesis demonstrates that these contestations profoundly affected the trajectory of an industry that started as a mere side-line to the beef industry until it had become a central industry in Southern Rhodesia's agricultural economy by the late 1940s. Thus, besides filling a historiographical gap in existing studies of Southern Rhodesia's agricultural economy, the thesis engages in broader historiographical conversations about settler colonial agricultural policy and the role of the state and farmers in commercial agriculture. Given the fractured nature of colonial administration in Southern Rhodesia, this study also discusses conflicts among government officials. It demonstrates how these differences affected policy formulation and implementation, especially regarding African commercial dairy production. This thesis also explores the impact of a segregationist agricultural policy, particularly focusing on prejudices about the "African body" and hygiene. It shows how this shaped the character of both African and white production trends. It demonstrates that Africans were unevenly affected by settler policy, as some indigenous people continued to compete with white farmers at a time when existing regulations were intended to exclude them from the colonial dairy industry. It argues that although dairy farming had grown to be a strong white-dominated industry by 1951, the history of dairy farming during the period under review was characterised by contestations between the state and both white and African farmers.

Key Words: Dairy farming, African milk regimes, *amasi*, white farmers, African farmers, the colonial state, cream, butter, milk, Great Depression, Southern Rhodesia, Colonial Zimbabwe.

Opsomming

Hierdie tesis gebruik suiwelboerdery in koloniale Zimbabwe/Suid-Rhodesie as 'n lens om die ekonomiese, sosiale en omgewingsgerigte kruispunte in koloniale landbou van omstreeks 1890 t 1951 toe 'n nuwe regulatoriese raamwerk vir suiwelboerdery ingestel is te, ondersoek. Die komplekse en vloeibare interaksies tussen die koloniale staat en boere (wit sowel as swart) en die wyse waarop hierdie interaksies beleid binne die konteks van die plaaslike politieke ekonomie en die globale ekonomiese omstandighede gevorm en hervorm het, word ondersoek. Hierbenewens word gelet op die spanninge tussen die belange van die koloniale staat en die boere (wit sowel as swart) en hoe hierdie spanning oor tyd in die formulering en implementering van suiwelbeleid gemanifested het. Hierdie tesis demonstreer dat dié spanninge en stryd 'n diepgaande uitwerking gehad het op 'n bedryf wat aanvanklik as ondergeskik tot die vleisbedryf begin het, naar teen die leat as 'n sentrale veertigerjere bedryf in die Rhodesiese landelike ekonomie uitgekristalliseer het. Benewens die feit dat die proefakrif 'n historiografiese leemte in bestaande koloniale Zimbabwe aangespreek, vorm dit ook deel van 'n breër historiografiese diskoers ten opsigte van setlaar koloniale landbou in Zimbabwe en die rol van die staat en boere in kommersiële landbou. Vanweë die gefragmenteerde aard van koloniale administrasie in Suid-Rhodesië, fokus die tesis ook op die konflikte tussen regeringsamptenare en hoe hierdie geskille veral beleidsformulering en implementering ten opsigte van swart kommersiële suiwelboerdery beïnvloed het. Vervolgens word die uitwerking van 'n landboubeleid geliasear of segragasië onder die loep geneem met spesiale verwysing na die geskiktheid van swartmense vir kommersiële suiwelboerdery en hoe dit die aard en karakter van beide swart sowel as wit produksie tendense beïnvloed het. Daar word aangedui dat swartmense nie eenvormig deur setlaarsbeleid geraak is nie aangesien van hulle met wit boere meegeding het op 'n stadium toe die heersende regulasies daarop gemik was oin baie van hulle uit die koloniale suiwelbedryfwit te slint. Die sentrale argument is dat hoewel suiwelboerdery sterk wit gedomineerd was teen 1951, die geskiedenis van die bedryf gedurende die tydperk onder bespreking gekenmerk is deur stryd en konflikte tussen die staat en wit sowel as swart boere.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I acknowledge the funding that was awarded to me by the Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences to pursue my doctoral studies full-time at Stellenbosch University. Secondly, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor, Prof Sandra Swart, for the great mentorship and inspiration she rendered to me throughout the duration of my studies. In addition to constantly nudging me to raise the bar during the process of researching and writing of this thesis, she selflessly facilitated for my participation at many workshops and conferences where I presented some of the findings in this thesis. Her constructive criticism and extraordinary attention to detail helped shape my ideas. Indeed, the writing of this thesis would have been a much harder process without her enduring support.

I am also indebted to people from different institutions that helped me during the research process. I am singularly grateful to the staff at the National Archives of Zimbabwe, particularly Mr Livingstone Muchefa and Mr Tafadzwa Chigodora for the assistance they rendered to me during the seven months I spent doing archival research. I also extend my gratitude to staff at the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, particularly Mr 'Christmas', at Ngungunyama Building for allowing me access to the Ministry's library and helping me to locate some important documents. I also acknowledge the help I received from Mr Eddie Cross, the head of the Agricultural Marketing Authority's Dairy Committee during the 1970s, who often disrupted his busy schedule to indulge me in discussions about the nature and scope of the Department of Agriculture's involvement in dairy farming. His exceptional interest in my research saw him linking me with many former employees of the Ministry of Agriculture and white commercial farmers. My thanks are also extended to all my interviewees, particularly Mrs Rhoda Hove and Mr Difford Sibanda who entertained my numerous calls for interviews, freely shared their memories and further connected me with other interviewees.

I received invaluable ideas and suggestions from a number of individuals, and at the risk of omitting many other names, I wish to mention the following people: Dr Anton Ehlers for generously and meticulously proofreading the thesis and other editorial work, Dr Gerald Chikozho Mazarire for his enduring support and for indulging me in lengthy discussions which

shaped some of the ideas in this thesis, Aldrin Tinashe Magaya and Tapiwa Madimu for assisting me, beyond the call of friendship, by meticulously going through several draft chapters of this thesis, and sharing their ideas. I also acknowledge the support from members of staff and postgraduate students in the History Department at Stellenbosch University. Particularly helpful were the members of History Friday Morning (HFM) for offering valuable feedback on most of my chapters during the fortnightly seminars. These include my fellow ‘comrade in arms’, George Berson Jawali, Gustav Venter, Esté Kotzé, Wesley Mwatwara, Chelsey White and Anri Delport. My sincere thanks also go to Graham Walker for assisting me with the graphs and tables. I am also grateful to the continued motivation and camaraderie which I received from friends who helped turn this otherwise rigorous study into an enjoyable and memorable experience. These include Pedzisai Mangezvo, Gugulethu Siziba, Gibson Ncube, Medadi Ssentanda and Richard Kagolobya.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for the continued emotional and spiritual support throughout the course of my studies. With all the pain and tolerance that comes with it, my wife Sikhuphukile and son Tinevimbo Asher were a constant source of inspiration as they generously accommodated a very demanding ‘family member’ – the thesis – for three years. I am deeply thankful, and, when the time comes, I will certainly return the favour. Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank other members of my family for consistently supporting me throughout the duration of my studies. Worthy of particular mention are Clifford and Sichelesile Makandise under whose tutelage my life has been shaped, and whose sacrifices towards my life I can never repay fully. I would also like to extend my sincere gratitude to Delight Hove, Prof Senelani Hove-Musekwa, Phendukani Ntini and the Chigwada family for their generous support over the years. May the Lord Almighty bless them abundantly. All the individual and institutional support notwithstanding, I however, remain solely responsible for all the arguments, opinions, errors, omissions and short-comings in this thesis.

Dedication

To Skhu and Tinevimbo Asher, with love, and to the memory of my late parents, Goodwell and Editor Hove.

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List of Abbreviations

AMA	Agricultural Marketing Authority
BSAC	British South Africa Company
CONEX	Department of Conservation and Extension
DMB	Dairy Marketing Board
DICB	Dairy Industry Control Board
CBA	Cattle Breeders' Association
CFU	Commercial Farmers' Union
FPAC	Food Production Advisory Committee
FPC	Food Production Committee
ICA	Intensive Conservation Area
NAD	Native Affairs Department
NAZ	National Archives of Zimbabwe
NPA	Native Purchase Area
NLHA	Native Land Husbandry Act
PLO	Private Locations Ordinance
RAU	Rhodesia Agricultural Union
RNFU	Rhodesia National Farmers' Union
WAP	White Agricultural Policy
WWII	World War Two
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction, Literature Review and Methodology

Introduction

Dairy farming is political. Indeed, developments in the Zimbabwean dairy industry have attracted a lot of attention in international news during the last five years. Circumstances in which the country's first lady, Grace Mugabe, has established herself as arguably the biggest dairy farmer in the land, and one of the major players on the processing and marketing scene have been as fascinating as they have been controversial. After taking over Foyle Farm in Mazoe (an agriculturally rich district about 48km outside the capital, Harare) at the height of the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP), she established a huge dairy empire, which, at the end of 2012, was the largest dairy farm in the country.¹ The farm was formerly owned by a white commercial dairy farmer and media reports suggest that she paid only 40% of its value to the Agricultural and Rural Development Agency (ARDA), before evicting newly resettled black farmers in the district to make way for her ever growing herd. She has been accused of forcing Nestlé, a global multi-national milk processing company, to purchase her milk. Until 2009, Nestlé was the biggest customer of the First Family's Gushungo dairy farm, supplying up to 15% of all of Nestlé's milk requirements. However, due to international pressure over its links with Mugabe's business, Nestlé stopped buying milk from Gushungo holdings in October 2009, a move which nearly precipitated the forced closure of the company on allegations of championing a 'regime change agenda'. Initially, members of the Affirmative Action Group (AAG)² drove tanks of milk from the farm and dumped them at Nestlé's premises. When the company still refused to purchase milk from Gushungo Holdings, Mugabe established a huge dairy processing plant – reportedly the second most sophisticated in Southern Africa. She launched her own range of products to directly contest Nestlé's control of the dairy market.³ Hubristically naming her company "Alpha and Omega", she launched her own brand of manufactured products including

¹ <http://www.newzimbabwe.com/news-8412-Grace+Mugabe+takes+on+Nestle/news.aspx>. See <http://www.thezimbabwean.co/news/zimbabwe/56662/dairy-plant-for-gushungo.html>.

² The Affirmative Action Group is a Zimbabwean organization that was formed ostensibly as a lobby group agitating for the empowerment of black entrepreneurs in industry, agriculture and mining. Its leadership invariably has strong connections to the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front) (ZANU PF), particularly because of its indigenization and black empowerment rhetoric.

³ See, <http://www.newzimbabwe.com/news-8412-Grace+Mugabe+takes+on+Nestle/news.aspx>.

fresh milk, sour milk, powdered milk, ice cream and yoghurt, a development which has transformed the first lady's business into the 'udder of the nation'. Happening at a time when the country faced a food deficit and acute foreign currency shortages that contributed to the virtual collapse of the national milk procurement and marketing parastatal, the Dairibord,⁴ this has underlined the centrality of power in the dynamics of dairying⁵, but also highlights how far dairying has come from a liminal and marginal position in the political economy of Zimbabwe's agrarian industry. This liminality requires a nuanced historical explanation as it is apparently belied by the centrality of cattle.

Historically, the cattle industry has been at the centre of the country's agro-based economy throughout Zimbabwean⁶ colonial and post-colonial history. Indeed, considering the country's tropical climate, early colonial authorities concluded that Zimbabwe was essentially a cattle country, and that it "would be hard to over-emphasize the pre-eminent importance of the cattle industry as a branch of agriculture".⁷ With cattle as a common denominator, the dairy and beef industries have generally been regarded by agriculturalists as two sides of the same coin. From the early 1890s, at the time of settler occupation in Southern Rhodesia, the two industries have shared a symbiotic, sympatric but highly asymmetrical relationship. Although the country initially struggled to meet local demand (as shown in chapter 2 and 3 of this thesis), the dairy industry grew so much that by 1980, with the attainment of majority rule, Zimbabwe was one of the few countries in sub-Saharan Africa with a well-developed dairy industry. Indeed, by the 1990s, Zimbabwe had established itself as a major player on the regional dairy and beef markets

⁴ The Dairibord is the national parastatal responsible for the buying of milk from producers, and processing and marketing of dairy products to the public. As a result of diminishing dairy output due to the invasion and seizure of most commercial dairy farms during the Land Reform Programme and the economic meltdown which bedeviled Zimbabwe during the first decade of the 21st century, the Dairibord nearly collapsed, and was unable to supply dairy products to the public.

⁵ By her own admission, Grace Mugabe used her husband's powerful political position to access foreign currency with which a modern dairy manufacturing farm was constructed at a time when the foreign currency reserves in the country were low. See *The Herald*, 30 April, 2012.

⁶ From the early 1890s to 1964, present day Zimbabwe was known as Southern Rhodesia. In 1964, after Northern Rhodesia's attainment of independence, the prefix "Southern" was dropped to become Rhodesia until independence in 1980, when it was renamed Zimbabwe. Although the name Southern Rhodesia is used predominantly in this thesis to reflect the official name used during the time under review, the title includes the name "Zimbabwe" because it is the name used in reference to the contemporary nation-state.

⁷ The notion that Zimbabwe was (and still is) most suited to a pastoral economy has been stated (and restated) by many agricultural authorities during the colonial and post-colonial period. For assertions separated by a century but analogous in content, see *Report of the Director of Agriculture, 1911*, and *The Chronicle*, 18 August 2014.

at a time when the majority of African countries were struggling to satisfy internal demand.⁸ After South Africa and Kenya, Zimbabwe was the highest exporter of dairy products in tropical Africa between the 1960s and 1980s.⁹ It also boasted one of “the most well developed formal dairy marketing systems” in sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁰

These achievements, however, were reversed by the effects of the farm invasions which accompanied the Land Reform Programme from 2000 onwards. The number of commercial dairy farmers, which stood at over 500 during the 1990s, fell to just under 200 after the compulsory acquisition of land.¹¹ Similarly, as many cattle were either stolen, maimed or killed during the farm invasions,¹² the national herd fell from 104 483 milked cows in 1994 to 35 000 in 2004, while dairy production fell from 184 000 tonnes in 1998 to a mere 86 000 in 2007.¹³ This was part of widespread agrarian reverses: maize production fell from a peak of just over 2 million tonnes in 1996 to about 700 000 tonnes in 2008, while wheat production tumbled from 263 134 tonnes in 1996 to just 31 00 tonnes in 2008.¹⁴ Consequently, as a popular *bon mot* noted, the country went from southern Africa’s ‘bread basket’ to ‘basket case’. By 2008, Zimbabwe had become a net importer of all dairy products and nearly all other foodstuffs.¹⁵

Yet, despite its changing role in national food self-sufficiency, dairy farming in Zimbabwe has

⁸ See S. Mbogoh, *Dairy development and internal marketing in sub-Saharan Africa: performance, policies and options*, (Addis Abba: International Livestock Centre for Africa, 1984), 16. Also see, H.E. Jahnke, *Livestock production systems and livestock development in tropical Africa*, (Kiel: Wissenschaftsverlag Vank, 1982), 30.

⁹ R.F. Brokken, ‘Summary and review’, in R. Brokken and S. Seyoum (eds), *Dairy Marketing and development*, (Proceedings of a symposium held at the International Livestock Centre for Africa [ILCA], Addis Ababa, 26-30 November 1990), 19-20.

¹⁰ S. Mbogoh and J. Ochuanyo, ‘Kenya’s dairy industry: The marketing system and the pricing policies for fresh milk’, in R. Brokken and S. Seyoum (eds), *Dairy Marketing and development*, 41.

¹¹ L. Ndlovu, ‘Livestock Research and development’, in M. Rukuni and C.K. Eicher (eds) *Zimbabwe’s Agricultural Revolution*, (Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 2001), 245-257.

¹² W. Wolmer, *From wilderness vision to farm invasions. Conservation and development in Zimbabwe’s south-east lowveld* (Oxford: James Currey, 2007), 197. Also see, A. Selby, ‘Commercial Farmers and the state: State Interest groups and land reform in Zimbabwe’, PhD thesis, University of Oxford, 2006, 303.

¹³ United Nations Development Programme, *Comprehensive Economic Recovery in Zimbabwe. A discussion document* (Harare: UNDP Zimbabwe, 2008). See also *The Zimbabwe Independent*, 21 April 2006.

¹⁴ Special Report: Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and World Food Programme (WFP) Crop and Food security Assessment Mission to Zimbabwe, 2010.

¹⁵ Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Zimbabwe was responsible for food security among the southern African nations under the banner of SADC, the regional bloc. By 2008, however, Zimbabwe depended on imports from Zambia, South Africa and overseas for the provision of virtually all of its dairy requirements, as local production fell dismally. See <http://www.bdlive.co.za/africa/africanews/2014/03/17/market-comment-zimbabwe-could-go-from-basket-case-to-breadbasket>

been relegated to the fringes of serious scholarly inquiry. Indeed, dairy farming has been dwarfed by the outpouring of scholarly work focusing on cattle ranching, maize and tobacco growing.¹⁶ This may be attributable to the fact that, for much of the colonial period, the three industries formed the lynchpin around which the Southern Rhodesian agrarian economy rotated. However, although it never competed with tobacco, maize and beef, dairy farming potentially provided the colony and its settlers with a steady income, and, until the 1970s, it was the fourth highest agricultural earner of export earnings.¹⁷ Moreover, as demonstrated in chapter 3, the development of the dairy industry was initially considered by the colonial state to be of strategic importance in the plans to establish in Southern Rhodesia a ‘white man’s country’, a phrase used in state propaganda offering assurances of national food self-sufficiency to would-be settlers. Thus, the dairy industry offers a lens through which larger socio-economic and political dynamics may be examined as they evolved over time.¹⁸

Scope of the study

As with current developments, Zimbabwe’s history shows that the intersection of economics, national politics, state policy and the agricultural sector has been a place of many tensions and competing agendas.¹⁹ These tensions arose out of the often conflicting interests of farmers, both settler and African, consumers and the state itself which successive administrations had to manage, in on-going attempts to develop a viable agricultural sector. Using the dairy industry as a lens, this thesis analyses the social and economic imperatives that shaped the trajectory that it

¹⁶ Together with maize and tobacco, there is a relatively large corpus of works focussing on beef production in colonial Zimbabwe. For instance, see I. Phimister, ‘Meat and monopolies: Beef cattle in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1938’ *Journal of African History*, 19, 3, (1978); V. Machingaidze, ‘The development of settler capitalist agriculture with particular reference to the role of the state, 1908-1980,’ PhD Thesis, University of London, 1980; N. Samasuwo, “‘There is something about cattle’”: Towards an economic history of the beef industry in colonial Zimbabwe, with special reference to the role of the state, 1939-1980’, PhD Thesis, University of Cape Town, 2000, and N. Samasuwo, ‘Food production and war supplies: Rhodesia’s beef industry during the Second World War, 1939-1945’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29, 2, (2003).

¹⁷ M. Bratton, ‘The comrades and the countryside: The politics of agricultural Policy in Zimbabwe’, *World Politics*, 39, 2 (1987), 332.

¹⁸ These three sectors of settler agriculture were, in terms of output and export performance, considered to be the most important for the colonial economy. At any given time during the colonial period, the three sectors contributed no less than 50 % of total agricultural export earnings in the country, and came to be referred to as the “three pillars of settler agriculture”. See Machingaidze, ‘The development of settler capitalist agriculture with particular reference to the role of the state, 1908-1980,’ 7-32.

¹⁹ See P. Mosley, *The settler economies: studies in the economic history of Kenya and Southern Rhodesia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 12.

took over time. It eschews triumphalist Whiggish narratives often deployed in telling industry histories from the inside, and demonstrates that it followed a non-linear and complicated development path. It focuses on the interaction between the state (and its shifting and often ambiguous interests), and producers – both white and black – which shaped and re-shaped dairy policy within the context of evolving socio-economic and political developments. Given Southern Rhodesia's status as a British colony and the country's participation on the external export markets, this study also considers the impact of the international economic system and its influence on the development of the local dairy industry. Policy-making itself, as shall be demonstrated in this thesis, was often an *ad hoc*, reactive and a hit and miss affair, and not always a product of careful planning and plotting on the part of the colonial government.

Although, as already noted, the country had a relatively well developed dairy sector by 1980, what made the Zimbabwean case somewhat different is that whereas dairy produce was predominantly derived from black small-scale holders in Kenya, Zimbabwe's formal market was overwhelmingly dominated by white large-scale producers, with black producers making a negligible contribution towards the formal sector.²⁰ Zimbabwe's dairy industry in particular was characterised by marked differences in the modes of production between white large-scale producers and indigenous and predominantly small-scale producers. On the one hand, by 1980, the large-scale sector was a more "efficient and well established commercial sector of some 525 farmers milking exotic animals (who) produced about 250 million litres of milk per year, supplying the urban market."²¹ The small-scale sector, on the other hand, consisted of an unquantified number of small-holder farmers milking indigenous animals seasonally for home consumption and local sales."²² Although such dualism pervaded the colonial agricultural sector, the virtual absence of African participation on the 'formal' dairy market in Zimbabwe was peculiar to the dairy industry, as Africans still marketed cattle, maize and Turkish tobacco during the colonial era. Thus, this thesis traces the historical factors that led to such a scenario. As will be demonstrated, dairy farming is peculiar for the particularly high levels of expertise,

²⁰ See B.R. Henson, 'Dairy Farmers and markets in rural Zimbabwe', in Brokken and Seyoum (eds), *Dairy Marketing and development*, 279-280. The author is aware of the contentious nature of the phrase 'formal market'. In this context the two words are used to refer to the mainstream, government regulated marketing system, while 'informal' refers to the less regulated market in which the government wields relatively less influence.

²¹ Henson, 'Dairy Farmers and markets in rural Zimbabwe', 279.

²² Henson, 'Dairy Farmers and markets in rural Zimbabwe', 279.

technology, and the significantly bigger outlay of capital needed to produce and handle dairy products. Produced nearly on a daily basis, milk – the primary dairy commodity – is highly perishable and requires high cost transportation and storage.²³ This happening, as it did, in a context of very little state assistance profoundly affected African participation, leading to its eventual disappearance from the late 1940s onwards. Although focusing predominantly on the commercial sector, this thesis does acknowledge the informal dairy sector, and examines the factors that contributed to its existence and its interaction with the formal sector.

This thesis explores more than shifts in the political economy or agrarian change. Given the high level of hygiene and sanitation that is required in the industry, dairy farming offers a useful window into the interface between ‘traditional’ African and western notions of cleanliness and the prejudices that played out between African producers and the settler community. As chapter 4 demonstrates, dairy farming became a site of struggle as the settler community brought pressure to bear on the colonial state to eliminate African producers from the mainstream dairy market. Hence, by 1951, when the Dairy Marketing Board (DMB) was established, the number of black farmers registered as dairy producers was negligible. This was notwithstanding the fact that, throughout the period under review, no legal instrument was employed explicitly outlawing the participation of black farmers on the market. However, while claiming to standardise the industry along international models, the legislative interventions that were made effectively eliminated African producers as they received neither the training nor the financial assistance that was afforded white farmers to comply with the regulations. While acknowledging that colonial agrarian policy was designed to develop settler agriculture with African enterprise playing a peripheral role,²⁴ this thesis demonstrates that the relationship between white farmers and the state was often uneasy and frequently confrontational. Indeed, as will become clear in this thesis, although they received considerable technical assistance and subsidies, white farmers periodically protested that the state was not rendering adequate support to them, particularly in

²³ See H. Schelhaas, ‘The dairy industry in a changing world’ *Smallholder dairying in the tropics*, ILRI, Nairobi (1999), 1-2.

²⁴ The role of the state in aiding settler capitalist agriculture and under developing African agricultural enterprise after 1908 has been discussed by a number of scholars. For instance, see I. Phimister, ‘Peasant production and underdevelopment in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1914’, *African Affairs*, 73, 291 (1974), 217-228; Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*, (London: Heinemann, 1977) and Machingaidze, ‘The development of settler capitalist agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with particular reference to the role of the state, 1908-1939’.

the form of higher producer prices. While white farmers, who constituted a significant political constituency for political leaders, clearly received preferential treatment, it will be shown that the government also had other interest groups, particularly consumers, to protect for political reasons. As William Munroe argues, one of the principal aims of the state (both colonial and post-colonial) is to appease all political constituents in order to perpetuate its incumbency.²⁵ Thus – as this thesis will show – white farmers’ interests were neither always opposed to those of Africans nor inclusive with those of other white communities or the state.

Moreover, government itself was not a homogeneous entity. Indeed, a study of the development of dairy farming in Southern Rhodesia shows that the various government departments which were involved with the industry often did not agree on policy and its implementation. Officials of the Native Affairs Department (NAD), under which African agriculture fell, frequently clashed with officials of the Department of Agriculture’s Dairy Division in both policy formulation and implementation. Diana Jeater has argued that the making of ‘native policy’ in Southern Rhodesia was often ambiguous, and a product of arguments, debates, and profoundly conflicting interests among whites – administrators, missionaries, and settlers – all of whom interacted with Africans with agendas of their own.²⁶ As this thesis will show, the debates and conflicting interests among sections of the settler community were not limited to the making of ‘native policy’, but extended to policy-making and implementation in general. These differences often led to inconsistencies in the articulation of policy. In the same vein, farmers (both Africans and whites) did not always respond uniformly, nor did they always speak with the same voice. Their voice and responses were guided by their different socio-political, economic and spatial²⁷ interests.

The period under consideration begins in the 1890s, with the beginning of colonial occupation. However, in order to fully understand the impact of colonialism on African milk regimes and

²⁵ W. Munroe, *The moral economy of the state: Conservation, community development and state making in Zimbabwe*, (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1998), 28-33.

²⁶ D. Jeater, ‘Imagining Africans: scholarship, fantasy, and science in colonial administration, 1920s Southern Rhodesia,’ *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 38, 1, (2005), 1.

²⁷ For the early colonial period, Southern Rhodesia was generally divided into two provinces: Mashonaland and Matabeleland. Due to the climatic, topographical and ecological variations between the two provinces, and indeed, the individual differences between districts within the provinces, the peculiar needs and interests of the farmers were not homogeneous.

African responses to the emergence of a market dominated system, an overview of pre-colonial production and consumption systems is given. The thesis closes its analysis in 1951 for three reasons. Firstly, to the extent that it witnessed the establishment of the DMB, which transformed the entire dairy regulatory and marketing system, 1952 marked a watershed year in the history of the dairy industry in Southern Rhodesia. The changes that came with the establishment of the statutory body have been examined in a separate study, and the socio-economic factors in which these changes occurred do merit further study.²⁸ Secondly, the passage of the 1951 Native Land Husbandry Act brought with it a new regime in the African livestock sector which radically affected African milk production from 1951 onwards. Thirdly, the advent of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1953 brought with it a change in the marketing policy, since Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland were now considered as part of the ‘domestic market’ which led to the extension of the territorial influence of the DMB.²⁹

Literature review

For all their importance in most Southern African societies’ socio-economic and political organisations, cattle have received little historical attention. Indeed, it is surprising that a region with so small a percentage of arable land, compared to Europe and the United States, should have so little material devoted to pastoral history. In comparison with the beef industry, dairy farming offers, to use Beinart’s words, “a silence that echoes the stillness of the veld.”³⁰ His argument that, historiographically, “South Africa’s commercial pastoral economy seems to have been dwarfed internationally by Australasia and Argentina, or locally by the behemoths of mining and maize” rings true of the Zimbabwean situation.³¹ Shapiro, Jesse and Foltz have summed up the need for more research in the southern African context more broadly thus: “the African development literature is relatively thin on livestock in general, but thinner still for dairy, and woefully inadequate for dairy marketing.”³²

²⁸ G. Hove, ‘Creating order and stability? The Dairy Marketing Board, milk (over) production, and the politics of marketing in colonial Zimbabwe, 1952-1970s’, *Historia* 58, 2, 2013, 119-156.

²⁹ Hove, ‘Creating order and stability? The Dairy Marketing Board, milk (over) production, and the politics of marketing in colonial Zimbabwe, 1952-1970s’, 132.

³⁰ W. Beinart, *The rise of Conservation in South Africa. Settlers, Livestock, and the Environment 1770-1950*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 5.

³¹ Beinart, *The rise of Conservation in South Africa*, 5.

³² K. Shapiro, E. Jesse, J. Foltz, ‘Dairy marketing and development in Africa’, in R. Brokken and S. Seyoum (eds), *Dairy marketing in Sub-Saharan Africa Dairy Marketing and development*, 19-20.

A review of Zimbabwe's agrarian history shows that there is no in-depth historical monograph solely devoted to dairy farming. The most in-depth historical studies have so far focused on the maize, tobacco and beef industries. This is largely attributable to the fact that, for much of the colonial period, these sectors were considered to be the three pillars of settler agriculture. To date, there are only two available historical studies of dairy farming in colonial Zimbabwe. In his piece, Jeft Ngadze provides an insightful but, of necessity, truncated overview of the development of commercial dairy farming between 1908 and 1952.³³ As his study is focused on the marketing side, particularly Southern Rhodesia's climatic and geographical disadvantages in comparison with major dairying countries of the world, Ngadze's work does not explore the social and economic dynamics that shaped the country's performance on the international scene. Moreover, his work is largely silent on African production. My previous study focuses on the impact of the DMB in stabilising the production and marketing aspects of the dairy industry.³⁴ The study analyses the role played by the statutory board as a vehicle through which the government could regulate and control production and marketing amid the general shortages that were experienced in the post-World War Two (WWII) period. By focusing on the statutory board, however, the latter study does not discuss the social and political imperatives that affected the development trajectory that the dairy industry took over time. As in Ngadze's study, African enterprise in dairy farming does not feature in any significant manner in this study.

There are, however, analyses by agricultural economists, veterinary and animal scientists that provide useful insights into dairy farming in Zimbabwe. Writing in 1971, J. Oliver sets out the basic requirements for dairy production in the tropics, giving the basic principles in breeding and feeding of dairy cattle, rearing calves and milking methods.³⁵ Similarly, C. Pederson and J.

³³ J. Ngadze, 'The development of commercial dairying from an international perspective: a case of a late comer', Honours dissertation, University of Zimbabwe, 1985.

³⁴ Hove, 'Creating order and stability? The Dairy Marketing Board, milk (over) production, and the politics of marketing in colonial Zimbabwe, 1952-1970s'. For more detail see, G. Hove, 'Creating order and stability? The development of commercial dairying in Southern Rhodesia under the Dairy Marketing Board (D.M.B), 1952-1980', Masters' Dissertation, University of Zimbabwe, 2010.

³⁵ Writing from a technical view point, he bemoans the poor sanitary facilities and antiquated milking methods and climatic factors that adversely worked against the production of good quality milk and butter in the colony. J. Oliver, 'An introduction to dairying in Southern Rhodesia.' University of Rhodesia, Department of Agriculture, Occasional paper 3, 1971.

Madson's study on the constraints suffered by farmers in calf rearing and milk production in the Sanyati district offers some valuable technical information on the factors that adversely affected dairy farming in the country.³⁶ Using a quantitative approach, he discusses the advantages of certain breeds over others in relation to the local environment of Sanyati to illustrate the importance of finding suitable breeds for specific environments. N. French, J. Tyrer and W. Hirst's study on the productivity and morbidity of cattle on smallholder dairy farms in the Chikwaka communal lands gives an extensive discussion of the problems faced by black small scale producers in independent Zimbabwe.³⁷ Although these studies offer valuable data about different factors affecting dairy farming in Zimbabwe, they are presentist in approach. By giving a historical account of the dairy industry, this thesis seeks to rectify this lacuna in the existing body of knowledge on dairy farming, in turn offering (among other points) context for further scientific studies.

Zimbabwe's agrarian historiography

There is a considerable body of literature on colonial Zimbabwe's agriculture in general on which this study draws, and to which it seeks to contribute. For much of the pre-1960s period, Zimbabwean historiography was dominated by colonialist/liberal historiography which, by extolling the 'virtues of settler civilisation', defended Southern Rhodesian colonial agrarian policy and settler society in general. Colonialist historiography in Southern Rhodesia, like Afrikaner Nationalist historiography in South Africa, was, as David Chanaiwa observed, "primarily written to rationalise invasions, massacres and predatoriness."³⁸ As settlers were confronting problems of self-determination in an alien and hostile environment, they "not only needed historians, but also a distinct historical folklore of their own".³⁹ While political leaders in South Africa went to the extent of appointing 'official historians' such as Theal for the Cape Colony, in Southern Rhodesia Marshall Hole (whose role in determining Agricultural policy from 1910 is discussed in chapter 3 of this thesis) was a typical example of official writers of the

³⁶ C. Pedersen and J. Madsen, 'Constraints and opportunities for improved milk production and calf rearing in Sanyati, Zimbabwe', *Livestock Research for rural development Journal*, 10, 1, (1998), 14-17.

³⁷ N.P. French, J. Tyrer and W.M. Hirst, 'Smallholder dairy farming in the Chikwaka communal land, Zimbabwe: Birth, death and demographic trends', *Preventive Veterinary Medicine*, 48, (2001), 101-112.

³⁸ D. Chanaiwa, 'Historiographical traditions of Southern Africa', *Paper prepared for the international Conference on the Historiography of Southern Africa*, (December, 1976), 12.

³⁹ Chanaiwa, 'Historiographical traditions of Southern Africa', 14.

time.⁴⁰ A colonial official himself, he often wrote pieces in defence of colonial agricultural policy.⁴¹

The earliest accounts in Southern Rhodesia were written by colonial explorers, settlers and officials. African methods of production are disparaged and the ‘virtues’ of settler civilisation extolled in these works. Perhaps the most well-known representative of this stratum is Lewis Gann, who defended colonial policy as having been beneficial for both African and settler groups. Writing in the 1960s, Gann discussed the social and economic developments during the early years of colonial occupation, paying particular attention to what he perceived to be the massive steps towards civilisation which accompanied occupation.⁴² Gann also defended the passage of the Land Apportionment Act, arguing that as ‘an essay in trusteeship’: the Act was fair because it ensured that some land was set aside for African occupation and offered paternal protection to vulnerable African communities.⁴³ Early colonial administrators discussed livestock issues, albeit tangentially: chiefly depicting their successes in conquering the ‘Dark Continent’. In her 1927 article, ‘*Southern Rhodesia: A white man’s country in the tropics*’, Ethel Tawse-Jollie outlines the country’s social and geographical anatomy, celebrating the land’s suitability for European settlement, with little regard to the interests of indigenous peoples.⁴⁴ For these writers, primitive African methods and perceived recalcitrance to join the capitalist colonial market, and not land shortages and lack of state support, were the main for African agricultural underdevelopment during the colonial era.

There have been accounts by colonial officials appearing in the *Rhodesian Agricultural Journal* (itself a vehicle for the development of settler agriculture) discussing dairy farming. John Cory

⁴⁰ Chanaiwa, ‘Historiographical traditions of Southern Africa’, 14.

⁴¹ Marshal Hole served in various capacities in the colonial government, including the following: Secretary for Matabeleland, Civil Commissioner for Bulawayo and Chief Native Commissioner for Matabeleland between 1901 and 1913. His most recognizable publications include M. Hole, *The making of Rhodesia*, (London: Cass, 1926) and M. Hole, *Old Rhodesian days*, (London, Cass, 1968).

⁴² L.H. Gann, *A History of Southern Rhodesia: early days to 1934*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965), 162. Also see L.H. Gann and M. Gelfand, *Huggins of Rhodesia: the Man and his Country*, (London, Allen and Unwin, 1964).

⁴³ L.H. Gann, ‘The Land Apportionment Act in Southern Rhodesia: An Essay in trusteeship, National Archives of Rhodesia and Nyasaland’, Occasional paper, (Government Printer, 1963), 71-91.

⁴⁴ E. Tawse-Jollie, ‘Southern Rhodesia: a white man’s country’, *Geographical Review*, 17, 1, (1927). Tawse Jollie was a prominent politician during the early years of colonial rule: she was the first female member of Southern Rhodesian Legislative Assembly, and a leading figure in the campaign for Self-Rule.

wrote extensively in this journal, mainly giving advice to settler farmers on successful dairy farming. African agriculture was either disparaged or totally ignored in most of his articles.⁴⁵ As an official of the Dairy Division, which fell under the Department of Agriculture, Cory wrote a series of articles in the *Rhodesia Agricultural Journal* with a view to give expert technical advice to settler dairy farmers on matters pertaining to the industry. Although his articles are particularly useful insofar as they give insights into government thinking, one has to read against the grain in order to pick some evident prejudices towards African dairy production.

A number of settler ranchers have written accounts dwelling on the “colourful frontier character of the new colony”.⁴⁶ L.T. Tracey, C. Truepenney⁴⁷, W. Robertson and D.M. Sommerville⁴⁸ also chronicled their experiences as settler ranchers during the early days of colonial occupation. Tracey offered a detailed description of the colony’s geographical and ecological set up, and how settler farmers could gainfully utilise the regional differences in climate and physical terrain.⁴⁹ In the same vein, Robertson, a rancher in Sinoia, gave an account depicting the life of early settler ranchers, their constant socio-economic struggles, and (unwittingly) also revealed their condescending attitudes towards African livestock practices and cattle breeds.⁵⁰ He claimed that “the background to many years of ranching life in Rhodesia was the land itself, the twenty seven square miles of virgin bush, unaltered by man since the dawn of time.”⁵¹ Similarly, Sommerville only viewed Africans as a reservoir of cheap labour, which, he believed, was actually beneficial to them. He argued that, owing to the paternal intervention of the settler community, the African has “changed from a primitive man to a much more civilised being, with civilised wants and customs.”⁵² Although they must be read “against the grain” to counteract their racist ideology, such accounts are nevertheless useful in understanding the everyday experiences of settler

⁴⁵ Cory initially served as the Assistant Dairy Expert, before he became the Assistant Chief Dairy Officer in the 1930s. By 1935 he had risen to the position of Chief Dairy Officer. He wrote extensively on European dairy farming, encouraging settler farmers to emulate ‘modern’ standards of production. J. Cory, ‘The dairy scene in Rhodesia’, *Rhodesia Agricultural Journal*, 1, 2, (1952).

⁴⁶ See Samasuwo, “‘There is something about cattle’: Towards an economic history of the beef industry in colonial Zimbabwe, with special reference to the role of the state, 1939-1980”, 10.

⁴⁷ C. Truepeney. *Our African farm* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1965).

⁴⁸ D.M. Sommerville, *My life was a ranch* (Salisbury: Kailini, 1976).

⁴⁹ L.T. Tracey, *Approach to farming in Southern Rhodesia* (London: University of London press, 1953).

⁵⁰ W. Robertson, *Rhodesian Rancher*, (Glasgow: Blackie and Son, 1935).

⁵¹ Robertson, *Rhodesian Rancher*, 18.

⁵² Sommerville, *My life was a ranch*, 153.

ranchers, and the complexities of settler thinking at the time. Particularly relevant to dairy farming is C.G. Tracy's recent book in which he recounts his life experiences in Southern Rhodesia within a farming family. He describes the growth of his family's dairy herd at their farm and the various challenges they faced in developing a thriving dairy enterprise.⁵³

Liberal scholarship, as espoused and exemplified by William Barber in 1961, focussed on colonial agricultural policy and African participation mainly as labourers. Informed by modernisation theory, and drawing from Arthur Lewis's model of development theory in which he argues that labour was transferred from a low productivity indigenous sector to a highly productive capitalist economy⁵⁴, Barber argued that African agriculture in Southern Rhodesia was inherently underdeveloped prior to colonial occupation.⁵⁵ For him, the capitalist system, which the colonial establishment introduced, ultimately benefitted Africans to the extent that it enabled them to enter the money economy, which was supposedly a higher stage of development than the traditional sector.⁵⁶ The basic tenets of this argument were later adopted by Paul Mosley in his studies of colonial agrarian policy in Southern Rhodesian and Kenyan settler economies.⁵⁷ He argued, rather unconvincingly, that policies of settler colonialism did not cause African rural economies to regress. For him, far from damaging the indigenous agricultural economies, the population pressures did not check, but actually stimulated, African productivity.⁵⁸

The colonialist/liberal view, which tended to be Whiggish and laudatory of colonial agriculture, was inevitably subjected to increasing criticism from the 1970s onwards. Giovanni Arrighi's seminal paper, written in 1970, demolished Lewis and Barber's postulations that African agriculture was essentially underdeveloped prior to colonial occupation. Writing from a Marxist perspective, Arrighi focused on the state's coercive influence in the proletarianisation of the

⁵³ C.G. Tracy, *All for nothing? My life remembered*, (Harare: Weaver Press, 2009), 32-35.

⁵⁴ See W.A. Lewis, *Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labour* (Manchester: Manchester School, 1954).

⁵⁵ W. Barber, *The Economy of British Central Africa* (London: Athlone Press 1961), 93.

⁵⁶ Barber, *The Economy of British Central Africa*, 93.

⁵⁷ P. Mosley, 'Agricultural development and government policy in settler economies: the case of Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, 1900 – 1960', *Economic History Review*, 2, 32 (1982), 390-408.

⁵⁸ Mosley, 'Agricultural development and government policy in settler economies', 395.

African peasantry in Southern Rhodesia.⁵⁹ Arrighi also argues that, in the face of labour shortages, the state forcibly extracted labour from African areas because economic inducements had failed during the early years of occupation.⁶⁰ In an earlier work, Arrighi had noted that race and class were in many ways linked in the colony's socio-economic set up.⁶¹ In his book, *The political economy of Southern Rhodesia*, he traces the manner in which the British South Africa Company and the Responsible Government after 1923, embarked on a protracted and systematic process of primitive accumulation which was aimed at empowering settler agriculture.⁶² Arrighi's views were subsequently developed and advanced by a group of scholars who focused on the political economy from the mid-1970s onwards. These include Ian Phimister, Duncan Clarke and Charles van Onselen, whose works on peasant production and underdevelopment, African contract and domestic labour and racial inequalities, and mine worker consciousness, respectively, popularised the political economy paradigm during the 1970s.⁶³ Particularly important to this thesis is Phimister's piece which, as did Colin Bundy with the South African peasantry in 1979,⁶⁴ explored African agriculturalists' positive response to the market from 1890 until the late 1900s, when African agricultural enterprise was deliberately and systematically curtailed to favour settler capitalist agriculture.⁶⁵ In an edited book that examines the impact of colonial capitalism on African peasantries in Southern and Central Africa – *The roots of rural poverty in central and Southern Africa* – Robin Palmer makes a similar argument that African agricultural producers enjoyed significant prosperity on the colonial market during the first two decades of occupation.⁶⁶ Chapter 2 of this thesis engages and interrogates this notion of African agrarian prosperity from a dairying point of view.

⁵⁹ G. Arrighi, 'Labour Supplies in Historical Perspective: A Study of the Proletarianisation of the African Peasantry in Rhodesia', *Journal of Development Studies*, 6, 3, (1970), 197-234.

⁶⁰ Arrighi, 'Labour Supplies in Historical Perspective', 197-234.

⁶¹ G. Arrighi. *The political economy of Southern Rhodesia*, 16 (The Hague: Mouton, 1967), 12.

⁶² Arrighi, *The political economy of Southern Rhodesia*, 13.

⁶³ See Phimister, 'Peasant production and underdevelopment in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1914', 217-228; D. Clarke, the political economy of discrimination and underdevelopment in Rhodesia with special reference to the African worker, 1940-1973', PhD Thesis, St Andrews University, 1975 and C. Van Onselen, *Chibaro: African mine labour in Southern Rhodesia*, (London: Pluto Press, 1976).

⁶⁴ See C. Bundy, *The rise and fall of the South African peasantry*, (California: University of California Press, 1979).

⁶⁵ Phimister, 'Peasant production and underdevelopment in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1914', 217-228.

⁶⁶ R. Palmer, 'The Agricultural History of Rhodesia', in R. Palmer and N. Parsons (eds), *The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa*, (London: Heinemann, 1977).

Palmer's 1977 *magnum opus* on settler land alienation, eviction and racial discrimination is an important book in the political economy paradigm.⁶⁷ He documented the political, social and economic processes that culminated in the domination of white farmers in agricultural production, noting that that the underdevelopment of African agriculture was a double edged sword aimed at reducing African agricultural competition and creating a ready pool of cheap labour for settler farmers.⁶⁸ Palmer dismissed Gann's Eurocentric view that the Land Apportionment Act actually saved Africans from totally losing their land. He contended that the Act (and many others that followed) in fact perpetuated the impoverishment of African agricultural producers.⁶⁹ This thesis draws from this group of scholars extensively, particularly in the manner in which they demonstrate the underdevelopment of the African agrarian sector. However, by demonstrating that neither the state nor settler farmers themselves were homogenous entities, this thesis seeks to go beyond the issue of race that is so often used as the primary lens through which state/farmer relations have been examined.

Further research by Machingaidze in 1980 also focuses on the role of the state in the development of settler agriculture, stressing that without state support in the form of vast tracts of land at concessional rates, cheap labour and the provision of cheap labour, settler capitalist agriculture would have found it very hard to get off the ground in the first place. He adds that the effects of the Great Depression in the 1930s would have killed off any lingering settler agricultural endeavours.⁷⁰ He points to a plethora of problems faced by settlers: undercapitalisation, lack of expertise, market unavailability and a poor transport network which greeted settlers upon arrival in the colony, and then outlines state interventions in helping settlers establish themselves.⁷¹ He demonstrates that, in the final analysis, the state used African producers to subsidise settler agriculture during hard times.

⁶⁷ R. Palmer, *Land and racial domination in Rhodesia*, (London: Heinemann, 1977).

⁶⁸ Palmer, *Land and racial domination in Rhodesia*, 83.

⁶⁹ Palmer, *Land and racial domination in Rhodesia*, 16.

⁷⁰ V. Machingaidze, 'The development of settler capitalist agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with particular reference to the role of the state, 1908-1939', 57.

⁷¹ Machingaidze, 'The development of settler capitalist agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with particular reference to the role of the state, 1908-1939', 57 -58.

From a livestock viewpoint, Machingaidze's doctoral thesis offers a critical examination of the state's decisive role in assisting the Rhodesian cattle industry to overcome challenges of the pre-WW II period.⁷² The major limitation with Machingaidze's work, however, is that it focuses on beef farming to the exclusion of dairy farming, which constituted is grouped under the "other side-lines" sub-title. Using a similar Africanist viewpoint, Nhamo Samasuwo delineates the rise of the beef industry in war-time and post Second World War Rhodesia.⁷³ It analyses how the state's statutory marketing and pricing policies helped to develop the industry from its infancy to a stage where it had become a major earner of foreign currency on the export market.

Taken together, Machingaidze and Samasuwo's studies give a long historical account of the beef cattle industry from 1890 to 1980. The major limitation with both studies, however, is that while they acknowledge the exploitation of African livestock owners, they present Africans generally as passive victims of a colonial system. Very little is said of African agency in their responses to exploitative colonial policy. As will be shown in this dissertation, Africans did carve a niche within the colonial system through devising ways to counter exploitative policies. Since both works make only passing references to dairy farming, this thesis seeks to fill this gap by showing that dairy farming was not only an important adjunct of the cattle industry, but also that developments in one invariably affected the other. Moreover, Machingaidze and Samasuwo treated the state as largely homogeneous, with very little internal debates and differences within the bureaucracy. Yet, as this thesis shows, the state was wracked by contradictory and competing agendas, and the efficacy of policy-making and implementation was often mitigated by differences within the Agricultural Department, and between the Department and the Native Affairs Department. Nevertheless, this thesis engages many of the key debates first raised in Machingaidze and Samasuwo's studies, particularly the colonial breeding policy and the impact of bovine diseases.

Phimister and Alois Mlambo's works on the marketing of beef offer useful insights into

⁷² See chapter 4 of Machingaidze, 'The development of settler capitalist agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with particular reference to the role of the state, 1908-1939.'

⁷³ Samasuwo, "'There is something about cattle": Towards an economic history of the beef industry in colonial Zimbabwe, with special reference to the role of the state, 1939-1980'. Also see, N. Samasuwo, 'Food production and war supplies: Rhodesia's beef industry during the Second World War, 1939-1947,' *South African Historical Journal*, 58, 2 (2003), 42-64.

commodity marketing in colonial Zimbabwe. Phimister's article outlines the privileges enjoyed by settler ranchers such as cheap land and labour, and the availability of cheap indigenous cattle on which a settler herd could be built, and the factors that led to the failure of Southern Rhodesian beef producers to penetrate the international markets.⁷⁴ Owing to the production of predominantly low quality beef, Southern Rhodesia was unable to attract reputable international beef marketing companies, leading to the establishment of the Cold Storage Commission in 1938.⁷⁵ Thus, Mlambo's study on the role of the Cold Storage Commission focuses on the role of the Commission as a statutory body through which the colonial state regulated and shaped developments in the beef industry between 1938 and 1968.⁷⁶ Although limited to beef marketing, this studies offer interesting comparisons to the problems faced by creameries in marketing butter from the mid-1920s onwards that are discussed in chapter 4 and 5 of this thesis.

Cognate disciplines offer useful auxiliary analysis and material. Anthropological studies by Richard Mtetwa and Murray Steele on African livestock regimes in colonial Zimbabwe respond to the colonial discourse on the existence of the "cattle complex" theory – an anthropological view that assumed that Africans kept large herds of cattle for socio-religious purposes to the point of economic irrationality. They view the reluctance of Africans to sell their livestock necessarily as a form of resistance to the exploitative nature of the colonial market. Writing in 1979, Mtetwa specifically states that "there has been nothing mystical about cattle (among Africans): they have been first and foremost an economic asset and all the socio-religious attitudes held by Africans are based on their economic value."⁷⁷ With regards to their perceived reluctance to sell cattle, Mtetwa adds that:

Africans have always been willing and ready to sell their cattle provided the prices are good. Their prevailing reluctance to sell their cattle in the capitalist market is based on knowledge that they are being exploited: that prices are far below what their cattle are worth. Thus, capitalist exploitation is responsible for Africans' reluctance to sell their cattle and not their traditional or irrational attitudes, as has been long alleged.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ I. Phimister. 'Meat and monopolies: Beef cattle in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1938', *Journal of African History*, 19, 3 (1978), 391-414.

⁷⁵ Phimister, 'Meat and monopolies: Beef cattle in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1938', 400-413.

⁷⁶ A.S. Mlambo, 'The Cold Storage Commission: A colonial parastatal, 1938-1963', *Zambezia*, 23, 1 (1996), 53-72.

⁷⁷ R.M.G. Mtetwa. 'Myth or reality?: The cattle complex with reference to Rhodesia', *Zambezia*, 1 (1978), 23.

⁷⁸ Mtetwa. 'Myth or reality?: The cattle complex with reference to Rhodesia', 23.

While concurring that the premise of the cattle complex theory was flawed, Steele gives a further dimension by focussing on the economic value of cattle outside the market. He argues that by preferring to keep their livestock and resisting de-stocking measures, Africans kept their cattle for their utility value.⁷⁹ While scholarship on colonial livestock policy and African responses has been actively engaged on the cattle complex theory, very little attention has been paid to African milk usage and response to the colonial market in Southern Rhodesia. Hence, engaging existing historical and anthropological studies undertaken in east Africa and South Africa,⁸⁰ this thesis seeks to fill this gaping lacuna on colonial Zimbabwe's livestock history.⁸¹

Nationalist/patriotic history, agrarian reform and post-colonial narratives

Nationalist historiography emerged during the 1960s, partly motivated by rising African nationalism across the African continent and the euphoria of independence in neighbouring countries. It gained further currency during the 1970s, and was adopted by the post-colonial state for its Africanist rhetoric.⁸² In Southern Rhodesia this was propelled by Terence Ranger's *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia*⁸³ and *African Voice in Southern Rhodesia* in 1970.⁸⁴ Attempts were made to reconstruct the development of pre-colonial modes of production and African resistance to colonial encroachment. This nationalist approach was adopted by a few historians in independent Zimbabwe, whose work was, to use Preben Kaarsholm's words, "just as mythologically oriented as its colonial precedent".⁸⁵

⁷⁹ M. Steele, 'The economic function of African-owned cattle in colonial Zimbabwe', *Zambezia*, 9, 1 (1981), 29-49.

⁸⁰ On studies on the role of milk in the Zulu kingdom see, P.K. Bjerk, 'They Poured Themselves into the Milk: Zulu Political Philosophy under Shaka', *Journal of African History*, 47, (2006), 1 – 19. Examples of east African studies include K. Århem, 'Maasai Food Symbolism: The Cultural Connotations of Milk, Meat, and Blood in the Pastoral Maasai Diet', *Anthropos Institute*, 84, (1989), 1-23, C. Taylor, *Milk, Honey, and Money: Changing Concepts in Rwandan Healing*, (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), and H.K. Schneider, 'The Role of Cattle Among the Pakot and in East Africa,' *American Anthropologist*, New series, 59, 2, (1957), 278-300.

⁸¹ See Chapter 2 of this thesis.

⁸² The ZANU (PF) government mobilized Africanist writers to justify the Land Reform programme. While reference was made to the Africanist writings of the 1960s and 1970s, new scholarship also arose defending the need for Land Reform. For a more detailed discussion see, T. Nyamunda, 'Insights into independent Zimbabwe: Some historiographical reflections', *Strategic Review for Southern Africa*, 36, 1, 74-78.

⁸³ T. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, 1896 – 7. A study in African resistance*, (London: Heinemann, 1967).

⁸⁴ T. Ranger, *The African voice in Southern Rhodesia 1898-1930*, (London: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

⁸⁵ P. Kaarsholm, 'The past as battlefield in Rhodesia and Zimbabwe', Collected Seminar Papers, *Institute of Commonwealth Studies*, 42, (1992), 156.

Moyo's post-1990 works on post-colonial land policy became increasingly nationalist in outlook in the way he, as Angus Selby observes, took an "increasingly sympathetic stance towards the ruling party" and the latter's propensity to exploit that in its rhetoric.⁸⁶ Indeed, Moyo views the farm invasions that preceded the FTLRP as "fundamentally progressive", notwithstanding the chaos and food insecurity that followed both the invasions and the FTLRP.⁸⁷ While presenting the white farming community in Zimbabwe as homogeneous, Moyo's analyses blamed farmers for their reluctance to allow for land transfers which would upset their privileged position in commercial agriculture.⁸⁸ This nationalist/patriotic history has, however, been challenged by some scholars. Scholars such as Amanda Hammar, Jocelyn Alexander and Joan McGregor, Eric Worby, Patrick Bond and Masimba Manyanya have uncovered the destructive nature of land reform in the manner in which it was undertaken and the politics of patronage underpinning it.⁸⁹ While acknowledging the privileged position of the white farming community, they also reveal the post-colonial government's politics of patronage and exhausted nationalism. Although the scope of this thesis does not cover this period, it draws from the manner in which the state and its interests play out in the country's agricultural political economy.

Another rich vein of work arose during the post-colonial period, focusing on African resistance, agency and their role in shaping colonial policy. Following on Ranger's work on peasant consciousness and resistance in Southern Rhodesia,⁹⁰ more recent scholars such as Jocelyn Alexander have used oral sources to illuminate individual experiences of African peasants to chip away at the colonial and post-colonial state's overbearing influence on socio-economic life. Writing in 2003, Alexander traces the continuous remapping of agrarian landscapes of settlement

⁸⁶ A. Selby, 'Commercial Farmers and the State: Interest Group Politics and Land Reform in Zimbabwe', PhD Thesis, University of Oxford, 2006, 17.

⁸⁷ S. Moyo, 'The land question' in I. Mandaza (ed), *Zimbabwe: The political economy of transition, 1980 – 1986*, (Dakar: Codesria, 1986), also see Moyo and Yeros, (eds), *Reclaiming the land: The resurgence of rural movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America*, (Harare: Zed Books, 2005).

⁸⁸ S. Moyo, 'The land occupations movement and democratisation: the contradictions of the neoliberal agenda in Zimbabwe', *Studies* 26, (2002), 1.

⁸⁹ See A. Hammar, B. Raftopoulos and S. Jenson, *Zimbabwe's unfinished business: Rethinking land, state and nation in the context of crisis*, (Harare: Weaver Press, 2003); E. Worby, 'The new agrarian politics' in A. Hammar, B. Raftopoulos and S. Jenson, *Zimbabwe's unfinished business: Rethinking Land, state and nation in the context of crisis*; J. Alexander and J. McGregor, 'Elections, land and the politics of opposition in Matabeleland', *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 1, 510-533 and P. Bond and M. Manyanya, *Zimbabwe's Plunge, Exhausted Nationalism, neo-liberalism and the search for social justice*, (London: Merlin Press, 2002).

⁹⁰ T.O. Ranger, *Peasant consciousness and guerrilla war in Zimbabwe*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

and dispossession, production and punishment, authority and resistance, from the arrival of white settlers in the 1890s to the eviction of white farmers alongside farm workers in early 2000.⁹¹ Pius Nyambara's analyses state policy which aimed at increasing African production of cotton in order to satisfy British needs, and peasant resistance between 1904 and 1953.⁹² He pays particular attention to African farmers' reluctance to enter into cotton production due to the low profitability of the exercise and domestic food insecurity which often accompanied over-indulgence in cash-crop production.⁹³

There has also been a recent rise in scholarship that explores the colonial state and its relationship with African farmers. In his studies of the economic conditions that existed as a consequence of the colonial land policies, Ian Scoones examine state policy and its shortcomings in the making of 'native policy'. In showing state misconceptions of African agrarian systems,⁹⁴ he illustrates that cattle population density was not always directly responsible for soil erosion in many areas, as the colonial authorities always argued.⁹⁵ Allison Shutt has added a significant dimension to studies on the interaction between the colonial state and African cattle owners in Southern Rhodesia. In her 2002 examination of the 1938 cattle culling and sales in Gutu and Victoria reserves, Shutt exposes some of the loose assumptions made by the Native Affairs Department in their views towards African cattle owners.⁹⁶ Shutt, in the final analysis, reveals the tensions that existed within the settler community itself, particularly when it came to African affairs.

These works are useful not only in explaining state/African farmer relations, but also in

⁹¹ J. Alexander, *The unsettled land. State making and the politics of land in Zimbabwe 1893-2003*, (Harare: Weaver Press, 2006).

⁹² P. Nyambara. 'Colonial Policy and peasant cotton agriculture in Southern Rhodesia, 1904-1953', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 33, 1 (2000), 81-111.

⁹³ Nyambara. "Colonial Policy and peasant cotton agriculture in Southern Rhodesia, 1904-1953.

⁹⁴ I. Scoones, 'Households, lineage groups and ecological dynamics: Issues for livestock research and development in Zimbabwe's communal lands,' in B. Cousins and C. Jackson et al (eds), *Socio-economic dimensions of livestock production in the communal lands of Zimbabwe*, (Harare: Longman books, 1988). Also see I. Scoones, 'Livestock populations and household economics: A case study from southern Zimbabwe', PhD Thesis, University of London, 1990.

⁹⁵ I. Scoones, 'Land degradation and livestock production in Zimbabwe's communal areas.' *Land degradation and rehabilitation*, 3, (1992), 99-113.

⁹⁶ A. Shutt, 'The settlers' cattle complex: the etiquette of culling cattle in colonial Zimbabwe, 1938', *Journal of African History*, 43, 2, (2002), 263-283.

exploring the heterogeneity of opinion within different arms of the state and how they shaped state/ farmer relations. As shown in chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis, differences among state actors gave Africans an opportunity to contravene and ultimately reshape policy. Like Shutt, Drinkwater also explores fractures within the state in the formulation and implementation of agricultural policies. He explains that coercive agrarian policies were produced and reproduced within state bureaucracies despite their repeated failures, arguing that the state was often unable to understand the working of African agriculture, and instead sought to “impose technical solutions that failed in their own terms and met with repeated resistance.”⁹⁷ These studies are informative in the examination of African production of dairy products, and how they responded to colonial policy towards dairy farming, the commercial aspect of which was tailored by the state to develop as an exclusive settler enterprise. The major limitations with these studies, however, is that they do not show change, in both policy and farmer responses, over time. This thesis seeks a longer understanding of the imperatives that influenced change and continuity in policy using the dairy industry, itself a neglected area in Zimbabwe’s agrarian historiography.

The position of the white farming community in post-colonial Zimbabwe has received significant scholarly attention. Selby’s doctoral thesis demonstrates that the influence of the white farming community during the 1980s was overestimated, while emphasizing that the farmers themselves were not a homogeneous political group.⁹⁸ While his study illuminates the relations between white farmers and the post-colonial state from an organisational point of view, this thesis explores colonial state/farmer relations from an industrial perspective. Rory Pilosoff has recently written a moving historical account of white farmers’ voices in Zimbabwe within the context of the constantly shifting socio-economic and political dispensations between the 1970s and 2005.⁹⁹ Pilosoff captures the nature of white farmer voices together with the social and political imperatives that shaped them. This thesis seeks to add to this body of literature by examining farmers’ (both white and black) interactions within a particular industry and how this interaction shaped policy within the local political economy and the international economic system.

⁹⁷ Drinkwater, *The state and agrarian change in Zimbabwe’s communal areas: An application of critical theory*, 27.

⁹⁸ Selby, ‘Commercial farmers and the state’ 145-165.

⁹⁹ R. Pilosoff, ‘The unbearable whiteness of being: White farming voices in Zimbabwe and their narration of the recent past’, c. 1970-2004, PhD Thesis, University of Sheffield, 2010. Also see, R. Pilosoff, *The unbearable whiteness of being. Farmers’ voices from Zimbabwe*, (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2012).

The international dairy context

In the absence of many historical works on colonial Zimbabwe's dairy industry, and with the desire to eschew an ersatz sense of exceptionalism, this thesis draws on comparative international studies, particularly from African and commonwealth countries. In his article on Kenyan dairy cattle development W.T. Conelly focuses on colonial era livestock policy in Kenya, especially the introduction of improved dairy cattle in high-potential African farming areas.¹⁰⁰ In outlining state efforts to import European breeds for cross-breeding purposes during the 1950s and the problems which arose out of this programme such as high on-farm mortality rates due to disease and poor nutrition, lack of veterinary and extension services, he argues that the post-colonial Kenyan dairy cattle policy did not learn from mistakes of the colonial era.¹⁰¹ F.E. Ogbimi and A.A. Oyawale make a similar argument with regards to south-western Nigeria, describing the indiscriminate importation of animals into the country after independence, regardless of the lessons of a similar colonial policy which led to high cattle losses to diseases and poor feeding.¹⁰² The two case-studies offer illuminating comparisons with Southern Rhodesia on colonial breeding policy. As chapter 3 demonstrates, Southern Rhodesian dairy breeding policy was predicated on the use of both imported stock and local breeds.

Bert Theunissen's studies on cattle breeding cultures in the Netherlands give useful insights into the dynamics that shaped dairy cattle breeding systems in that country. Theunissen traces dairy cattle breeding culture in the Netherlands, which he argues was more an art than a science because of farmers' disregard of genetics in preference of physical appearance. He argues that the development of the 'modern Friesland' until the 1940s was an attempt by breeders and farmers to hold on to the high yielding breed while making it less susceptible to bovine tuberculosis.¹⁰³ However, Theunissen observes that the struggle between the "traditional

¹⁰⁰ W. Conelly, 'Colonial era livestock development policy; Introduction of improved dairy cattle in high potential farming areas of Kenya', *World Development*, 26, 9 (1998), 1733-1748. The Kenyan Highlands were high potential areas because of the environmental and climatic conditions which were more suitable for dairy farming.

¹⁰¹ Conelly, 'Colonial era livestock development policy: Introduction of improved dairy cattle in high potential farming areas of Kenya', 1734.

¹⁰² E. Ogbimi and A.A. Oyewale, 'Analysis of the experience of developing the dairy industry in south-western Nigeria', *Food Reviews International*, 16, 4 (2006), 485.

¹⁰³ B. Theunissen, 'Breeding without Mendelism: Theory and practice of Dairy Cattle breeding in the Netherlands 1900-1950', *Journal of the history of biology*, 12, 2008.

approach” of using cows’ physical appearance, and the use of genetics to cattle breeding came to a deadlock from the 1940s to the 1960s owing to stagnating milk yields. It was not until the 1970s that Dutch farmers abandoned the use of physical appearance and embraced the American Holstein – a cross bred ‘cousin’ of the traditional Dutch Friesian. Consequently, milk yields began to rise after 1970.¹⁰⁴ However, as happened in the Netherlands itself, this breed began to succumb to bovine tuberculosis in most countries that imported it.¹⁰⁵ These works are vital to the development of colonial dairy cattle breeding policy in colonial Zimbabwe in that the Friesian developed to be the most popular dairy breed in Southern Rhodesia, due in part to its high milk yielding capabilities, and largely owing to its perceived compatibility with Rhodesian environmental conditions. These changes, as noted in chapter 6, provide a platform on which to critique Southern Rhodesian breeding policy during the immediate post-Second World War period, when the country desperately needed to expand local dairy production.

On the development of the dairy industry during the early years of colonial occupation, Lilian Mafela’s monograph focusing on colonial Botswana’s dairy sector advance fascinating parallels with the development of dairy farming in Southern Rhodesia. Outlining the development trajectory of the dairy industry colonial policy, she argues that the cattle industry in colonial Botswana was almost completely dominated by beef production, and that “the dairy industry arose in Bechuanaland primarily as an alternative to beef production in response to South Africa’s restrictions on the import of cattle from the Protectorate”, and the decline of dairy production in the later colonial period can be attributed to “the revival of beef exporting, which undercut the Administration’s already limited interest.”¹⁰⁶ As this thesis illustrates in chapters 2 and 3, the development of settler dairy farming in Southern Rhodesia during the early years was intricately linked to developments in the beef industry. Although Southern Rhodesian colonial policy in

¹⁰⁴ B. Theunissen, ‘Breeding for Nobility or for production? Cultures of dairy cattle breeding in the Netherlands, 1945-1995’, *Journal of the history of biology*, 10, 2006, 1-45.

¹⁰⁵ S.M. Makings, C.A. Murray, R.R. Staples, *An agricultural survey of Rhodesia*, Part 2, (Salisbury: Government printer, 1961) 62.

¹⁰⁶ L. Mafela, ‘Colonial initiatives and African response in the establishment of the dairy industry in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1930-1966’, *Botswana Journal of African Studies*, 13, 1 (1999), 77-92.

general drew much from neighbouring South Africa, it is rather surprising that published material on the history of dairy farming is lamentably thin.¹⁰⁷

Besides African case studies, this study draws on concepts from commonwealth states. This is vital because, like other British settler colonies, Southern Rhodesia was one of the few territories that were ear-marked for European settlement. M.A. Gilmore's doctoral thesis on the causes and effects of government policy on initial development and establishment of agricultural industries, particularly the dairying, maize and tobacco sectors, on the Atherton Tablelands of Australia is important in this respect.¹⁰⁸ She examines the role of the state in the establishment and sustenance of initially unviable industries through the introduction of a regulated marketing system and the various support mechanisms which led to the development of the three industries. Her work is particularly important for this study in that, like Southern Rhodesia, the establishment of Australia as a British colony and agriculture in particular was predicated on an anticipated huge influx of settler immigrants. Also, as this thesis shows, the Southern Rhodesian government often modelled dairy regulation along Australian legislation.

Equally informative are David Taylor's studies on the development and structural changes in the English dairy industry between 1860 and 1930 – a period when the industry made the greatest strides in the country. Taylor illustrates the great strides that were made in the English dairy industry during the period under review as result of the changes made from the Shorthorn, a dual purpose breed that also produces beef, to the Friesian, a specialist dairy breed imported from Holland at the turn of the 18th century mentioned above.¹⁰⁹ In a separate work, Taylor employs quantitative evidence to illustrate the changes that occurred in the proportion of milk that was converted into cheese, butter and other milk by-products. He argues that, as the industrial revolution gathered momentum, more milk was converted, and this necessitated the change from

¹⁰⁷ There is a dearth in accessible material on the history of dairy farming in South Africa. Yolandi Albertyn's thesis, however, provided a refreshing exception to the general silence on the subject. See Y. Albertyn, 'Upsetting the Applecart: Government and Food Control in the Union of South Africa during World War II, c. 1939-1948', Masters' Thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 2014.

¹⁰⁸ M.A. Gilmore, 'Kill, cure or strangle: The history of government intervention in three key agricultural industries on the Atherton Tablelands, 1895-2005', PhD Thesis, James Cook University, North Queensland, 2005.

¹⁰⁹ D. Taylor, 'The English dairy industry, 1860-1930', *The Economic History Review, New Series*, 29, 4, (1976), 585-601.

the low yielding dual purpose shorthorns to the high yielding Friesian breed.¹¹⁰ As Southern Rhodesia experienced a similar structural change – from butter towards milk from 1939 onwards – these studies provide helpful comparisons to the local case, particular as the country was a late-comer onto the industry.

Research questions and analytical framework

Whereas there is a considerable number of understandably ahistorical studies by agricultural scientists, the literature review above shows that the history of dairy farming in Zimbabwe has not been explored in the context of economic and social change. In general, it confirms Shapiro, Jesse, and Foltz's observation that existing historical literature on dairying is currently inadequate.¹¹¹ This thesis focuses on the interactions between the colonial state, white dairy farmers and African producers, and how these shaped the trajectory the industry took within the context of local socio-economic changes and the vicissitudes of the international market conditions. By using the dairy industry as window of analysis, this thesis offers a novel direction both empirically and historiographically as very few academics have utilized the material generated by the colonial dairy officials and dairy farmers themselves.

Thus, this thesis seeks to find answers to questions that have not hitherto been answered or even asked: What were the economic and social factors driving the establishment of the dairy industry in Southern Rhodesia? How did dairy farming fit into the overall cattle industry, and the agricultural policy in general? What environmental and economic challenges (both locally and internationally) stood in the way of state and farmers' efforts to embark on dairy farming, and how were these tackled? How did the state and white farmers interact, and with what impact on policy and the general direction of the industry over time? How did settler attitudes (both farmers and consumers) towards African dairying shape dairy policy, and with what consequences? How did African milk producers respond to overall policy and with what effects on the structure of the dairy industry in general?

¹¹⁰ D. Taylor, 'Growth and Structural Change in the English Dairy Industry, 1860-1930', *The Agricultural History Review*, 35, 1, (1987), 47-64.

¹¹¹ Shapiro, Jesse, Foltz, 'Dairy marketing and development in Africa', 19-20.

As this thesis explores the intersection of agricultural, environmental and socio-economic issues through the lens of the Zimbabwean dairy industry, it is not limited to one grand overarching theory. It draws upon ideas from John Wanna and Patrick's Weller's "settler-state developmentalism" model. In their study of Australian traditions of governance, they held that the concept "grew out of the necessity to populate the vast continent and to provide the necessary infrastructure and services, and to protect the livelihoods of those who pioneered settlement."¹¹² Owing to this obligation, which necessarily meant the subjugation of indigenous peoples' socio-economic and political interests, successive Australian administrations from the 19th century not only provided publicly funded infrastructure, but also adopted a social and economic system that protected farmers from the vagaries of the open market, both locally and internationally.¹¹³ This interpretation proved helpful for this thesis. As chapter 3 of this thesis demonstrates, dairy farming was initially identified as a central industry to the colony's white settlement plan. Throughout the period under review, the state was under pressure not only to provide better farming conditions, but to eliminate African dairy marketing due to long held prejudices about African suitability for such an undertaking.

This thesis also draws from the concept of the settler culture model, which is closely related to settler developmentalism. Fronted by Anna Johnson and Alan Lawson, this concept examines settler attitudes towards indigenous people with whom they related and the new environment into which they settled. As delineated in chapter 4 and 5, settler attitudes and prejudices towards African notions of cleanliness and hygiene (which Timothy Burke has discussed in depth)¹¹⁴ were responsible for the pressure they brought to bear on the state to eliminate African dairy producers from the market. As Johnston and Lawson have explained, there were basically two types of colonies: colonies of occupation and colonies of settlement.¹¹⁵ Together with Kenya, South Africa and Algeria, Southern Rhodesia is one of the few colonies that were earmarked for physical white settlement. Indeed, the immigration of white settlers into Southern Rhodesia from all over the commonwealth, especially Britain, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, was

¹¹² J. Wanna and P. Weller, 'Traditions of Australian governance' *Public Administration*, 81, 1 (2003), 63-94.

¹¹³ Wanna and Weller, 'Traditions of Australian governance', 79.

¹¹⁴ T. Burke, *Lifebouy men, lux women: Commodification, consumption and cleanliness in modern Zimbabwe*, (London: Duke University Press, 1996), 17-35.

¹¹⁵ Johnston and Lawson, 'Settler Colonies', in H. Schwarz and S. Ray (eds), *A Companion to Post-Colonial Studies*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Limited, 2002), 360-362.

viewed by the state as vitally important if the desire to create a ‘white man’s country’ was to materialise.¹¹⁶ Although, in some British settler colonies such as Australia, the desire to subdue the indigenous peoples in demographic terms was realised, as Mlambo notes, this was never accomplished in Southern Rhodesia, with the consequence that the settler and indigenous populations (with their different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds) had to co-exist within the country.¹¹⁷ In fact, while the former dominated the political and economic spheres of the country, at no time during the history of the country did their numbers threaten to equal the indigenous population.

Notwithstanding the settler state’s failure to outnumber the local people, both the settler developmentalism and settler culture theories apply to Southern Rhodesia to the extent that settlers displaced local inhabitants and established a parallel and supposedly higher socio-economic system. Indeed, a similarity between Southern Rhodesia and Australia may be seen in the way settlers often viewed the land they occupied. In Australia they viewed the land as *terra nullius* – land with no owner.¹¹⁸ In line with Sara Berry’s point that the coloniser viewed African land as ‘vacant and ownerless’¹¹⁹, Whittlesey, a white farmer himself, contended that many whites have affiliated themselves with the land rather than with surrounding societies’.¹²⁰ Indeed, many settler ranchers and dairymen identified themselves with their land and livestock, rather than Africans, whom they viewed as nothing more than a source of labour. Accounts by farmers both during the colonial and post-colonial period reveal their connection with the land.¹²¹ Pilosof has observed that farmers mistakenly exonerated themselves of any historical culpability

¹¹⁶ See Tawse-Jollie, ‘Southern Rhodesia: A white man’s country in the tropics’, and A.S. Mlambo, ‘Building a white man’s country: Aspects of white immigration to Rhodesia up to World War Two’, *Zambezia*, 25, 2, (1998), 123-146.

¹¹⁷ Mlambo, ‘Building a white man’s country: Aspects of white immigration to Rhodesia up to World War Two’, 145.

¹¹⁸ Johnston and Lawson, ‘Settler Colonies’, 363.

¹¹⁹ S. Berry, ‘Debating the Land Question in Africa’, *Society for Comparative Study of Society and History*, 44, (2002), 642.

¹²⁰ Whittlesey, ‘Southern Rhodesia: An African Compromise’, 69.

¹²¹ Sommerville, *My life was a ranch*. Also see, C. Buckle, *African Tears: The Zimbabwe Land Invasions* (Johannesburg: Covos Day, 2001), and C. Buckle, *Beyond Tears: Zimbabwe’s Tragedy* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball, 2002).

and for having never identified themselves with black Zimbabweans.¹²² This thesis thus analyses how settler developmentalism influenced colonial state policy and settler culture shaped settler attitudes of social and cultural superiority towards African producers played out within a dairy industry that generally requires a high level of hygiene and cleanliness.

Although this thesis predominantly focuses on the ‘formal’ dairy market from which African participation had, by the early 1950s, been curtailed, it demonstrates African responses to exclusionary policies within the colonial market. In doing so, it is informed by Subaltern studies, which explore the history of marginalized groups on account of their ‘inferior’ class, race or gender. In particular, it draws from James Scott’s anthropological studies of the everyday struggles of South East Asian peasant communities in view of their marginal socio-economic and political position in society.¹²³ This approach, which looks at history from below, is a helpful tool for analyzing farmers’ responses to an overbearing colonial state that, although seeking to develop the dairy industry, had interests that did not always dovetail with those of settler farmers. As Munroe argues, besides seeking to maintain social balance within society, the colonial state also sought to generate revenue for itself from farmers as well as to maintain its incumbency in power through placating groups it considered as key political constituencies.¹²⁴ This epistemology will be particularly helpful in understanding the colonial experience of both white and African farmers as they related with the state and responded to dairy policy as it evolved. Indeed, this thesis disentangles the state and the white farming community, noting that although the latter was often at the end of deliberate state patronage, it also often felt short-changed by the state in many ways. Although not focusing on the dynamics that played out in the ‘informal’ sector in which most African milk trade occurred, this thesis seeks to understand how Africans

¹²² R. Pilossof, ‘The Unbearable Whiteness of Being: Land, Race and Belonging in the Memoirs of White Zimbabweans’, *South African Historical Journal*, 61, 3, (2009), 628. For a wider discussion see also, R. Pilossof, *The unbearable whiteness of being. Farmers’ voices from Zimbabwe* (Harare: Weaver Press, 2012).

¹²³ J. Scott, *Weapons of the weak: Everyday forms of resistance*, (London: Yale University Press, 1985); Scott, *Weapons of the weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance*, (London: Yale University Press, 2008). Also see, J. Scott, *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden transcripts*, (London: Yale University press, 1990).

¹²⁴ Munroe, *The moral economy of the state: Conservation, community development and state making in Zimbabwe*, 53.

“flouted, reconstructed, repudiated and remade European life-ways” in their responses to what they perceived to be unfavourable policies on dairy production and marketing.¹²⁵

Methodology

This dissertation relied mainly on documentary evidence, particularly archival sources and secondary sources. Largely because of the dearth in extensive historical works focusing on dairy farming in Zimbabwe, my initial focus was centered on analysing existing secondary sources on Zimbabwe’s livestock history and agricultural history in general. These included published books, dissertations, published articles and unpublished papers. In this way, I was able to identify gaps in existing historiography and to ask new questions on the history of Zimbabwe’s livestock industry which this thesis seeks to answer.

Archival sources formed the bedrock of this thesis, however. Predominantly gathered from the National Archives of Zimbabwe (NAZ), the material included correspondence between government officials and white farmers’ organisations and, in some cases, individual farmers. This enabled me to understand the nature of the state/farmer interaction and its impact on the unfolding development trajectory of the dairy industry during the period under review. Intra-government correspondence between officials of different government departments concerned with dairy farming such as the Department of Agriculture, Department of Native Affairs and the the Department of Health. This was particularly useful in understanding the differences in opinion and attitude within different state actors and how this played out in the dairy industry. Reports of various Committees of Enquiry that were commissioned during the period under review and the evidence that was used in arriving at the reports played a vital role in this thesis. While the reports gave useful insight into the factors that determined policy, the evidence given to the committees was crucial in capturing the voices of farmers, and the extent to which these voices shaped development in the dairy industry. This thesis also made extensive use of minutes of meetings, memoranda from both the Department of Agriculture and the Dairy Division, which offered valuable information on debates within government structures concerning dairy development in the country.

¹²⁵ J. Comaroff and J.L. Comaroff, *Theory from the south or how Euro-America is evolving towards Africa*, (London: Paradigm publishers, 2012), 8.

Whilst archival data from NAZ played an important role in this thesis, it is equally important to note that the nature of the colonial archive is inherently problematic. As James Hevia has noted, colonial records “report the elaborate colonial attempt to record local space, local property and local ideas into imperial terms.”¹²⁶ While white farmers’ voices were captured, mainly in correspondence mentioned earlier, this is also limited. However, by reading against the grain, I was able to pick out some inconsistencies and racial prejudices. As Louise White contends, the colonial state’s inability to “fully recode and reterritorialise is revealed in colonial archives and teasing out African voices suggests layers of domination that can be stripped away to reveal a colonial subject beneath the colonial project. Indeed, by reading ‘against the grain’ of the archive, I was able to detect occlusions and distortions caused by racial bias, as well as distinguish policy inconsistencies and even locate some African responses.”¹²⁷ Where the archive is largely silent on the African contribution (both rebellious or conformist, or the gamut of responses between these two poles), oral interviews were used to capture African thinking and past initiatives. Moreover, although the NAZ has a relatively wealthy repository of hitherto unused material on settler dairy farming from the post 1923 period onwards, material on the earlier period is relatively thin. While this is because dairy farming during this period was less developed as an industry, I had to depend on accounts by transport riders, missionaries for the 1890s period (themselves an interesting and less biased source on African milk regimes), and reports of the Department of Agriculture to gather information. I encountered further restrictions on the use of NAZ documents. Given the limited time within which I had to complete the fieldwork process, I made efforts to use the institution’s photographing and scanning services. However, as I did not have funding specifically for research, I only made partial use of these services on account of the highly prohibitive costs associated with the services.

While I attempted to access institutional records, particularly those of the Commercial Farmers’ Union which houses all historical data on the Rhodesia National Farmers Union (RNFU) under which commodity marketing organisations fell, these efforts were not successful. As a result of

¹²⁶ G.C. Spivak, ‘The Rani of Sanir: An Essay on Reading the Archives,’ *History and Theory* 24 (1985), 251.

¹²⁷ See E. Allina-Pisano, ‘Resistance and the social history of Africa’, *Journal of Social History*, 37, 1, (2003), 187-198.

the volatile political situation at the time (prior to and shortly after the 2013 national election), and the general persecution which the CFU underwent at the hands of the state since the early 2000s, access to farmers' documents was denied on account of fears and suspicion that the researcher could be a state agent. I am, however, grateful to Eddie Cross, who served within the Dairy Committee of the Agricultural Marketing Authority (AMA) during the 1970s, for connecting me to former white farmers' representatives who still had personal files from which I could draw. Sadly, a considerable number of such officials and farmers are no longer available either due to their demise or emigration.

The other source of primary data was oral interviews. In-depth individual interviews were used for their advantage in giving researchers access to "people's ideas, thoughts and memories in their own world".¹²⁸ These were used primarily to get the African experience in the production, consumption and marketing of dairy products over time. Indeed, the accounts given by the predominantly elderly men and women gave an interesting dimension to African beliefs, practices and responses to the circumstances obtaining on the dairy market. Admittedly, the number of surviving people who could recount their experiences is quite low. Nevertheless, the few I was able to locate provided useful information, which was able to give a refreshingly different dimension from the colonial narrative. For the 1890s period, however, I was able to gain information from informants through oral tradition, information passed from one generation to the other.¹²⁹ Working to my advantage was my ability to converse in both the Shona and siNdebele language, since most of these elderly black people could not communicate in the English language. In this way, they felt more comfortable. As Hesse-Biber and Leavy observed, interviewees who speak their own language and within their environment are better able to express "their ideas, thoughts and memories in their own world."¹³⁰

Newspapers were also used as a source through which the voices of farmers and government could be captured. In particular, the *Rhodesia Herald* and *The Chronicle* were useful forums in

¹²⁸ S.N. Hesse-Biber and P. Leavy, *The practice of Qualitative research*, (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2011), 47.

¹²⁹ For more on the passage of generational information see, P. Thompson, 'The voice of the past: Oral History', in R. Perks and A. Thomson (eds), *The oral history reader*, (London: Routledge, 1998).

¹³⁰ S.N. Hesse-Biber and P. Leavy, *The practice of Qualitative research*, (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2011).

which public debates played out. White farmers often wrote letters to the editors and occasional articles in which they expressed their views. Similarly, officials of the Dairy Division such as Cory often authored articles through these newspapers giving advice to farmers and articulating government policy. The major problem with these media, however, is the editorial bias which often pervades the press leading to misrepresentations and inaccuracies. In the main, state newspapers were used to prop the colonial regime and its prejudicial policies against Africans. Again, the researcher resorted to reading against the grain to attain a measure of historical objectivity and balance.

Structure and layout

The study is divided into seven chapters, five of which follow the chronological contours of colonial Zimbabwean historiography. This chapter has introduced the thesis, giving the scope and focus of the study. It has reviewed the existing literature on Zimbabwe's agrarian history and the international dairy industries. It further discussed the analytical framework of the study and the research methods employed in carrying out the study. Chapter 2 gives a background to the emergence of a colonial dairy industry in Southern Rhodesia. Engaging scholarship on milk on the cultural, social and economic symbols of milk production on the African continent outside the colonial market system, it focuses on African milk production in some parts of Southern Rhodesia, and the manner in which indigenous people positively responded to the advent of the colonial market during the 1890s. In discussing the emergence of the colonial dairy market, chapter 2 engages existing historiography on the extent to which Africans prospered during the first two decades of occupation. It argues that in terms of milk production, African prosperity was very short-lived as a result of huge cattle losses that accompanied conquest and bovine diseases, with the latter also delaying the development of settler dairying endeavours. It illustrates that by 1908, neither the settler nor the African sector had prospered in dairy production.

The third chapter discusses the BSAC's efforts to establish a settler dominated dairy industry within the context of the White Agricultural Policy that was espoused in 1908. Using dairy herds as a focus, this chapter joins the scholarly debate on Southern Rhodesian cattle breeding policy, arguing that scientific issues were more important determinants than racial prejudice in

determining breeding policy. The chapter also discusses the environmental, climatic, financial and technical factors that impeded the development of settler dairy farming despite the espousal of an agricultural policy that was decidedly tailored to benefit settler capitalist agriculture. In the main, it argues that the growth in butter and milk output witnessed by 1923 was largely a result of the fall in beef prices which pushed cattle ranchers to dabble in dairy production in order to boost their income. There were very few dairy cows in the country, and most of the dairy products produced during this time were derived from beef herds. The chapter also examines the impact of the White Agricultural Policy on African dairy production and marketing, demonstrating that African participation on the colonial dairy market between 1908 and 1923 was further diminished by the displacements that took place after the institution of the Private Locations Ordinance and the introduction of increased rents on unalienated lands. However, not all African producers were removed from the market, as some who had managed to purchase land still provided competition to settler farmers on the market.

Chapter 4 examines the trajectory that dairy farming – both settler and African – took during the first decade of self-rule, from 1924 until the mid-1930s. It illustrates that the expansion in butter production explained in chapter 3 continued so much that by 1924 Southern Rhodesia was forced to dispose surplus butter on external markets at a loss due to the production of predominantly low grade butter. Further, this chapter also examines the interventions, particularly the 1925 legislation and the Milk Recording Scheme, that were taken in the 1920s in order to stem the country's failure to profitably participate on the export market. It demonstrates that the legislative intervention, imported as it was from Australian dairy regulations, primarily focused on improving the processing and manufacturing side of the industry. Settler assumptions and prejudices on African hygiene and suitability for commercial dairying are explored in this chapter, since African producers were often blamed for producing low grade products. The overarching argument in this chapter is that the state's inability to regulate settler production methods, focusing instead on calls for African exclusion and the manufacturing processes at creameries meant that the legislative interventions did not yield the desired results. Longstanding problems of inadequate dairy infrastructure, lack of proper dairy cows remained unattended throughout the 1920s to the mid-1930s.

Whereas chapter 4 discusses the impact of the Dairy Produce Act in stabilising the industry in light of the exportation of low quality butter, chapter 5 examines developments in the dairy industry during the 1930s within the context of the Great Depression and its aftermath. It engages existing scholarship which has examined the general impact of the Great Depression on Southern Rhodesia's agricultural economy by giving a case study of a hitherto unexamined industry. It also gives a comparative angle to existing works on interventions that were made in the beef and maize industries during the 1930s. It discusses the circumstances leading to the formation of the Dairy Industry Control Act (DICB) in 1931 and the passage of the Dairy Act in 1937. It examines the impact of the DICB, arguing that while it somewhat succeeded in cushioning farmers from the impact of the depression, it was unable to improve the quality of butter being produced on the farms, hence the interaction between the state and settler farmers which led to the passage of the Dairy Act in 1937. The Dairy Act, as this chapter demonstrates, marked a momentous event in the history of the dairy industry to the extent that it sought to eliminate dilettantes from the industry by ushering in increased control on farm operations. Further, the legislation virtually outlawed African producers since they were not aided in adhering to the stipulations of the legislation. The chapter concludes by examining farmers' responses to the increased control, arguing that in some cases it only served to give life to the emergence of an informal and often illegal dairy market.

The sixth chapter examines the outbreak of war, its aftermath and the consequent change in the structure and disposal pattern of the dairy industry. Drawing from studies on the impact of the Second World War on the food industry locally, on regional and international dairy industries, this chapter outlines the impact of increased demand for food supplies from Britain as well as the ever expanding local demand for dairy products. It makes the point that although the Southern Rhodesian government and white farmers desired to assist in the imperial war effort through exporting butter and cheese to Britain during the war, this proved nearly impossible because of the difficulties of exporting during the war and, more importantly, the expanding local demand for dairy products which actually resulted in shortages. The chapter also examines the various war and post-war interventions that were made to avert shortages. It contends that although some *ad hoc* measures were taken to increase production, the war proved to be a blessing in disguise to the extent that the reform process that had been initiated in 1937 had to be intensified in order to

meet the new conditions of the war. Moreover, this chapter has also argued that the war-time and post war period was characterised by the further underdevelopment of the African milk sector through the de-stocking measures that were undertaken in order to boost beef supplies. Finally, the chapter outlines the factors that led to the formation of the Dairy Marketing Board during the post-war period.

Chapter 7 concludes this thesis and ties together the major arguments developed throughout. It suggests that an understanding of the history of the dairy industry is vital if Zimbabwe is to have a stable livestock industry and successfully return to its erstwhile position as a net exporter of dairy produce in Southern Africa and beyond. It further argues that ongoing efforts to strengthen the small-scale dairy sector, which was neglected during the colonial period, may yield better results if policy makers learn from mistakes and achievements of the past. Further, it explores the need for further research on the dairy industry, particularly on the role of gender in the dairy industry, and how the dynamics of labour affected dairy farming. It, finally, points to the need for more studies on the 1951 to 1980 period, together with the post-colonial dairy policy and its impact. The conclusion to the thesis shows that, as with current developments in the industry, dairy farming has moved from periphery to centre, and offers a lens into understanding shifts in the country's agrarian political economy over time.

CHAPTER TWO

“This is a land of honey – no milk, bar sour!” African milk regimes and the emergence of a colonial order in Southern Rhodesia, c.1890 – 1907

Introduction

The advent of colonial occupation in Zimbabwe had a profound impact on African livestock regimes. While African cattle owners had long been accustomed to predominantly pre-capitalist regimes, the emergence of a largely exploitative capitalist system set the stage for intriguing encounters between the colonial establishment, the emerging settler community and African livestock owners. With much of existing scholarly analysis focusing on the development of the colonial beef industry and the role of the indigenous producer,¹³¹ very little attention has been paid to the dynamics African milk production and consumption and its role in shaping the dairy industry from the early days of occupation. This chapter focuses on traditional¹³² African attitudes and practices with milk, and their response to the emergence of a hegemonic colonial order, with its exploitative and prejudicial tendencies. In relation to other African societies, an exposition of some African customs and idioms in Zimbabwe shall be made.

Engaging existing scholarship on African peasant prosperity during the early years of colonial occupation, this chapter also examines African production and participation on the colonial milk market.¹³³ It shall be illustrated that, notwithstanding their eagerness, African milk producers' participation on the early colonial market had become markedly less active by 1908 when compared to grain producers. This situation arose mainly as a result of huge cattle losses – to

¹³¹ A great compendium of work has been done on the development of beef production in Colonial Zimbabwe. for instance, see I. Phimister, 'Meat and monopolies: Beef cattle in Southern Rhodesia., 1890-1938' *Journal of African History*, 19, 3, (1978), V. Machingaidze, 'The development of settler capitalist agriculture with particular reference to the role of the state, 1908-1980,' PhD Thesis, University of London, 1980, and N. Samasuwo, "“There is something about cattle”: Towards an economic history of the beef industry in colonial Zimbabwe, with special reference to the role of the State', PhD Thesis, University of Cape Town, 2000.

¹³² The author is aware of the problematic nature of the term 'traditional'. In this context, this word is not used to imply backwardness, it is employed to refer to African systems and practices outside the colonial exchange system.

¹³³ See R. Palmer, 'The Agricultural History of Rhodesia', in R. Palmer and N. Parsons (eds), *The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa*, (London: Heinemann, 1977), I. Phimister, 'Peasant Production and Underdevelopment in Southern Rhodesia, 1890 – 1914', *African Affairs*, 73, 291, (1974), 217-228, and G. Arrighi, 'Labour Supplies in Historical Perspective: A Study of the Proletarianisation of the African Peasantry in Rhodesia', *Journal of Development Studies*, 6, 3, (1970), 197-234.

colonial expropriation and livestock diseases – which had a deleterious effect on African milk production. The confiscation of African cattle by the British South Africa Company (BSAC), on behalf of settlers and on its own behalf, was done in an effort to launch a settler cattle industry from the mid-1890s onwards. However, successive livestock diseases, which affected both the settler herd and African livestock, made the establishment of an early and robust cattle industry impossible.

A historiographical overview of cattle and milk regimes in African societies

The accumulation of cattle in most African societies has been regarded as key to any family's socio-economic, and in some instances, political standing. In as much as cattle had a symbolic value, there also existed customs and symbols associated with milk production and consumption. This section makes an examination of the subsistence and symbolic role of milk in the social and economic milieu of traditional African life. In the absence of any substantial archival holdings or in-depth published historical material on indigenous milk traditions on pre-colonial and colonial Zimbabwe, oral interviews provided much of the information.

As the social and economic place of cattle generally, and milk in particular in African societies has generated intense discussion and debate among historians and anthropologists, there are several case studies on which this study draws. The debates were inspired by Melville Herskovits' pioneering work on east and southern African societies' relationships with cattle. Writing in 1926, he argued that the value of cattle was viewed mainly in religious and cultural terms.¹³⁴ As he described it, this 'cattle complex' consisted of a strong attachment to cattle which manifested in the general reluctance among people to slaughter them except for ritual purposes (which also meant a reluctance to sell them on the new settler markets or regulate them in accordance with colonial policy).¹³⁵

Following up on Herskovits' views, a number of anthropological studies emerged focusing on the existence of the 'cattle complex' in individual societies. Studies by Frankel and Moss on east

¹³⁴ M. J. Herskovits, 'The Cattle Complex in East Africa', *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 28,1, (1926), 258.

¹³⁵ Herskovits, 'The Cattle Complex in East Africa', 256.

African societies, the Maasai and Bahaya respectively, offer support to Herskovits' model.¹³⁶ With reference to colonial Zimbabwe, Holleman argued that cattle among both the Ndebele and the Mashona, were considered to be of almost equal importance with humans, as they could be used in exchange for wives or for the payment of restitution in cases of murder and other social crimes.¹³⁷ Indeed, such views gained currency among scholars, colonial authorities and settlers as they sought to explain African resistance in disposing of their cattle during the colonial period. In fact, some of the scholars also acted as officials in the colonial establishment. For instance, shortly after retiring from his position as Chief Native Commissioner in Southern Rhodesia, the aptly named Bullock penned a scathing attack on Africans for accumulating livestock to the point of what he perceived to be economic irrationality. He stated that "the religious and social significance" attached to cattle by Africans was not "in accord with our view that cattle are kept simply to supply us with milk and meat, and to these ends, purchase and sale should be untrammelled by any clogs on trade."¹³⁸

This view, however, has come under increasing attack from mid century by some scholars for its prejudicial stance against African livestock regimes. In his 1957 ethnographic study of the Pakot of Kenya, Harold Schneider argued that "more extensive subsistence and exchange use of cattle is evident than is usually acknowledged" by the proponents of the 'cattle complex' theory.¹³⁹ In a more recent study, John and Jean Comaroff, adopting the Marxist commodity and capital model, posited that cattle among the Tshidi Barolong, a Tswana people, were commodities which acted as a form of currency in the exchange of goods. In their words, cattle were "a medium of transformation, in a total economy of signs and practices, between a material economy of things

¹³⁶ See P.O. Moss, 'Cattle in Bahaya', *Anthropological Quarterly*, 27, 1, (1954), 23, and S.H Frankel, 'Concepts of Income and Welfare in Advanced and Developed Societies – With Special Reference to the Intercomparability of National Income Aggregates' in M. Gilbert, *Income and Wealth Series 3*, Cambridge: Bowes and Bowes, (1953), 166.

¹³⁷ See J.F. Holleman, *Shona Customary Law*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1952). For more on the role of Cattle in Southern Rhodesian African societies see, M. Yudelman, *Africans on the Land. Economic Problems of African Agricultural Development in Southern, Central, and East Africa, with Special Reference to Southern Rhodesia*, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1964) and P. Mason, *The Birth of a Dilemma*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1958).

¹³⁸ C. Bullock, *The Mashona and the Matabele*, (Cape Town: Juta, 1950), 99.

¹³⁹ H.K. Schneider, 'The Role of Cattle Among the Pakot and in East Africa,' *American Anthropologist*, New series, 59, 2, (1957), 278.

and a moral economy of persons.”¹⁴⁰ For them, cattle were a form of capital which could be used to access other scarce commodities. In a study of South Africa’s Transkei region during the 1960s, Gibert Rutman and David Werner argue that livestock accumulation was profitable to individuals insofar as cattle purchases were Africans’ most readily available investment opportunity.¹⁴¹ In his materialist study of pre-colonial and colonial African cattle regimes in Southern Rhodesia, Mtetwa dismisses the cattle complex theory as a myth, arguing that Africans’ reluctance to sell their cattle on the colonial exchange market owed to the exploitatively low prices the system offered to indigenous sellers.¹⁴²

Some scholars have shown that although cattle were used in ritual life of traditional societies,¹⁴³ the main value which was attached to cattle was economic. Beach, whose study stretches back to the Mutapa and Torwa states’ cattle economies from the 16th century, notes that cattle were not accumulated only for their social importance, but were equally important both for their value in the provision of labour, meat and milk. He adds that cattle were useful as a medium of exchange, particularly in lobola (marriage) negotiations as well as in the acquisition of grain during droughts and other goods from traders during the 19th century.¹⁴⁴ J. Holleman has discussed the role of cattle in Shona customary practices, elaborating the role of the steer and the cow in marriage ceremonies.¹⁴⁵ Similarly, H. Aschwanden has also illustrated the role of cattle, particularly the bull in funeral customs and rites and in ancestral worship.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁰ J. Comaroff and J.L. Comaroff, ‘Goodly Beasts, Beastly Goods: Cattle and Commodities in a South African Context’, *American Ethnologist*, 17, 2, (May 1990), 195-216.

¹⁴¹ G.L. Rutman and D.J. Werner, ‘A Test of the ‘Uneconomic Culture’ Thesis: An Economic Rationale for the ‘Sacred Cow’, *The Journal of Development Studies*, (1973), 566-580.

¹⁴² R.M.G. Mtetwa, ‘Myth or reality: The ‘Cattle Complex’ in South East Africa, with Special Reference to Rhodesia’, *Zambezia*, vi, (1978), 23-35.

¹⁴³ See D. Beach, ‘The Shona Economy: Branches of Production’, in R. Palmer and N. Parsons (eds), *The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa*, (London: Heinemann, 1977), and D. Beach, ‘Ndebele Raiders and Shona Power’, *The Journal of African History*, 15, 4, (1974), 633-651.

¹⁴⁴ D. Beach, ‘The Shona Economy: Branches of Production’, 45.

¹⁴⁵ J.F. Holleman, *Shona Customary Law*, (Cape Town: Juta), 164.

¹⁴⁶ H. Aschwanden, *Symbols of Death: An Analysis of the Consciousness of the Karanga*, (Gweru: Mambo Press), 1987).

The Ndebele have been categorised as pastoralists, although like the Shona-speaking Changamire Rozvi state, which influenced them in many ways, they were also agriculturists.¹⁴⁷ Cattle were also regarded as an important asset, and the king had ultimate control of all cattle in the kingdom, and all the spoils gained from raiding excursions were similarly surrendered to him. Palmer states that although beef was a part of the Ndebele diet, cattle were not regularly slaughtered, except on ceremonial occasions.¹⁴⁸ However, the fact that the cow was a treasured possession whose disposal for whatever purpose was discouraged should not be misconstrued to mean that its supposed mystic value outweighed its subsistence value.

Cattle thus assumed a very important but varied socio-economic status in most societies in the country, and, concomitantly, one who acquired more cattle assumed a high status. Indeed, among both the Shona and Ndebele “if you have a kraal of cattle, you can say that you have all power.”¹⁴⁹ This should not, however, be interpreted to mean that the reluctance by African societies to part with their livestock suggests some form of a religious or socio-cultural complex. In the absence of money as a form of currency, cattle were stored as a form of economic capital, which could be relied on to purchase other goods which could not be produced locally. When economic circumstances made it necessary, cattle were disposed of in order to meet certain economic demands. Indeed, both the Shona and the Ndebele did exchange some of their cattle for grain during years of crop failure, hence, in the last resort, the cow was an insurance against crop failure.¹⁵⁰ P. Stigger has shown that cattle were bartered to missionaries and traders prior to 1890, and to newly settled settlers after 1890.

African milk complex?

Although little has been written on the milk culture in the traditional sector of Zimbabwe, a considerable amount of literature on other African countries exists. In his anthropological study of the customs Beja people in Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, Seligmann outlines the customs pertaining to the milking processes, preservation and consumption of milk and its by-products among the

¹⁴⁷ D.N. Beach, ‘Ndebele Raiders and Shona Power’, *Journal of African History*, 15 (1974), 634. For a detailed Assessment of the Ndebele, see, J. Cobbing, ‘The Evolution of the Ndebele Amabutho’, *Journal of African History*, 15, (1974), 601-631.

¹⁴⁸ Beach, ‘Ndebele Raiders and Shona Power’, 634.

¹⁴⁹ Beach, ‘The Shona Economy: Branches of Production’, 46.

¹⁵⁰ R. Palmer, ‘The Agricultural History of Rhodesia’, 250.

Beja people.¹⁵¹ Christopher Taylor's work on Rwanda, which makes an exposition of social and even therapeutic uses of milk in traditional (pre-colonial) Rwandan society, argues that milk motifs are central to Rwandan myths among nearly all its ethnic groups.¹⁵² Drawing from Taylor's study, Paul Bjerck's recently published work focuses on the role of milk in the Zulu political philosophy under King Shaka.¹⁵³ Drawing evidence from the Stuart Archive where a number of experienced informants volunteered information, Bjerck argues that the "pattern of symbolism ...surrounding the meaning of milk points to an equation between milk and power", and that the political uses of milk were intimately related to similar uses for semen. This suggests that these substances had some ritual equivalency."¹⁵⁴ For Bjerck, the equation of milk with power correlates with the logic in Herskovits' 'cattle complex'.¹⁵⁵ Kag Arhem's study on the food symbolism among Kenya's Maasai people also focuses on the cultural connotations of milk, meat, and blood among the pastoralist societies, positing that, beyond its dietary value, the consumption of milk was steeped in deep socio-cultural symbolism.¹⁵⁶

Notwithstanding the useful insights they give on the workings of milk in African societies, the proponents of the 'milk complex' argument do little to show the economic and dietary uses of milk in society's quotidian life. The net effect of this has been the over-mystification of milk and subsequent relegation of its material and practical importance outside its symbolic meaning to the fringes. Schneider's study of the Pakot society in Kenya, however, offers some refreshing balance on the place of milk in African society. While he acknowledges that there existed "various taboos surrounding milk, and that there were certain sacred qualities associated with milk and ritual meat"¹⁵⁷, he concludes that most of the milk from cows and goats was consumed without ritual or any other complications. The overall impression given was that milk production

¹⁵¹ C.G. Seligmann, 'Some Aspects of the Hamitic Problem in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 43, (July – December, 1914), 593-705.

¹⁵² C. Taylor, *Milk, Honey, and Money: Changing Concepts in Rwandan Healing*, (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992).

¹⁵³ P.K. Bjerck, 'They Poured Themselves into the Milk: Zulu Political Philosophy under Shaka', *Journal of African History*, 47, (2006), 1-19.

¹⁵⁴ Bjerck, 'They Poured Themselves into the Milk: Zulu Political Philosophy under Shaka', 16.

¹⁵⁵ Bjerck, 'They Poured Themselves into the Milk: Zulu Political Philosophy under Shaka', 16.

¹⁵⁶ K. Arhem, 'Maasai Food Symbolism: The Cultural Connotations of Milk, Meat, and Blood in the Pastoral Maasai Diet', *Anthropos Institute*, 84, (1989), 1-23.

¹⁵⁷ Schneider, 'The Role of Cattle Among the Pakot and in East Africa,' 287.

was largely important for subsistence purposes.¹⁵⁸ By focusing on the symbolic and economic uses of milk in traditional Zimbabwean society, this study seeks to go beyond the polarising and increasingly unproductive debates that view milk either as a mystical resource whose consumption was laden with many symbolisms, or merely as a vital foodstuff whose prime value was found in its nutritional and economic value.

It is important to understand that, like culture in general, patterns of milk production and consumption were neither static nor generalised geographically. Indeed, they were as varied as the ethnic groups in the country, and, in response to the shifting socio-cultural and economic circumstances, they mutated periodically. 19th century Southern Africa was characterised by huge population movements mainly as a result of the Mfecane. Two groups of people, the Ndebele and Shangaan, fleeing Shaka, settled in the area of Southern Rhodesia, and another, the Ngoni, passed through the region.¹⁵⁹ These population movements increased African interaction, not only with European explorers and missionaries from the 1850s, but also among African societies themselves. The migration of Mzilikazi from Shaka's Zulu kingdom in the 1840s and the subsequent establishment of his Matabele kingdom in the south western parts of present day Zimbabwe altered the socio-economic and political dynamics in surrounding societies. There can be little doubt that it resulted in the cross-pollination of ideas which helped to reshape local cattle culture and practices. While the impact of these migrations may not be quantified owing to the paucity of reliably quantifiable data, it is clear that the establishment of the Ndebele kingdom facilitated the dissemination of some elements of the Zulu cattle culture among the Ndebele and those groups that were absorbed into the kingdom. This chapter will focus on the Ndebele regimes and nearby Karanga societies.

¹⁵⁸ Schneider, 'The Role of Cattle Among the Pakot and in East Africa,' 287.

¹⁵⁹ A note on place names: The author is aware of the danger of anachronism but will, for the sake of convenience, use names of places that were used during the colonial period.

Idioms of milk production and consumption in the African sector

The value of cattle derived from its many utility uses, and, together with beef, milk was one of the important benefits of keeping cows. A mature cow, whose average life expectancy ranged between sixteen and twenty, could calve every year from the time she was three years of age.¹⁶⁰ This meant that to cattle owners, milk was available virtually every year. Largely because of its dietary vitality, milk was viewed as a ‘complete’ and ‘pure’ liquid that was important for its nutritional value. With milk being the first food a newly born baby is fed on exclusively, the image of milk as both complete and pure seems to have been projected onto milk from the cow. This has been captured in some Shona and Ndebele proverbs and idioms. For instance, the Shona proverb ‘*chakanaka chakanaka mukaka haurungwi*’, which metaphorically mean that some things are so perfect they need no spicing, literally evoke the image of milk – both in its natural taste and nutritional qualities – as being so pure and complete that it needs no artificial spicing.¹⁶¹ Similarly, the Ndebele imagined milk as a precious substance that was as pure as it was life giving. This may be captured in popular Ndebele adages: ‘*ugeza ngochago*’ which, when literally translated, mean that ‘one bathes in milk’, but metaphorically connotes that one is living in abundance.¹⁶² In the same vein, when a bad incident spoiled a good event or experience it was quite common for people to say ‘*impukane iwele echagweni*’ (a fly has fallen into a glass of milk).¹⁶³

The role of milk in the *incwala* ceremony reveals some interesting aspects of Ndebele imagination of milk.¹⁶⁴ Held annually during the time of the first fruits, the feast was an important occasion within the Kingdom during the 19th century. Thomas Morgan Thomas, a Welsh missionary who spent considerable time observing the Ndebele way of life from the king’s palace, noted that *izunduna* (the king’s aides) poured fresh milk for consumption by

¹⁶⁰ Beach, ‘The Shona Economy: Branches of Production’, 46.

¹⁶¹ This is a common Shona proverb which is often employed when congratulating or complimenting a person who has done something exceptionally good or perfect.

¹⁶² This siNdebele proverb is often used when referring to a person who appears well nourished and seems to be enjoying a lavish lifestyle.

¹⁶³ This popular siNdebele proverb is usually used when a perfect event or object has been marred or polluted by an unpleasant occasion or object. Juxtaposing the image of a fly, which is regarded as filthy and a harbinger of diseases, it clearly shows the perceived perfection and cleanliness of milk.

¹⁶⁴ The *incwala* ceremony was traditionally held in most Nguni societies at the beginning of every season to bring the King together with his people.

young boys. After a period of three days, hot fresh milk mixed with charcoal was splashed onto the young boys' mouths and limbs, to "invigorate their knees."¹⁶⁵ In this way, milk prepared at the king's palace was used to 'strengthen' young men for life and, more importantly, the defence of the kingdom. This dovetails with Bjerk's analysis of the Zulu kingdom, where milk was a symbol of power, and whose distribution symbolised the flow of power from the king to his subjects.

Just as Taylor has shown for Rwandan pre-colonial society, milk was also used for therapeutic purposes among the Karanga and Ndebele during the pre-colonial era. Largely because of its supposed purity, milk was regarded as a cleansing agent – one that could rid the human body of physical and spiritual impurity and infirmity. It was not uncommon for a person suffering from a stomach ailment to drink fresh milk, as it was believed that fresh milk had a cleansing effect on human bowels. This belief was partly derived from human experience, as well as the observation that, due to the high levels of lactic acid in recently calved cows, young calves developing diarrhoea shortly after a sustained intake of milk. Further, drinking of donkey milk was, and still is, believed to be an effective remedy for measles, while goat milk was believed to heal tuberculosis.¹⁶⁶ Traditional healers, and, later, syncretic African independent churches use milk as part of concoctions for cleansing purposes to banish bad luck and to reverse curses. In fact, there are many therapeutic uses to which milk, from any source other than the cow were used. In this case, as in pre-colonial Rwanda, one may state that besides its dietary value, milk was considered a life giving force. For this study, however, particular attention shall be paid to bovine milk, and the material and symbolic connotations in its consumption.

Although the milking process, owing to different cultures, may have differed from society to society, and indeed, from family to family, it was usually done inside the kraal – a practice that was disparaged by colonial officials as unhygienic. Milking itself was done by herd boys or male members of the family, while the processing and preservation of the same was done by women. In very rare circumstances were women and girls allowed to milk cows. Indeed, the assumption was that herd boys and other male members of the family best understood the individual cows'

¹⁶⁵ T.M. Thomas, *Eleven years in central Africa*, (Bulawayo: Books of Rhodesia, 1970), 303.

¹⁶⁶ Interview with Martha Maphosa, born 1927, Mataruse area of Mberengwa, 19 July, 2013.

behaviour.¹⁶⁷ Thomas observed that the milking process within the king's palace was exclusively done by herd boys, who skilfully 'charmed' the cow into releasing milk, before surrendering the milk to the king's female children for preservation and preparation of *amasi*.¹⁶⁸

In most cases, milking was done in the morning, just before the cattle were released for the pastures. The calves, which were separated from their mothers in the evening and spent the night in a separate kraal for cattle, were allowed back to their mother just before the milking process. Since cows were known to exercise agency – being able to withhold milk to reserve it for their calves – the cows were allowed to suckle briefly, and the milker would start milking onto a container when he felt the cow had begun to 'release' the milk. When the milk began to dry, the calf would be summoned again to suckle, only to be stopped when it was felt that the cow had begun to yield, the process would be repeated:

The calf is led to its mother and allowed to draw the milk, when the boy beating it away stoops down under the cow, and placing a wooden vessel between his knees, he milks, while a smaller boy keeps the disappointed calf away. Should the cow refuse to give her milk, the calf is allowed a drop more, and again driven away, the milker in the mean time whistling and vociferating in the most indescribable manner, to charm the cow.¹⁶⁹

This method of milking was consistent with what Stanely Hyatt, a trader who moved from Natal to Mashonaland towards the end of the 19th century had observed among Zulu cattle keepers. Upon observing milking patterns in Mashonaland, Hyatt remembered seeing similar milking techniques in South Africa.¹⁷⁰ He could not comprehend the manner in which the African milker related with the cow and the calf in 'bargaining' for more milk. Bemused by the behaviour of both the milker and the milked, he stated:

for some extraordinary reason, the cattle in South Africa will not yield milk, unless the calf has first had a suck. Really, the man is far more to blame than the beast. The custom is a native one, but, as usually happens, the Afrikanders have adopted it slavishly, and now regard it as one of their own. They never try to break through it,

¹⁶⁷ Interview with Rhoda Hove, born 1933, Mataruse area of Mberengwa, 16 July, 2013.

¹⁶⁸ Thomas, *Eleven years in central Africa*, 184.

¹⁶⁹ Thomas, *Eleven years in central Africa*, 184.

¹⁷⁰ S.P. Hyatt, *The Old Transport Road*, (London: Andrew Melrose, 1914), 191.

in any way, and the cattle, with some sense of the foolish habit bred in them, expect to have it observed.¹⁷¹

Interestingly, some cows were known to be ‘liberal’ in giving the milker, while others, called *izigqala* in siNdebele, were known to be ‘conservative’ in the manner in which they withheld milk for the offspring, regardless of how many times they were milked.¹⁷²

It was not uncommon for herd boys to milk cows during the day in the bush where they herded cattle in an act the Ndebele called *ukuhleza* (milking into the mouth). In many cases, herd boys by-passed the use of a container squirting milk directly into their mouths.¹⁷³ This mostly occurred without the knowledge and permission of elders, as (if done excessively) it led to the malnutrition of calves. An interesting scenario emerges out of the interaction between the cattle owners, herd boys and the cow: while the cows were still within the homestead, before being released to the pastures, the milk they carried belonged to the family (even calves would not have access to the cows), and after their release in the morning, whatever milk they produced was reserved for the calf. As shown above, cows were not passive respondents while humans did the milk ‘budget’; they had the capacity to hold on to their milk. For the herd boys, however, the milking of cows at pasture, although considered uncouth, was one of the professional benefits of spending days with cattle.¹⁷⁴ Feeling left out of the distribution process of milk, they found subtle means of accessing a resource in which they felt they had a stake. They thus deployed James Scott’s ‘Hidden Transcripts’ in the manner in which powerless members of society chip at the hegemony of the powerful through everyday acts of deviance.¹⁷⁵ Hence, while the drinking of milk by Maasai herders and warriors was a public ritual which had its own symbolism, it was not recognised as a permissible practice among the Ndebele and Karanga people.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷¹ Hyatt, *The Old Transport Road*, 191.

¹⁷² Interview with Difford Sibanda, born 1934, Filabusi Business Centre, 12 June, 2013.

¹⁷³ Interview with Difford Sibanda, born 1934, Filabusi Business Centre, 29 June, 2013. Also see, Thomas Morgan Thomas, *Eleven years in central Africa*, 184.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Difford Sibanda, born 1934, Filabusi Business Centre, 29 June, 2013.

¹⁷⁵ See J. Scott, *Hidden Transcripts. Domination and the Art of Resistance*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

¹⁷⁶ Arhem, ‘Maasai Food Symbolism’, 12.

A gendered division of labour existed in the milking and processing of milk during the pre-colonial period. Whereas milking was a preserve of male members of the family, the processing and preparation was almost invariably done by women. Although most of the milk was fermented, fresh milk could also be used in the preparation of certain agricultural products. For instance, fresh milk was added to soften as well as to add flavour to pumpkins (*amajodo/manhanga*).¹⁷⁷ However, the proportion of milk used for this purpose was quite low. Traditionally, fermented milk (*amasi/mukaka wakakodzekwa*)¹⁷⁸ was the most important type of milk consumed among both the Shona and Ndebele. As the interviewees noted, although these traditions dated back to pre-colonial times, they continued to be practiced throughout the colonial and post-colonial periods.

Fermenting was a vital form of food preservation in the African traditional sector. These included non-alcoholic cereal-based beverages (*mahewu, tobwa* and *mangisi*), alcoholic beverages from sorghum or millet malt (*dorolutshwala* and *chikokiyana*) distilled spirits (*kachasu*) and fermented fruit mashes (*mukumbi*). Indeed, a growing body of scientific literature focussing on the role of fermented foods in traditional African societies has emerged. For instance, in scientific analyses of different types of fermented foods are produced in Zimbabwe's rural sector, Gadaga, Mutukumira, Narvhus and Feresu show how traditional fermenting methods are effective in preserving perishable foodstuffs.¹⁷⁹ In a separate study of the chemical properties of *amasi*, Mutukumira argues that the traditional systems, through the use of clayey or wooden containers, help preserve ferment milk better than the industrial use of metal containers.¹⁸⁰ E. Karenzi, A. Mashaku, A. Nshimiyimana, B. Munyanganizi, and P. Thonart, which focus on the production of fermented milk in Rwanda shows the changes that have come with the preparation of fermented milk (locally referred to as *kuvuguto*) in modern dairies using

¹⁷⁷ Interview with Martha Maphosa, Bulawayo, 19 July, 2013.

¹⁷⁸ A cheese-like cottage, traditionally fermented milk is called *amasi* in siNdebele language, *mukaka wakakodzekwa* or *mukaka wemahwe* or *hodzeko* in the Shona dialects. For brevity, the term *amasi* will be used in this study to refer to traditionally fermented milk.

¹⁷⁹ T.H. Gadaga, A.N. Mutukumiraa, J.A. Narvhus and S.B. Feresu, 'A review of traditional fermented foods and beverages of Zimbabwe', *International Journal of Food Microbiology*, 53, (1999), 1-11.

¹⁸⁰ A.N. Mutukumira, 'Properties of *Amasi*, a Natural Fermented Milk Produced by Smallholder Milk Producers in Zimbabwe', *Milchwissenschaft*, 50, (1995), 201-205.

‘modern’ handling facilities and non-indigenous breeds.¹⁸¹ Although these scientific studies laud the importance of the use of modern methods of fermenting foods, they nevertheless acknowledge that traditional means, which are also characterised by the accumulation of microbial metabolic products like lactic acid, ethyl alcohol among others, are also effective means of preserving food, particularly milk.¹⁸²

The making *amasi* was a protracted process, often lasting up to four days. The first stage involved pouring raw milk onto a clay container and leaving it to partially ferment overnight. The partially fermented milk would have cream removed from it the next day. The partially fermented milk, named *zifa* in the Karanga dialect, was steered using a *musika* (steering spoon). It would then be poured into a special clay pot (*chingo*), where it was kept under high temperatures for three or four days.¹⁸³ On each of these days, a residual liquid drawn from fermented milk (*mutuvi/umlaza* in Shona and siNdebele respectively) was drained from the fermenting milk while the *zifa* drawn from the previous day was added onto the fermenting milk.¹⁸⁴ After a period of about four days, the fermented milk, which would have become semi-solid by this time, was deemed ready for consumption.

This milk could be consumed in a number of ways. Most commonly, it was consumed with maize meal (*sadza*), which was, and still is, the staple food in most Zimbabwean communities. *Amasi* was mixed with cooked sorghum meal, to make a meal called *mavhuvegwa*.¹⁸⁵ Sorghum meal was first mixed with boiling water, after which milk would be added onto the mixture, to form a thick dough, which would be further heated and steered until a fine mixture was obtained. *Amasi* could also be eaten as it was after the consumption of a staple, hence acting as a type of dessert. This meal, however, was generally prepared for elderly family members.

¹⁸¹ E. Karezi, A. Mashaku, A. M. Nshimiyimana, B. Munyanganizi, and P. Thonart, ‘Kivuguto traditional fermented milk and the dairy industry in Rwanda. A review’ *Biotechnological Agronomy and Social Environment*, 17, 2, (1998), 24-41.

¹⁸² E. Karezi, A. Mashaku, A. M. Nshimiyimana, B. Munyanganizi, and P. Thonart, ‘Kivuguto traditional fermented milk and the dairy industry in Rwanda. A review’, 26.

¹⁸³ Interview with Rhoda Hove, born 1933, Mataruse area of Mberengwa, 16 July, 2013.

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Rhoda Hove, born 1933, Mataruse area of Mberengwa, 16 July, 2013.

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Rhoda Hove, born 1933, Mataruse area of Mberengwa, 16 July, 2013.

While fermented food generally tends to develop a sour taste, *amasi*¹⁸⁶ could only be considered good if it did not develop a lingering sour taste. Although early white traders and later, settlers often referred to *amasi* as ‘sour milk’, the milk did not develop a sour taste when properly prepared. Sourness was viewed as a sign of a process gone wrong. Given the painstaking nature of preparing *amasi*, cases of sour or watery milk were not uncommon. Indeed, some women developed a reputation of preparing solid, tasty milk, while others were notorious for being bad ‘brewers’ of *amasi*.¹⁸⁷ The result of this was that a woman’s ability or otherwise to prepare good *amasi* became associated with her social capital and her status as a “good wife”. Sthabisiwe Ngwenya, an elderly woman from the Mbembesi area just outside Bulawayo, stated that:

Growing up as a young girl [in the 1930s], preparing *amasi* was one of the first things my mother and aunts taught from a young age. In addition to preparing *istshwala* and good meat, I was told to watch closely when they prepared *amasi*. They often told me that the preparation of good *amasi* was one sure sign of determining a girl’s preparedness for marriage or her social background.¹⁸⁸

Ngwenya’s narrative, however, becomes easier to understand when one considers the fact that a girl who had not mastered the art of preparing staple dishes was invariably deemed as unprepared for marriage. Once a girl married into a family, it was expected that she would be able to manage a kitchen in which she prepared meals for her spouse, children and the extended family.¹⁸⁹ Preparing *amasi* was such a difficult task that it was used as a proxy for the measurement of overall wifely competence.

Another important issue raised in Ngwenya’s narrative, in addition to the importance of a woman’s ability to prepare food generally, and *amasi* in particular, is the constructed relationship between a woman’s inability or ability to prepare good milk and her economic background. As indicated earlier in this section, cattle were an important form of wealth and indicator of one’s socio-economic position in society. Thus, to the extent that cattle were not evenly distributed among families with the politically and materially powerful in society enjoying a virtual monopoly over cattle ownership, the availability of milk and its by-products also followed a

¹⁸⁶ The term *amasi* is used both in the siNdebele and Zulu languages.

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Sthabisiwe Ngwenya, born 1930, Bulawayo, 23 July 2013.

¹⁸⁸ Interview with Sthabisiwe Ngwenya, born 1930, Bulawayo, 23 July 2013.

¹⁸⁹ Interview with Sthabisiwe Ngwenya, born 1930, Bulawayo, 23 July 2013.

similar pattern. Powerful cattle-owning families accessed milk much more easily than poor families who owned few or no cattle. Under the old system whereby wealthier families loaned cattle to poor families for temporary use, which the Karanga called *kuronzera*, the beneficiary was allowed to milk the cows for family use, in addition to utilising cattle for manure and draught power.¹⁹⁰ Hence, as in the Zulu kingdom, the flow of milk in society became a symbol through which social and political power could be flexed and distributed by powerful individuals in society. Bjerck has argued that, the control of the flow of milk through Zulu society was the preserve of the chief, who was the in charge of all cattle, and through his patronage system “trickled down to among his attendants, wives, and officers, and the rest carried out into the society through the cattle, first to the boys of the *amabutho* and the rest into the homesteads.”¹⁹¹ While the control and flow in the Zulu kingdom began with the king, in traditional Southern Rhodesian societies the transfer was largely in the hands of wealthy and politically powerful individuals who controlled cattle in society.

Amasi was not easily accessible to everyone in society. Although no rules existed concerning restrictions regarding who could and who could not partake of it, it was often reserved for adults, particularly husbands or given as special gifts to sons-in-law.¹⁹² This practice was particularly common among the Ndebele speaking people and the Karanga people whose language and culture somewhat borrowed syncretically from nearby Ndebele communities.¹⁹³ Most Ndebele-speaking elderly women interviewed concurred that *amasi* was a special delicacy which was mostly served to spouses and important relatives. For instance, Skhangele Mkandla, from the Filabusi district of Matabeleland, noted:

Dating back to the times of our ancestors, before the arrival of the whites, *amasi* has been an important element of our Ndebele diet. Although it was common for all cattle-owning families to prepare it, not everyone had regular access to it. It was often served to spouses, important visitors, sons-in law and neighbours with whom we shared close mutual relations. In many cases, *amasi* was seen as a way of strengthening relations among closely related people in society.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ Interview with Difford Sibanda, born 1934, Filabusi Business Centre, 29 June, 2013. Sibanda worked as an Extension Officer in the Rhodesian government from 1953 to 1977.

¹⁹¹ Bjerck, ‘They Poured Themselves into the Milk: Zulu Political Philosophy under Shaka’, 8.

¹⁹² Interview with Martha Maphosa, born 1927, Mataruse Mberengwa, 19 July, 2013.

¹⁹³ To date, the Karanga dialect spoken in Mberengwa is heavily influenced by siNdebele while certain Ndebele practices such as the first fruit ceremonies are also done in Mberengwa.

¹⁹⁴ Interview with Skhangele Mkandla, born 1929, Filabusi Centre, 10 August, 2013.

This system was to be found in societies in Mberengwa, a Karanga speaking people whose language and culture has, however, been heavily influenced by its proximity to Matabeleland. Musaengana Machita, for, example, explained that fermented milk was hardly sold among families in exchange of any commodity, but was distributed by those who possessed enough cattle to produce sufficient milk for their own needs to those families with whom they shared close social relations either through kinship or friendship.¹⁹⁵ A closer analysis of the importance of *amasi* in the gift economy among in-laws reveals some interesting dynamics. The common system where *amasi* was presented as gift to a son-in-law or his parents was, in effect, a reciprocal gesture aimed at showing gratitude for the payment of *lobola* (bride price), which was generally charged in the form of steers and cows.¹⁹⁶ Difford Sibanda explained it thus:

In the old days, before money was a factor in negotiations, *lobola* was charged in the form of beasts, and at least one of the beasts had to be a cow. If a son-in-law had paid a significant portion of the bride price, then we would often present him with *amasi* each time he visited, or we would often send it to his family, with the fact that he would have contributed to enlarging our head at the back of our minds. Younger generations still do it, but they do not know the real essence of sending *amasi* to the son-in-laws' families. In fact, it was common for elders to offer to look after a son-in-law's children if he had paid the bride price, because it was known that they would be nourished by milk from their father's cattle.¹⁹⁷

Similarly, it was considered a taboo for a relatively new son-in-law to accept *amasi* from his in-laws. Culturally, he was obliged to refuse that milk until such a time when he was sufficiently 'acquainted' with his in-laws through a ceremony called *ukukhululwa ibhatshi* (literally translated to have one's jacket removed), which was often done after he had fully serviced his bride price debt.¹⁹⁸ By declining *amasi* before the ceremony, the son-in-law would be acknowledging his *lobola* debt, which precluded him from consuming milk from in-laws.¹⁹⁹ Thus, the flow of fermented milk in society was important in cementing social ties and kinship. This has comparative resonance in other African societies, fitting with Taylor's ethnographic study of the role of fluids such as milk, blood and water in traditional Rwandan society. He

¹⁹⁵ Interview with Musaengana Machita, born 1930s, Mataruse, Mberengwa, 20 July 2013.

¹⁹⁶ Interview with Difford Sibanda, born 1934, Filabusi Business Centre, 12 June, 2013.

¹⁹⁷ Interview with Difford Sibanda, born 1934, Filabusi Business Centre, 12 June, 2013.

¹⁹⁸ In Ndebele culture, a son-in-law is obliged to put on a jacket, as a form of respect, each time he meets his in-laws. However, this requirement is waived after the *ukukhululwa ibhatshi* procedure, most often after he has paid all his *lobola* dues.

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Difford Sibanda, born 1934, Filabusi Business Centre, 29 June, 2013.

postulates that bodily fluids (blood, semen and maternal milk) and social fluids (cow's milk, sorghum, beer and porridge) were metaphorically linked with the traditional Rwandan economy, which was characterised by a constant circulation of gifts, including beer and bride wealth.²⁰⁰ In this way, the flow of milk was important in the creation and perpetuation of social, and in some cases political camaraderie. As in Rwanda, the Ndebele and Karanga constructed social relationships through the exchange of milk in celebration of ties, hospitality, and ordinary social interaction.

Besides *amasi*, milk was also consumed in other forms. For instance, the residual flavoured liquid (*mutuvi/umlaza*) that was drained from fermenting milk during the preparation of *amasi* was generally despised, and was reserved for young boys and herd boys. They would collect this liquid, which was either yellowish or cream in colour; mix it with fresh milk just drawn from the cow at the kraal.²⁰¹ In addition to its sour taste, this liquid was not deemed useful from a nutritional point of view. This type of milk was seldom consumed by humans within the home; it was often mixed with food reserved for the feeding of cats and dogs.²⁰² The cream separated from fermenting milk was, however, used for a couple of purposes in the homestead. It was either used to add flavour in the cooking of vegetables, or the separated cream was dried into a semi-liquid, which was used as a body ointment lotion.²⁰³

There also existed a number of practices associated with a recently calved cow and its milk. Although it is richest in colostrums at this stage, milk from a recently calved cow was considered unclean, and was thus prohibited from the homestead. For the first week after calving, the cow's milk was reserved for the herd boys and other young boys in the family. Yellowish in colour and dense in texture, this milk was prohibited from entering the homestead, and instead, was boiled at the kraal by the herd boys to make a semi-solid substance termed *mahlaka* (*amahlaka in siNdebele*).²⁰⁴ This would be consumed at the kraal or in some cases, at the pastures while

²⁰⁰ C. Taylor, *Milk, Honey, and Money: Changing Concepts in Rwandan Healing*, 221.

²⁰¹ Interview with Rhoda Hove, born 1933, Mataruse area of Mberengwa, 16 July, 2013.

²⁰² Interview with Rhoda Hove, born 1933, Mataruse area of Mberengwa, 16 July, 2013.

²⁰³ Interview with Difford Sibanda, born 1934, Filabusi Business Centre, 12 June, 2013.

²⁰⁴ Interview with Difford Sibanda, born 1934, Filabusi Business Centre, 29 June, 2013.

herding cattle. The prohibition of milk into the homestead would last for the first week and a half of the calf's birth.

However, the method of handling such milk differed after a week. Although it would still be processed and consumed by the herd boys at the kraal, this time it would be mixed with maize meal and boiled, to make dough called *mudzamba* in Shona (*sathiyana* in siNdebele).²⁰⁵ Although this particular handling of a cow's early milk could have easily been interpreted as a custom that was steeped in superstition, elders knew that this milk was not yet ready for family consumption during the first few days of the calf's life. As mentioned earlier, this kind of milk contains a high level of lactic acid, which is too acidic and may thus lead to diarrhoea. In fact, the calf itself is easily susceptible to diarrhoea during the first weeks of its life, and cattle owners took measures to ensure its intake of milk was regulated.²⁰⁶

Accounts of travellers who arrived just before the colonial occupation of what was to become Southern Rhodesia, demonstrate the extent to which African societies had developed systematic ways of preparing and utilising milk within their socio-economic circumstances. Adrian Darter, a white trader who arrived in Southern Rhodesia a few years before the arrival of the Pioneer Column and lived among Africans, acknowledged that milk was predominantly consumed in its fermented state, and that *amasi* was "excellent diet for the sick."²⁰⁷ Thus, Africans possessed a thriving milk economy that was not only based on its social and cultural value, but also by the prevailing economic circumstances in a largely pre-capitalist system. Although milk had a high cultural value, its importance in the diet, and, as the next section demonstrates, in African economies should not be underestimated.

Towards a market-oriented milk economy

Although pre-colonial African agricultural production was largely subsistence oriented, trade – both internal and external – did play a role in local economies. Beach has shown that the pre-capitalist Shona economy depended on trade – exogenously and endogenously – with merchants

²⁰⁵ Interview with Difford Sibanda, born 1934, Filabusi Business Centre, 29 June, 2013.

²⁰⁶ Interview with Difford Sibanda, born 1934, Filabusi Business Centre, 29 June, 2013.

²⁰⁷ A. Darter, *The Pioneers of Mashonaland*, (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent and Co) 1914, 102.

and among themselves to satisfy local shortages.²⁰⁸ Eira Kramer has shown that, on the eve of colonial occupation, indigenous populations were producing for exchange and traded with neighbouring people as well as itinerant merchants with whom they came into increasing contact during the last half of the 19th century.²⁰⁹ However, African participation in exchange during the pre-colonial phase, unlike the colonial period, was relatively small scale and thus did not interfere with pre-colonial agricultural practice.²¹⁰ This section focuses on the manner in which indigenous milk producers were brought into increasingly frequent contact with market forces at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. It examines the impact of key political and socio-economic factors which defined African participation in the colonially induced milk exchange economy. Early efforts by the British South Africa Company and settlers to establish a settler herd, from which a dairy industry could be developed, will also be examined.

African response to trade, particularly to agricultural market opportunities in the years leading to, and immediately after, colonial occupation has been subjected to intense historiographical debate. Liberal scholarship, as espoused in William Barber's *The Economy of British Central Africa*, focussed on African agrarian systems facing the demands of colonial occupation and capitalism. Influenced by Lewis's model of development theory which argues that labour was transferred from a low productivity subsistence or indigenous sector to a high productivity capitalist or money economy²¹¹, Barber conceived African agriculture prior to colonial occupation as naturally underdeveloped, with Africans being trapped in their old 'primitive' pre-capitalist systems which inhibited them from producing for exchange. For him, the capitalist system which the colonial establishment espoused was an ultimately beneficial process, spontaneously induced by market forces (rather than imposed by the colonial state).²¹² For him,

²⁰⁸ Beach, 'The Shona Economy: Branches of Production', 47.

²⁰⁹ E. Kramer, 'The Evolution of Policy: Trade and Production in the Reserve Economy of Colonial Zimbabwe, 1890-1952', PhD Thesis, University of Zimbabwe, 2003, 21.

²¹⁰ Kramer, 'The Evolution of Policy: Trade and Production in the Reserve Economy of Colonial Zimbabwe, 1890-1952', 21.

²¹¹ See W.A. Lewis, *Economic Development with Unlimited Supplies of Labour* (Manchester: Manchester School, 1954).

²¹² Barber, *The Economy of British Central Africa* (London: Athlone Press 1961), 93.

increased African movement away from the traditional 'subsistence' sector towards the capitalist labour market was voluntary.

Lewis and Barber's theses have been discredited. First was Giovanni Arrighi's 1970 study of the development of Southern Rhodesian colonial political economy, whose focus on labour supplies challenged Barber's conception of "the underdevelopment of the African peoples as an original state which the development of a capitalist sector gradually eliminates".²¹³ Writing from a Marxist perspective, Arrighi illustrated that, Africans had begun to respond positively to market conditions by producing surplus agricultural goods for exchange by the turn of the 19th century. Instead, he emphasized political processes, which often entailed land expropriation, expropriation of rents, coerced labour as being responsible for increased African participation on the labour market.²¹⁴

Following up on this were studies by Palmer and Phimister, which illustrated African economic enterprise shortly before and during the first two decades of colonialism, only to be curtailed by the colonial state's efforts at promoting European agriculture.²¹⁵ Phimister argues that, given their 'extensive experience' in pre-colonial trade, both the Shona and the Ndebele were not only receptive to, but actually thrived in the exchange economy during the early 1890s.²¹⁶ Indeed, with the settler community largely preoccupied with mineral exploitation at the expense of agricultural activity, African producers positively responded to the burgeoning demand for their produce in sprouting towns and mines by increasing their own agrarian activity. While the general argument in Arrighi, Palmer and Phimister's is compelling, they did not disaggregate the extent of this prosperity to individual agricultural enterprises. This and the next section will demonstrate that, while Africans initially participated on the milk market actively, this was short-

²¹³ Arrighi, 'Labour Supplies in Historical Perspective: A Study of the Proletarianisation of the African Peasantry in Rhodesia', 200.

²¹⁴ Arrighi, 'Labour Supplies in Historical Perspective: A Study of the Proletarianisation of the African Peasantry in Rhodesia', 201.

²¹⁵ R. Palmer, 'The Agricultural History of Rhodesia', 250, I. Phimister, 'Peasant Production and Underdevelopment in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1914', also see R. Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*, (London: Heinemann, 1977), 71.

²¹⁶ Phimister, 'Peasant Production and Underdevelopment in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1914', 219.

lived as they lost their livestock to expropriation from 1983 onwards, while the scourge of bovine diseases reversed both African and settler attempts to build a strong herd.

From the point of view of dairy production and marketing, African producers indeed attempted to defy the impact of colonial land disenfranchisement and positively responded to the market opportunities shortly prior to and during the first two decades of occupation. The existence of symbolic values in the manner milk was produced, distributed and consumed in the traditional socio-economic system, did not prevent Africans from actively participating on the milk exchange economy when opportunities arose. Indeed, there is evidence that Africans marketed milk to European merchants and transport riders during the late 1880s and early 1890s. When compared to the production of grain crops, however, active African milk marketing was short-lived – lasting only a few years before succumbing to the cattle losses which followed the 1893 war and cattle diseases from the late 1980s onwards. Consequently, the period between 1890 and 1908 – generally considered to have been an ‘era of peasant prosperity’ – was not similarly successful for milk producers.

When orchestrating the occupation of Southern Rhodesia in 1890, the BSAC, under the leadership of Cecil John Rhodes, was driven by the hopes of finding rich mineral deposits, especially gold, of the same magnitude as found in South Africa. Richard Hodder-Williams has said that white settlement in Southern Rhodesia was originally fired not by any sense of imperial mission, but by the prospect of a second Rand developing out of the mineral concessions Rhodes had negotiated with Lobengula, the Paramount Chief of the Ndebele.²¹⁷ The fabled ‘Second Rand’ would in turn generate new funds to finance further development, so that farming took a back seat. Rochford Maguire, one of the Company’s directors aptly captured the situation in 1891 thus: “when cattle and gold were in competition, nobody thought of cattle.”²¹⁸

²¹⁷ The British South Africa Company’s obsession with the hopes of finding huge mineral wealth in Southern Rhodesia has been documented by many historians. For instance, see, R. Hodder-Williams, *White Farmers in Rhodesia, 1890-1965*, (London: MacMillan Press, 1983), 13. G. Arrighi, *The Political Economy of Rhodesia*, (The Hague: Mouton, 1967), 35.

²¹⁸ Rochford Maguire, quoted in R. Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*, 26.

Without any regard for existing African rights and agricultural needs, huge tracts of African occupied land were pegged and alienated by the Company and sold to many companies and individual settlers at concessional rates. Each member of the Pioneer Column, for instance, became entitled to a farm of 1 500 morgen (about 3 000 acres).²¹⁹ Accompanied by hostile administrative ordinances and practices, the alienation of land disturbed African agricultural systems, precipitating bitter frustration among Africans. The invasion of Matabeleland by the Pioneers in 1893 led to the outbreak of a brief war between the Ndebele and Company agents. Shortly after the war, in which the Ndebele were vanquished, a Land Commission was set up by the Company to find a solution to the conflicting interests of Africans and Europeans. Pursuant to the Commission's recommendations, the BSAC, through the 1894 Order in Council, allocated to the Ndebele two large tracts of land, the Gwaai and Shangani reserves, which covered an area of over two million acres.²²⁰ Consisting mainly of poorly watered, infertile and Tsetse-infested lands, Ndebele themselves had long referred to the two areas as *Amagusu Amnyama* (Dark Forests), where only outcasts and witches could live.²²¹ Like the Maasai in colonial Kenya, the Ndebele were cognisant of the environmental dangers associated with their new homelands, and they interpreted their banishment to these areas as a ploy to ensure that they lose their livestock to diseases.²²² The implementation of the 1898 Order in Council, after the 1897 and 1898 Shona and Ndebele uprising, saw the creation of reserves in Mashonaland. By the end of 1899, about 16 reserves, covering about 24 800 000 acres had been established.²²³ This meant that a significant number of Africans, and their livestock were moved onto new environments.

Despite the unimpressive returns accruing from gold mining (as described in chapter 3), the BSAC proceeded to establish an administrative system inspired by Victorian industrial principles

²¹⁹ L.H. Gann, *A History of Southern Rhodesia. Early Days to 1934*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965), 162.

²²⁰ A.K.H. Weinrich, *African Farmers in Rhodesia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 17.

²²¹ J. Alexander, J McGregor and T.O. Ranger, *Violence and memory: One hundred years in the 'Dark Forests' of Matabeleland*, (Oxford: James Currey, 2000), 23.

²²² For a more detailed discussion of the Kenyan experience, see K. Hughes, "'They give me fever': East Coast Fever and other environmental impacts of the Maasai moves", in K. Brown and D. Gilfoyle (eds), *Healing the Herds: Disease, Livestock economies and the globalisation of veterinary medicine*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010), 148.

²²³ Kramer, 'The Evolution of Policy: Trade and Production in the Reserve Economy of Colonial Zimbabwe, 1890 - 1952', 23.

and values which mirrored settler interests.²²⁴ However, under pressure from the British government, which insisted on the preservation of African interests, a separate Native Affairs Department (NAD) was established to deal with African issues, and its supervision of African affairs lasted nearly 60 years.²²⁵ The ensuing governmental system created separate agencies for European and African agriculture, European and African education, European and African housing, and so on.²²⁶ Murray argues that safeguarding African interests involved “maintaining a framework of ‘traditional life’ or rather maintaining such features of it as were permissible given the context of a settled colony.”²²⁷ This sowed the seeds of a dual agricultural system, which, as shall become clear in this thesis, had a huge bearing on the fate of African commercial dairy farming.

Native Commissioners, who were appointed to superintend all facets of indigenous African affairs from 1894 onwards at district level, were asked to demarcate areas ‘suitable’ for African habitation throughout Southern Rhodesia. As African administrators, it should be said, Native Commissioners, and the NAD in general, often found themselves traversing a tight administrative line of balancing what they perceived to be the interests of African producers on the one hand, and the demands of both the state and settler community on the other.²²⁸ The creation of separate administrative units for Europeans and Africans into non-competing groups, which was reinforced by the division of land into separate African and European areas, sowed the seeds of a dual and conflicted economic system. Diana Jeater has argued persuasively that Southern Rhodesian ‘native policy was the product of arguments, debates, and profoundly conflicting interests among whites – administrators, missionaries, and settlers – who interacted with Africans on a daily basis.’²²⁹ As shall emerge throughout this thesis, rarely did state officials agree on the formulation and implementation of any African dairy policy.

²²⁴ D.J. Murray, *The Governmental System in Southern Rhodesia*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 63.

²²⁵ *Official Yearbook of the colony of Southern Rhodesia*, 1, 1924, 202-203.

²²⁶ M. Yudelman, *Africans on the Land*, (London: Heinemann, 1964), 42.

²²⁷ Murray, *The Governmental System in Southern Rhodesia*, 280.

²²⁸ Kramer, ‘The Evolution of Policy: Trade and Production in the Reserve Economy of Colonial Zimbabwe, 1890 - 1952’, 23.

²²⁹ D. Jeater, ‘Imagining Africans: Scholarship, fantasy, and science in colonial administration, 1920s Southern Rhodesia’, *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 38, 1 (2005), 1.

In spite of the loss of land, however, developments in the colony within the first two decades allowed many Africans not only to continue in their old agrarian systems, but also to increase production for the emergent settler markets. After losing their land rights in the 1890s, a considerable number of Africans did not move onto the lands reserved for their occupation, however. They opted to remain on their ancestral lands either as rent paying tenants or share croppers (on European owned land). Those living on as yet unalienated land had to pay hut tax to the Company.²³⁰ Christopher Youé contended that this phenomenon was a pronounced feature of early 20th century settler societies.²³¹ Southern Rhodesian officials reasoned that it would be “a very short-sighted policy to remove these natives to the Reserves, as their services may be of great value to European occupants.”²³² With very few settlers utilising their land for any agricultural purposes, the position of these ‘squatters’ was legally acknowledged through the 1908 Private Locations Ordinance which regulated the terms of African occupation of European land.

The Company and the early settlers’ obsession with the realisation of a highly anticipated but elusive fortune from gold mining, their consequent lack of genuine interest in farming and continued African occupation of alienated land, coupled with the slow removal from alienated land of its traditional occupants, gave Africans a window of agricultural opportunity. Given such a scenario, Africans chose to relate to the new economy as peasants rather than as wage labourers because, as Arrighi has demonstrated, the effort price of eking out a living as labourers on Europeans mines was higher than when they participated as producers.²³³ Hence, rather than gain the income they needed for the payment of taxes and other cash demands exerted upon them by the establishment, they swiftly took advantage of emergent local markets and began producing a surplus. They sold their produce to white traders and transport riders, who themselves had followed the Pioneer Column into the country but had neither ventured into

²³⁰ O. Cluer, ‘The assessment of rural development and planning in the tribal areas of Zimbabwe under the Rhodesian settler government,’ (Masters Thesis, University of Queensland, 1980), 60.

²³¹ C. Youé, ‘Black Squatters on White Farms: Segregation and Agrarian Change in Kenya, South Africa, and Rhodesia, 1902-1963’, *The International History Review*, 24, 3 (2002), 558-602.

²³² Youé, ‘Black Squatters on White Farms: Segregation and Agrarian Change in Kenya, South Africa, and Rhodesia, 1902-1963’, 575.

²³³ See, Arrighi, ‘Labour Supplies in Historical Perspective: A study of the proletarianisation of the African peasantry in Rhodesia’, 198-228.

mining nor agriculture. These traders would resell, often at huge profits, the produce on European settlements and mines. Himself a trader, Percy Fitzpatrick described the Shona people he met in 1891 as:

Anxious to barter and quicker to trade and more eager for business than any native I have seen. So keen are they on business, and so quick to perceive an opening, that they have broken up fresh ground, and planted double crops this year, in order to supply the rush of the white men.²³⁴

The Ndebele in the south-western part of the country were equally enterprising, disposing of their cattle and sheep in return for cash or some desired consumer goods such as cloth and salt.²³⁵ As the list of their consumer needs increased, Africans looked forward to selling more of their produce for cash or in return for such goods as blankets, salt and beads. The Native Commissioner for Chilimanzi in 1899 reported that “every year they (Africans) look forward to the trading season eagerly for the disposing of their surplus and for the satisfying of the different wants.”²³⁶

Milk marketing was quite common during the early 1890s. A transport rider, Stanley Hyatt recalled visiting African villages from where, in addition to grain and eggs, they could ‘get plenty of sour milk.’²³⁷ The availability of sour milk for sale is echoed in the account of Darter, a trader who operated in the Mashonaland area between 1890 and the mid-1900s. He observed that the locals who came to their camp were “anxious to trade”, bringing with them cattle, gallons of sour milk and fowls, among other goods.²³⁸ He gave a long list of goods which they purchased from African producers:

Natives along our route swarmed the camp, anxious to trade. They brought pumpkins, beans, rice, mealie meal, millet meal kaffir corn, kaffir beer, tobacco, honey, monkey nuts, gourds, bark-bags, bark-rope, bark string, fowls, eggs, sour milk and sweet potatoes.²³⁹

Due to its highly perishable nature, fresh milk was less common on the market; it was first fermented and marketed as sour milk. The ultimate consumers of sour milk were African

²³⁴ J.P. Fitzpatrick, quoted in Phimister, ‘Peasant Production and Underdevelopment in Southern Rhodesia, 1890 – 1914’, 220.

²³⁵ Phimister, ‘Peasant Production and Underdevelopment in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1914’, 220.

²³⁶ NAZ N9/1/5 Annual Report of the Native Commissioner, Chilimanzi, 1891.

²³⁷ Hyatt, *The Old Transport Road*, 90.

²³⁸ Darter, *The Pioneers of Mashonaland*, 101.

²³⁹ Darter, *The Pioneers of Mashonaland*, 101.

labourers to whom it was distributed by mining capital after purchase from traders, European settlers or the traders themselves.

The nature of the trade, it should be underscored, was decidedly aimed at short-changing African producers. Indeed, as Phimister argues, traders represented institutionalised raiding of peasant produce for the ultimate benefit of the capitalist sector.²⁴⁰ Accounts by European traders reveal how they often attempted to manipulate Africans on the market with a view to fleecing them of their produce. They often avoided cash transactions, preferring to offer goods of less value in exchange. Darter's account of the relations between Europeans traders and African producers is particularly revealing; "money they did not know the value of, not that we had much, neither did we care. We bartered with bouilli-beef tins, cartridge-cases, salt sugar and old kit we wanted to discard, also copper wire and beads."²⁴¹ It was not only market forces at play, the system was accompanied by naked violence. As Hyatt recalled of his trading trips:

At first the local heathen asked us outrageous prices for the stuff we wanted to buy from them. It is the way of the Mashona to be insolent until he is taught the danger of that course. They held out for cash at first, and when we offered trading goods, demanded a wholly unreasonable measure. However, they soon came to their senses....our reputation with the fear of the sjambok spread very quickly, and, after a day or so, we had no trouble at all.²⁴²

It would not be correct, however, to imply that African milk producers were simply passive victims of European traders' chicanery and violence. Although, as noted earlier, African producers in general were eager to trade, they were also quick to discern and respond to market dynamics. Producers would withhold the bulk of their milk from their market, until market conditions became favourable. For instance, a European trader stated that Africans would hide milk and mealies before sampling the obtaining prices. He added that:

If (the producer) finds there is a lively demand for food and milk, he will return to the bush, call his caretaker from his hiding place and part with all he has. If his supply is greater than our demands, he will go home and consume his produce in his own house, returning with more when the milk and mealie market improves.²⁴³

²⁴⁰ Phimister, 'Peasant Production and Underdevelopment in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1914', 225.

²⁴¹ Darter, *The Pioneers of Mashonaland*, 101.

²⁴² Hyatt, *The Old Transport Road*, 90.

²⁴³ NAZ A2/1/1 Farm Produce. P. Campbell, Mt Hampden Camp, to *Cape Times*, Cape Town, 12 October, 1890.

White aversion to African success on the market, as shall be illustrated throughout this thesis was persisted throughout the pre-Second World period, leading to the eventual elimination of African participation on the colonial dairy market, as delineated in chapters 4, 5 and 6. Although African cattle-owners in some areas responded to the milk market, this did not last long. The next section examines the impact of cattle losses and stock diseases.

Decline of African milk marketing and early efforts to build a settler herd, 1893 – 1907

Although very little was done to promote settler capitalist agriculture during the early 1890s, the Company, both on behalf of itself and settlers, had begun to build a sizeable cattle herd by the mid-1890s.²⁴⁴ The settler herd from which dairy farming emerged was largely founded upon the indigenous African cattle breeds. Partly because of lack of the requisite capital to import exotic breeds from South Africa and overseas, and largely because of the strength of the indigenous breeds in withstanding local conditions, the Company sought to use the indigenous breeds as a basis upon which to build the settler herd. Indeed, BSAC reports for the years 1892 to 1894 confirmed this policy thus:

That this country is good for cattle is proved by the large herds which were owned by King Lobengula, and attention to breeding is all that is required to improve the quality of the stock.²⁴⁵

A few years later, the Company reported that, in addition to cheap land with abundant grazing lands, “in the native herds there is a good foundation stock available at cheap prices.”²⁴⁶

The building of a settler herd for dairy and beef purposes that began from this period was then achieved through processes that led to a depletion of African herds. The observation by the Company that indigenous cattle could be obtained for “cheap prices” should not be misconstrued to mean that African cattle owners were prepared to dispose of their cattle cheaply. Instead, it was a declaration of intent by the Company to acquire African livestock at little or no cost, through whatever means possible. Indeed, coercion and brute force were often employed to

²⁴⁴ M.G.B. Rooney ‘European Agriculture in the History of Rhodesia, 1890-1907’ Masters’ Thesis, University of South Africa, 1968), 45-46, and Samasuwo, “‘There is something about cattle’: Towards an economic history of the beef industry in colonial Zimbabwe, with special reference to the role of the state, 1939-1980’, 13-14.

²⁴⁵ *BSAC Reports*, 1892-1894.

²⁴⁶ Quoted in H.Weinmann, *Agricultural Research and Development in Southern Rhodesia Under the Rule of the British South Africa Company, 1890-1923*, (Salisbury: University of Rhodesia, 1972), 112.

deprive Africans of their livestock. As noted in the previous section, the sjambok was used to force stock owners to ‘sell’ their livestock at low prices. Samasuwo argues that the settler cattle herd was developed as a result of a “protracted and violent process of primitive accumulation” in which cattle were forcibly taken from Africans by the BSAC and settler farmers.²⁴⁷ He regards the process of occupation itself that began in 1890, and particularly the 1893 War of Dispossession that led to the ousting of Lobengula as having been followed by the expropriation of cattle from Africans. Once Lobengula had been vanquished in 1893, all cattle were expropriated by the Company and distributed either to volunteer troops or settler farmers in both Matabeleland and Mashonaland.²⁴⁸ Indeed, H. Weinmann has observed that:

It (is often) assumed that they (European farmers) purchased such cattle from the Africans but, in addition, considerable numbers of native cattle were acquired by European settlers as a result of the defeat of King Lobengula in 1893, and it should be mentioned in this connection that the volunteers of the Matabele War were promised an equal share of half of the ‘loot’, ie, Lobengula’s 30 000 cattle.²⁴⁹

The 1894 Land Commission declared that all cattle in the hands of Africans (including the offspring) before 1893 now belonged to the Company.²⁵⁰ Weinrich has estimated that upwards of 150 000 head of African-owned cattle were confiscated by the BSAC during the period between 1893 and 1904.²⁵¹ Besides cattle given to volunteers, virtually all livestock acquired in this way by the Company eventually ended in the hands of settler farmers. A Government Notice in 1895 announced that the Company intended to sell cattle to *bona fide* settler farmers at a concessionary rate of 50s per head, payable in four instalments over 18 months.²⁵² Most of the volunteer troops opted to sell their livestock to big companies or to individuals who wished to venture into livestock raising.²⁵³ Although some livestock was purchased from the Bamangwato in neighbouring Bechuanaland (mainly the Mangwato breed and others such as the Tuli and

²⁴⁷ Samasuwo, “‘There is something about cattle’: Towards an economic history of the beef industry in colonial Zimbabwe, with special reference to the role of the state, 1939-1980”, 4.

²⁴⁸ British South Africa Company. Government Notice 49, 24 June 1895.

²⁴⁹ Weinmann, ‘Agricultural Research and Development in Southern Rhodesia under the rule of the British South Africa Company, 1890-1923’, 104.

²⁵⁰ See British South Africa Company. Government Notice 49, 24 June 1895.

²⁵¹ Weinrich, *African Farmers in Rhodesia*, 18.

²⁵² British South Africa Company. Government Notice 49, 10 December 1895.

²⁵³ See, Rooney ‘European Agriculture in the History of Rhodesia, 1890-1907’, 45-46.

Nkone) the majority of the cattle in settler herds were of the MaShona and Matabele stock.²⁵⁴ The ultimate corollary of Company attempts to use the indigenous breeds to build the settler herd was the near destruction of African capacity to participate on the milk market.

While a small number of Hereford, Shorthorn, Angus and Friesland bulls had been brought into the country from South African territories by 1895, an acute shortage of funds on the part of settlers and the high incidence of diseases in neighbouring territories limited the extent to which more could be imported.²⁵⁵ The outbreak of redwater and lungsickness in the South African provinces of the Orange Free State, Transvaal and the Cape Colony from the late 1890s onwards hampered cattle importation from those provinces, while the existence of East Coast Fever in Natal led to the total stoppage of importations.²⁵⁶ Restrictions were imposed under the Lung Sickness Ordinance of 1900, which provided for the mandatory quarantine, testing and inoculation process for all cattle coming from the affected provinces. Further regulations were introduced in 1901, and the main import of these was to ensure “the better regulating and restricting the movement of cattle with a view to prevent the spread of diseases, and the declaration of certain districts to be infected or quarantined areas.”²⁵⁷ The situation was aggravated by the fact that similar disease outbreaks were reported from her Northern and Eastern neighbours, from whom she had hoped to import breeding stock. The Agricultural Department was in 1905 forced to extend the restrictions on the importation of cattle from Portuguese East Africa and Northern Rhodesia to “prevent the introduction of cattle susceptible to African Coast Fever, and which might cause a recrudescence of and feed the disease on infected areas.”²⁵⁸

²⁵⁴ Southern Rhodesia, *Handbook for the use of prospective settlers on the land*, (Department of Agriculture and Lands, 1924), 30.

²⁵⁵ For a detailed discussion of the settler herd and the impact of diseases see, Samasuwo, “There is something about cattle”: Towards an economic history of the beef industry in colonial Zimbabwe, with special reference to the role of the state, 1939-1980” and Machingaidze, ‘The development of settler capitalist agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with particular reference to the role of the state, 1908-1939’.

²⁵⁶ *Report of the Department of Agriculture*, 1907.

²⁵⁷ NAZ S14876/1 Cattle Diseases: Letter from the Chief Veterinary Surgeon to the Secretary of Treasury, titled ‘Importation of cattle’, dated 9 June, 1920.

²⁵⁸ *Report of the Department of Agriculture*, 1907.

While the outbreak of diseases in neighbouring territories such as Northern Rhodesia and the Union of South Africa inhibited the importation of cattle, the outbreak of diseases locally decimated the national herd. First, the outbreak of Rinderpest that swept through the country from 1896 onwards dealt a heavy blow to both African and settler cattle owners.²⁵⁹ This outbreak, which first appeared in the north-eastern parts of the Bulawayo district in February 1896, and spread “with fearful rapidity through the large herds of cattle in Matabeleland”, had by the end of 1896 accounted for at least 40 000 cattle.²⁶⁰ In addition to running an inoculation programme, the Company adopted a policy of slaughtering all beasts that were suspected of carrying the disease. This set the stage for clashes between the Company and African cattle owners who did not understand the logic of slaughtering seemingly healthy cattle.²⁶¹ As a result of deaths, due both to effects of the disease and slaughter of cattle that had been exposed to the disease, African-owned herds fell from over 100 000 to just under 14 000 by the end of 1897.²⁶²

Commenting on the impact of the cattle losses on dairy production, the Civil Commissioner for Melssetter stated that the disease had “had a deleterious effect of milk and butter supplies, both on white settlements and among the natives of this territory”.²⁶³ From the late 1890s onwards, African milk was no longer readily available to traders and on mining settlements. Reflecting on the late 1890s, Darter observed:

In enumerating the commodities obtained from the natives I have come to honey, and we get quantities of honey. This is a land of honey – no milk, bar sour. Sour milk is excellent diet for the sick, but you will secure kaffir beer with greater facility than sour milk. **That is on account of the scarcity of their cattle.** [emphasis mine]²⁶⁴

Meanwhile, Company and settler efforts to build a herd from which a dairy and beef industry could emerge continued. With the scourge of Rinderpest subsiding, the United Goldfields

²⁵⁹ Weimann, *Agricultural Research and Development in Southern Rhodesia under the rule of the British South Africa Company, 1890 – 1923*, 105.

²⁶⁰ *British South Africa Company Reports, 1897-1898*.

²⁶¹ For more on the impact of the Rinderpest epidemic, settler and African responses to the disease, see the first chapter in W. Mwatwara, ‘The History of State Veterinary Services and African Livestock Regimes, c1896 -1980’, PhD Thesis, Stellenbosch University, 2014.

²⁶² R. Blake, *A History of Rhodesia*, (London: Eyre Methuen, 1977), 123. See also Weinmann, *Agriculture Research and Development in Southern Rhodesia, Under the Rule of the British South Africa Company, 1890–1923*, 105-106.

²⁶³ NAZ S14876/1 Cattle Diseases: Letter from the Civil Commissioner, Melssetter to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, 1897.

²⁶⁴ Darter, *The Pioneers of Mashonaland*, 102.

Company, working together with the BSAC, initiated a scheme in which considerable numbers of cattle for breeding purposes as well as for transport and slaughter were imported into the country from the Cape Colony, the Transvaal, Orange Free State, Bechuanaland and Northern Rhodesia (in strict compliance with the quarantine and inoculation provisions of the Lung sickness Ordinance). These cattle were distributed at cost price and easy terms of payment.²⁶⁵ Further, BSAC's successful suppression of the Angoni in Northern Rhodesia resulted in the capture of over 10 000 head, 1 500 of which were brought to Southern Rhodesia and sold to farmers on a two years instalment plan at £7 per head.²⁶⁶ These cattle, which were described by the Agricultural Department as "eminently good milkers for their size and hardiness", were cross-bred with imported Short-horn stock.

However, efforts to rebuild the settler herd were undone by the outbreak of yet another deadly cattle disease in 1901 – East Coast Fever.²⁶⁷ With its origins in Dar-es-Salaam and transmitted through Beira in Portuguese East Africa, the disease, became a major stumbling block to the development of the cattle industry until the 1920s.²⁶⁸ The disease first appeared when the BSAC imported cattle from Australia through the Beira Port, from where the cattle picked the disease and later spread it first in Umtali before it became spread across the whole country. Within the first two years of its detection, the disease had claimed upwards of 19 000 cattle.²⁶⁹ In 1903, the Department of Agriculture, painted a rather gloomy picture on the effects of East Coast Fever on the cattle industry in Rhodesia:

The cattle disease which had made its appearance during last year gradually increased its violence and spread through the country with disastrous results, practically decimating the districts of Melssetter, Umtali, Charter, Gwelo, Selukwe, and that portion of the Bulawayo District along the main transport roads from Gwelo, and within a radius of twenty miles of the Bulawayo Township – 40% of draught cattle, and 60 % of breeding stock within the infected area falling victims

²⁶⁵ *Report of the Department of Agriculture*, 1898.

²⁶⁶ Weinmann, *Agricultural Research and Development in Southern Rhodesia under the rule of the British South Africa Company, 1890-1923*, 107.

²⁶⁷ This disease is also referred to as African Coast Fever in some official documents.

²⁶⁸ For a detailed discussion on the Origins, impact of the disease, and the successes and failures of State interventions see, W. Mwatwara, "The Tick was not slow to take advantage", *Conflicts in the Struggle against East Coast Fever, 1901-1920* *South African Historical Journal*, 1, (2012) 1-22, and Machingaidze, 'The Development of Settler Capitalist Agriculture in Southern Rhodesia, with Particular Reference to the Role of the State, 1908-1939', 280.

²⁶⁹ Machingaidze, 'The Development of Settler Capitalist Agriculture in Southern Rhodesia', 280.

and succumbing to the disease. As a consequence, all branches of trade have suffered seriously, and the present outlook is far from hopeful...²⁷⁰

The disease's ravages were felt more among imported European breeds than on indigenous herds. By 1903, it had become evident that "Central or East African and native cattle have resisted or become immune to the African Coast Fever to a much larger degree than the Colonial or imported stock, or their progeny – the percentage being about 25%, as against 10% respectively."²⁷¹ Under pressure from farmers, the BSAC passed Regulations under the Animals Diseases Consolidated Ordinance in 1904, which sought to regulate both the importation and movement of cattle in Southern Rhodesia.²⁷² Under these Regulations, the movement of cattle from one area to another was prohibited, unless the cattle were certified to be disease-free by the Veterinary Department.

The promulgation of the 1904 Ordinance, coupled with the losses that accompanied the disease outbreak, dealt a heavy blow to the development of commercial dairying in Southern Rhodesia. With the South African provinces virtually blocked as a source of breeding cattle owing to the fear of Lungsickness and Rinderpest, and cattle already in the country prohibited from moving from one district to another, the number of cattle that could be milked was drastically reduced. Long term planning, especially in the importation of pedigree stock, could not be implemented as long as the disease was not eradicated in the country. With initial efforts to combat the epidemic initially appearing to bear fruit by 1907, the following statement by the Department of Agriculture in 1907 sums up the impact of African Coast Fever, and perhaps all bovine diseases during the first two decades of colonial occupation on commercial dairying:

The losses and restrictions incidental to the ravages of Coast Fever have merely had the effect of postponing the organisation of a dairy industry on sound commercial lines. The need for such a system, as essential to securing the best returns from our stock, has never been lost sight of, and with the virtual suppression of the disease, owners are already endeavouring to make good their losses and further strengthen their mobs against the time when it may be possible to support creameries at every centre of consumption.²⁷³

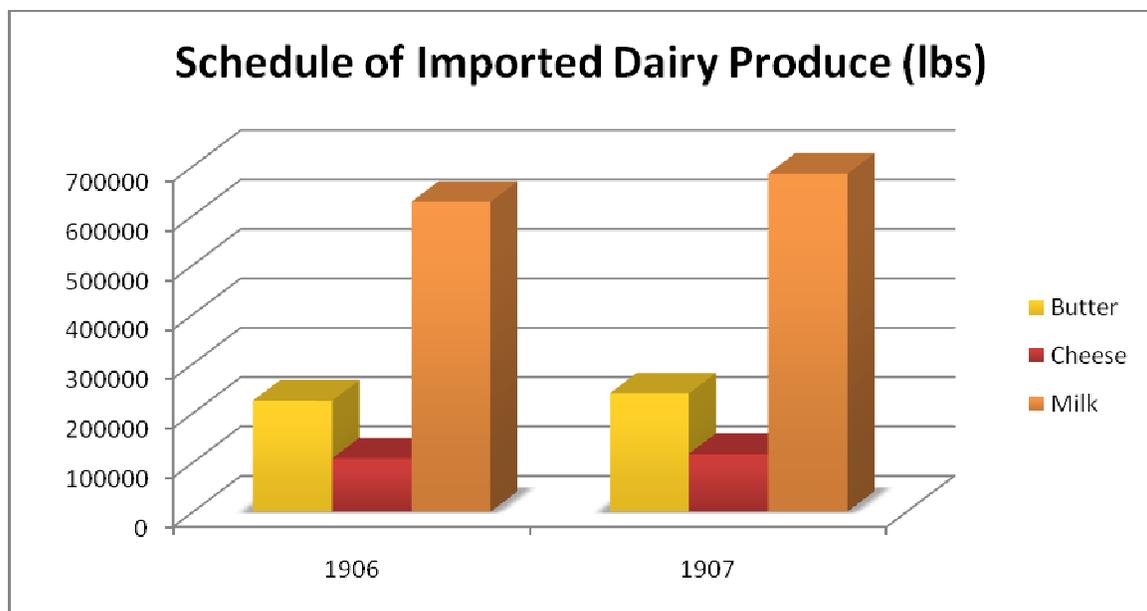
²⁷⁰ *Report of the Department of Agriculture*, 1903.

²⁷¹ *Report of the Department of Agriculture*, 1903.

²⁷² *Report of the Department of Agriculture*, 1905.

²⁷³ *Report of the Department of Agriculture*, 1907.

Although the Department looked forward to an immediately rosy future for the cattle sector, actually very little headway was made in the following years. This was because of the re-emergence of East African Fever soon after 1907 and other factors that shall be discussed in the next chapter. The inevitable consequence of the situation was that by 1908, when commercial agriculture was given a new impetus after the adoption of the White Agricultural Policy and the re-organisation of the Agriculture Department, milk production in the country was quite low. Indeed, owing to the parlous state of dairying by 1907, Southern Rhodesia depended on imports to meet local demand for milk and other dairy products. The graphs below shows import figures for dairy products for 1906 and 1907.



Graph 2: Schedule of Dairy produce imported into Southern Rhodesia during the two years ending 31st December 1907.²⁷⁴

Owing to the low levels of local milk production by both settler and African cattle-owners, very little had been achieved in the establishment of an organised marketing system by 1908. Settler farmers were delivering small quantities of milk and farm butter to privately owned dairies, while state aid remained low and ineffectual. For reasons discussed earlier, African involvement on the market at this time had been reduced significantly, although no government policy specifically precluding them from the market had been formulated. Because of the difficulties of

²⁷⁴ *Report of the Secretary for Agriculture, 1907.*

transporting fresh milk to dairies, the few that continued to produce a surplus sold sour milk to itinerant traders, who re-sold sour milk on the mine compounds. Hyatt bemoaned the dwindling amount milk traders could get from African producers during the early 1900s, stating that they could only acquire about seven to eight pints of milk a day, and lamented that such a situation had arisen because the “Rhodesian veld does not seem to lend itself to the production of milk.”²⁷⁵

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the various idioms and customs surrounding milk production and consumption among some societies outside the commercial sector. Exploring the existence of a milk complex in some African societies, it has demonstrated that despite the existence of cultural and social symbols in the production and consumption of milk in Southern Rhodesian indigenous societies, this did not amount to a complex. Indeed, Africans positively responded to market opportunities on the milk market. However, in comparison with other agricultural sectors, African success on the milk market was less apparent and was generally short-lived. Milk producers had ceased to prosper on the market by the mid-1890s as a result of cattle losses to colonial conquest and successive livestock diseases that ravaged the country at least for the first two decades after occupation.

The chapter also traced Company and settler efforts to establish a settler cattle industry during the period under review, particularly dairy farming, and the challenges such efforts faced. Firstly, Company fixation with gold mining during the period under review meant that very little agricultural development took place. Although, the Company did make efforts to help settlers to build a settler herd predominantly with indigenous herds and a few imported breeds, successive bovine epidemics in Southern Rhodesia and regional territories rendered such efforts futile. With neither Africans nor the settler farmers prospering in the milk trade, the first two decades of occupation were thus a period of milk scarcity.

²⁷⁵ Hyatt, *The Old Transport Road*, 191.

CHAPTER THREE

Laying the foundations of a settler-dominated dairy farming in Southern Rhodesia, 1908 – 1923

Introduction

After nearly two decades of Company and settler fixation with the elusive gold-inspired fortune, the period after 1908 witnessed deliberate attempts by the BSAC to diversify the Southern Rhodesian economy from mining towards settler agriculture. By the mid-1900s, it had become evident that Southern Rhodesia was not an Eldorado; its mineral wealth had been overestimated. From this period, the Company began to take a more active role in encouraging settler capitalist agriculture, leading to the adoption of what came to be known as the White Agricultural Policy (WAP) – a policy that acknowledged that settler agriculture would form the basis of the colony's economy and would thus receive sustained government support.²⁷⁶

If, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, the development of a strong settler dairy sector during the first two decades of occupation was hampered by the dominance of mining, stock diseases and lack of capital and government support, did the espousal of WAP in 1908 mark a positive change in the fortunes of settler dairy farming? If African milk producers responded to market opportunities and marketed surplus milk before they lost their stock to settler expropriation and bovine diseases between 1893 and 1907, how did the implementation of WAP affect their production levels and participation on the colonial market? Focussing on the role of the state, and the attitudes of farmers, both settler and African, this chapter focuses on the dynamics that shaped the development of dairy farming in the country from 1908 until the end of the Company's reign in 1923. Given the fact that WAP explicitly declared that settler – and not

²⁷⁶ Many scholars of Southern Rhodesia's agricultural history have written on the factors leading to the adoption of The White Agricultural Policy, and the manner in which it was implemented in the country, and its success on the major agricultural industries in the country, that is maize, beef and tobacco. For example see, R. Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*, (London: Heinemann, 1977); I. Phimister, 'Meat and monopolies: Beef cattle in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1938' *Journal of African History*, 19, 3, (1978), 391-414 and V. Machingaidze, 'The development of settler capitalist agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with particular reference to the role of the state, 1908-1939,' PhD Thesis, University of London, 1980.

African – agriculture would drive the economic development of the colony,²⁷⁷ this chapter explores the efforts of the Company and settlers to lay the foundation of the colonial agricultural economy, particularly dairy farming. Engaging existing historiography on colonial breeding policy, this chapter discusses early colonial dairy breeding policy and its impact on dairy farming, and the cattle industry in general. Other challenges that stood in the way of successful dairy farming, such as climatic realities, undercapitalisation, lack of expertise and the dominance of beef production will also be discussed. It will be shown that, although output increased so much that the country had become self-sufficient in butter and milk by 1923, this growth was premised on a shallow and flimsy foundation. The implications of the new agrarian policy on African milk production and marketing are also delineated in this chapter, arguing that the assault on African agrarian prosperity effectively set in motion the process of eliminating African participation on the colonial dairy market.

Background: Towards a White Agricultural Policy (WAP)

Although agriculture was a commercial option that was considered by the Company and the pioneer settlers from the early days of occupation, white agriculture was not considered to be as important as mining. The BSAC and the majority of the settlers that came into the country during the first few years had hopes of making a quick fortune from the anticipated huge gold deposit on the Zimbabwean plateau. As noted in the previous chapter, prospects of a gold-inspired mineral revolution had been the major driver of the BSAC's occupation of Southern Rhodesia.

Although considerable tracts of land were pegged and alienated by the British South Africa Company and sold to many companies and individual settlers at concessional rates, much of the land was retained for speculative purposes. Companies and settlers held onto the land in the hope of selling it off when land values had gone up. By the turn of the century, as it became

²⁷⁷ The Company was primarily concerned with realising value out of what it considered to be its biggest asset; land. The value would be realised by enticing as many white settlers into Southern Rhodesia as possible who would buy land, even at nominal prices and then produce agricultural commodities commercially at a profit both to themselves and to the Company. In the process, a substantial white population resident in the country would build up, leading to the realisation of the dream to create a 'white man's country' in Southern Rhodesia. The interests of the indigenous people in this scheme were relegated to the fringes. For more on the dream, see Tawse, E.J. 'Southern Rhodesia: a white man's country.' *Geographical Review*, 17, 1, (1927), and A.S. Mlambo, 'Building a white man's country: Aspects of white immigration into Rhodesia up to World War II', *Zambezia*, xxv, ii, (1998), 123-146.

increasingly evident that the colony's mineral wealth had been exaggerated, and as they began to struggle to sustain themselves, many members of the Pioneer Column and early settlers sold their land claims to big companies.²⁷⁸ Indeed, by 1900, many settlers had fallen into debt, and could only extricate themselves from the financial quagmire by relinquishing their claims for a fee. Companies such as Willoughby's Consolidated, Amalgamated Properties of Rhodesia Ltd, London and Rhodesia Mining and Land Company (LONRHO) and the British South Africa Company itself had established considerable mining and ranching properties by 1914.²⁷⁹ These companies speculatively purchased land "as an investment for mineral finds when communications improved and development became widespread."²⁸⁰

There were very few settlers on the land, and, for many, farming "meant only cutting down trees and selling the wood, or cultivating a small patch of mealies."²⁸¹ Although huge tracts of land were taken up in the first five years of occupation, most of it remained untilled. Although some pioneers accepted the hardships of farming and built homesteads, land changed hands too frequently during this time to enable a steady development of the farms.²⁸² Further, many pieces of farm land that had been purchased remained unoccupied as owners held on to them for speculative purposes. For example, in Marandellas, a rich agricultural district in eastern Mashonaland, "(it) may have seemed well occupied to the cartographer, but on the ground there were barely 10 white residents."²⁸³ As the majority of the settlers who came into Southern Rhodesia after 1890 were not men and women of sound financial and professional standing, most farmers were possessed neither the capital nor the agricultural expertise to venture into commercial agriculture. Hodder-Williams described this group of settlers as merely "store-keepers or small time prospectors" who could not develop their land for commercial agricultural

²⁷⁸ R. Hodder-Williams, *White Farmers in Rhodesia, 1890-1965: A History of the Marandellas District*, (London: Macmillan, 1983), 13.

²⁷⁹ Samasuwo, "There is something about cattle." Towards an economic history of the beef industry in colonial Zimbabwe, with special reference to the role of the state, 1939-1980', PhD Thesis, University of Cape Town, 2000, 16.

²⁸⁰ Hodder Williams, *White Farmers in Rhodesia*, 13.

²⁸¹ I. Phimister, *An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe, Capital accumulation and class struggle*, (London: Longman, 1988), 58.

²⁸² L.H. Gann, *A History of Southern Rhodesia. Early Days to 1934*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965), 162.

²⁸³ Hodder-Williams, *White Farmers in Rhodesia*, 14.

production.²⁸⁴ The growing settler community, in fact, depended on African producers for the provision of agricultural products during the first two decades of occupation.²⁸⁵

By the turn of the century, however, questions had begun to arise concerning the sustainability of the ‘Second Rand’ dream. Apart from over-estimation of the colony’s wealth, several other factors impeded the new colony’s economic progress by 1905. First, the Ndebele uprising of 1893, which was followed by the Ndebele War of Dispossession in the same year, diverted the BSAC’S attention from mining and agricultural development towards safe guarding its grip and control of the territory.²⁸⁶ This was followed by the Jameson Raid, a military onslaught on Paul Kruger’s Transvaal Republic in South Africa led by Leander Starr Jameson, the Company administrator.²⁸⁷ The raid, which began on 29 December 1895 and ended on 2 January 1896, presented the Shona and the Ndebele with an opportune moment to rise against Company administration as most of its troops and armaments had been committed to fighting the Transvaal Republic.²⁸⁸ The net impact of the raid and the risings, which ended in October 1897, was that the colony’s infant mining industry was left on the verge of collapse. The impact was also felt on the London Stock exchange where share values of 22 Rhodesian mining companies plummeted between 1895 and 1898.²⁸⁹ The South African War of 1899-1902, and the rail crisis that followed it, caused another body blow to the fledgling Southern Rhodesian economy.²⁹⁰

These crises eroded the embryonic profitability of Rhodesian mining enterprises. Another collapse of the London market for the colony’s mining shares in 1903 prompted the Company government not only to restructure the mining industry,²⁹¹ but also to begin to look to settler agriculture as an economic alternative. The Company’s Directors turned to the land which, it was

²⁸⁴ Hodder-Williams, *White Farmers in Rhodesia*, 24, 25.

²⁸⁵ Arrighi, ‘Labour Supplies in Historical Perspective: a study of the Proletarianization of the African Peasantry in Rhodesia’, 207. Also see, R. Palmer, ‘The Agricultural History of Rhodesia’, 35-56.

²⁸⁶ S.J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, ‘Rethinking the Colonial Encounter in Zimbabwe in the Early Twentieth Century’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 33, 1, (2007), 177.

²⁸⁷ G. Blainey, ‘Lost Causes of the Jameson Raid’, *Economic History Review*, 18, 2, (1965), 350-366.

²⁸⁸ T.O. Ranger, *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, 1896-7: a Study in African Resistance*, (London: Heinemann, 1967), 5.

²⁸⁹ I. Phimister, ‘The Reconstruction of the SR Gold Mining Industry’, *The Economic History Review*, 29, 3, (1976), 466.

²⁹⁰ Phimister, ‘The Reconstruction of the SR Gold Mining Industry’, 466.

²⁹¹ Phimister, ‘The Reconstruction of the SR Gold Mining Industry’, 465-468.

widely believed, the Company could dispose of as it wished.²⁹² From this period onwards, the BSAC systematically began to shift its focus away from mining towards promoting settler agriculture. Settlers with money and skills were sought to develop the land and thus enhance the value of unsold acres owned by the Company. Thus, a series of events occurred between 1905 and 1908, leading to the unveiling of the ‘White Agricultural Policy’ in 1907, and the subsequent re-organisation of the Agricultural Department under Nobbs’ Directorship the following year.

A Land Settlement Committee was established in London in 1905 with Charles D. Wise appointed Director of Land Settlement in Southern Rhodesia. Himself an experienced British agriculturalist, Wise arrived in Southern Rhodesia in October, 1905, with instructions from the board “to report upon current and future prospects of the agricultural industry, the opportunities for new settlers, and the methods by which cultivating owners could best be established upon the soil.”²⁹³ The following year, Wise wrote a glowing report pertaining to the country’s agricultural potential, particularly in cattle raising, maize and tobacco production. He recommended that it should be the aim of the BSAC:

to dispose of their land at low but fair rate, according to the market value of the land in the country today, reserving, however, alternate blocks (to be sold later when prices had risen): they should assist these men as far as possible within reason, without spoon-feeding and make them successful as their success will mean the success of land settlement and the development of the country.²⁹⁴

The Company adopted this recommendation, and began selling land to prospective settlers for as little as 1/6 per morgen. A commission of Directors of the BSAC visited the country in 1907, and emphasized the recommendations made by Wise. The commission insisted that the aim of the Company to “stimulate in every possible way the opening up and steady development of the mineral and agricultural resources of the country.”²⁹⁵

This new emphasis on promoting settler agriculture found its strongest expression through the re-organisation of the Agricultural Department in 1908 under the Directorship of Dr Eric Nobbs, an

²⁹² Hodder-Williams, *White Farmers in Rhodesia*, 120.

²⁹³ Charles D. Wise, *British South Africa Company Report on Land Settlement*, (London: 1906) Preparatory notes by the Company Directors.

²⁹⁴ Wise, *British South Africa Company Report on Land Settlement*, preparatory notes by the Company Directors.

²⁹⁵ *British South Africa Company Report on Land Settlement, preparatory notes by the Company Directors.*

agricultural scientist who had been an agricultural assistant in the Cape Department of Agriculture.²⁹⁶ His efforts revolutionised the Department, as agriculture began to take a leading role in the development of Rhodesia's fledgling economy. It was recognised that a number of specialists in various scientific discipline was required to give advice to incoming settlers and "to conduct research on all problems which had to be solved to put agriculture in a new country and environment on a sound basis."²⁹⁷ However, owing to limited financial resources and the scarcity of experts, the appointment of specialists was done gradually.

The first appointment was made in 1909, when an entomologist, R.W. Jack, was appointed, followed in 1910 by agricultural engineer, W.M. Matt and J.W. Lewis the tobacco expert. In 1912, R.C. Simmons was appointed Chief of the Animals Branch, under which dairy farming fell.²⁹⁸ His stay, however, was short-lived as he left the Department at the end of the First World War. He was never replaced. The first dairy expert, J.B. Fisher, was only appointed in 1918, at the end of the War, and was replaced by Thomas Hamilton the following year. By 1922, the Department had an established staff compliment of 36 technical officers and 24 administrative and clerical officers.²⁹⁹ State annual expenditure on agriculture increased from £8 729 in 1904 to £41 168 by 1923.³⁰⁰ The staff of the Department was mandated to conduct experiments and disseminate information to farmers. They regularly visited farms to give on-the-spot advice to settler farmers. These visits, according to Nobbs, were effective in the provision of support and guidance to farmers in a country "with a population so largely composed of newcomers, many of them without any agricultural experience."³⁰¹

Settler farmers themselves were fully aware of their limited knowledge and experience in farming. For instance, at the Rhodesia Agricultural Union Congress in 1909 they recommended that government establish a school of agriculture for training purposes.³⁰² The government

²⁹⁶ E.A. Nobbs, 'The native cattle of Southern Rhodesia,' *South African Journal of Science*, XXIV (1927), 1.

²⁹⁷ Weinmann, *Agricultural Research and Development in Southern Rhodesia*, 3.

²⁹⁸ Weinmann, *Agricultural Research and Development in Southern Rhodesia*, 112.

²⁹⁹ *Report of the Director of Agriculture*, 1922.

³⁰⁰ *Official Year Book of the Colony of Southern Rhodesia*, 1924.

³⁰¹ *Report of the Director of Agriculture*, 1921.

³⁰² Machingaidze, 'The Development of settler capitalist agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with particular reference to the role of the state, 1908-1939', 69.

embarked on a programme aimed at establishing institutions exclusively for white settler farmers. The first two experimental farms, also referred to as Central Farms, were established at Marandellas and Salisbury Commonage.³⁰³ In 1909 the Salisbury and Gwebi Agricultural colleges were established for experimental and demonstration work, while three estates – the Rhodes, Inyanga and Matopos – were opened in 1917. Municipal experimental stations at Bulawayo and Gwelo became operational in 1921 and 1923 respectively.³⁰⁴ Focusing only on settler agriculture, these experimental and demonstration farms became the vehicles through which settler agriculture could be developed. Results of research and knowledge were published in the *Rhodesia Agricultural Journal*, itself a settler agricultural mouthpiece that was run by the Rhodesia Agricultural Union.

Establishing a settler dairy industry, 1908 – 1923

The Company's new focus on commercial agriculture was followed by renewed efforts aimed at injecting life into settler dairy farming. However, the first challenge faced by a potentially viable dairying industry concerned the ecological and climatic constraints in the country relative to major dairying countries. Regarding the country's ecological and climatic conditions, Nobbs asserted in 1909 that:

Arable farming must rank below stock-farming in importance, profitable and useful as it is. Cattle raising requires more capital and a longer time before profits accrue, but ultimately yields a higher return, whilst crop growing yields a more regular and an earlier return – a more vital consideration to the newcomer and the man of limited means. Ranching, or at least cattle-farming on extensive lines, is a growing feature of the times, so far with a very promising measure of success, the one general want as yet being numbers.³⁰⁵

The notion that Southern Rhodesia, particularly the south-western region of the country, was generally better suited to a pastoral economy than arable farming was derived from the belief that the country's topography, soils and climate were generally not suited to intensive arable farming. With only about 40% receiving an average annual rainfall of more than 28 inches, which is considered to be the minimum annual rainfall required for most of the staple grains,

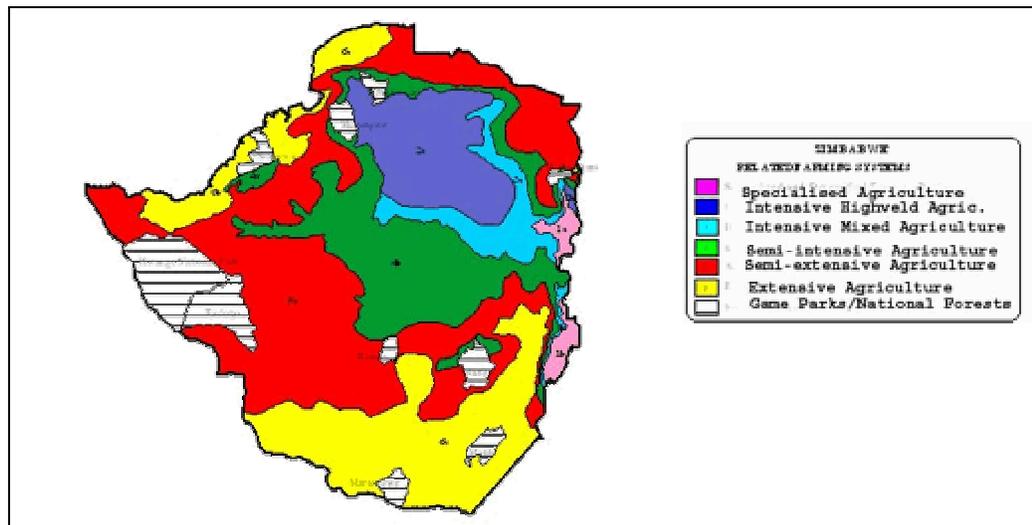
³⁰³ *Report of the Director of Agriculture*, 1923.

³⁰⁴ *Report of the Director of Agriculture*, 1921.

³⁰⁵ *Report of the Director of Agriculture*, 1909.

arable farming was a risky venture in most parts of the country.³⁰⁶ Only the eastern parts of the country could sustain intensive crop production.³⁰⁷

Yet, despite propaganda by colonial authorities, Southern Rhodesia's climate did not compare favourably with the major dairy producing countries in the world. Generally speaking, the minimum natural requirements for successful dairy farming are a fairly cool climate, well pastured grasslands, and an average rainfall of at least 635mm (24 inches) per annum.³⁰⁸ Southern Rhodesia had a highly seasonal and erratic rainfall pattern, with the average for over half of the country being less than 635mm per annum. As a result, the natural pasturage was inadequate for the maintenance of milk production for more than half the year. Pasturage was available mainly between November and March, when the country received rains.³⁰⁹ The map below, which illustrates the country's ecological zones, shows that arable farming was clearly unviable owing to low rainfall (less than 28 inches annually) and poor soils in the south-western parts of the country, these areas could only sustain dairy industry with great difficulty and at considerable cost.



Map 1: The natural farming regions of Southern Rhodesia.³¹⁰

³⁰⁶ M. Yudelman, *Africans on the Land. Economic Problems of African Agricultural Development in Southern, Central, and East Africa, with Special Reference to Southern Rhodesia*, (Massachusetts: Harvard University, 1964), 10.

³⁰⁷ The eastern parts of Zimbabwe receive a higher average rainfall than the south-western part.

³⁰⁸ The Dairy Branch, 'The Dairying Industry', *Rhodesia Agricultural Journal*, XI, 2 (1944), 79.

³⁰⁹ For more detailed description of the country's rainfall patterns and general topography in the 1920s see Tawse-Jollie, 'Southern Rhodesia: A white man's country in the tropics', 92-93.

³¹⁰ Map modelled from M. Yudelman, *Africans on the Land*, 32.

Southern Rhodesia's relatively difficult conditions may be understood by considering the fact that its maximum carrying capacity before 1950 was no more than a cow per two acres of land, while New Zealand's capacity stood at one cow per acre, and in some places reached two cows for three acres.³¹¹ New Zealand, Canada and Denmark had lower average temperatures than Southern Rhodesia. The result of this was that Southern Rhodesian farmers required supplementary feed for cattle during the dry months of the year, at a considerably higher cost, at a time when their counterparts in other Commonwealth countries depended on natural pasturage for longer periods of the year. However, despite this relative disadvantage, the country could still sustain a successful dairy industry if other variables were in place. In fact, some countries with generally similar climates such as Argentina and Australia had, by the beginning of the 20th century, developed successful dairy industries.

Despite the climatic challenge, the Southern Rhodesian colonial government was determined to develop settler dairy farming. As was the case on Australia's Atherton Tablelands, colonial officials viewed dairying as 'key' to their stated goal of creating a white man's country in Southern Rhodesia. Gilmore argues that the Australian state's active involvement in commercial dairying despite adverse economic and climatic realities "grew out of the necessity to populate the vast continent and to provide necessary infrastructure and services, and to protect the livelihoods of those who pioneered settlement."³¹² The Dairy Expert, Hamilton (who would later become Chief Dairy Officer), captured the envisaged position of settler dairying thus:

The dairy industry is of great national importance and...on its success the success of land settlement in this colony largely depends. It is essentially a key industry...[and] any scheme, therefore, which can be put forward to improve the status of the dairy industry should necessarily receive the support of the government.³¹³

Further pushing the cause for the speedy establishment of a strong dairy industry was the amount of money that was expended on importing butter and cheese. R.J. Moore, a British expert, who

³¹¹ *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Economic Development of the Colony (Southern Rhodesia), 1939*, 29.

³¹² M.A. Gilmore, 'Kill, cure or strangle: The history of government intervention in three key agricultural industries on the Atherton Tablelands, 1895-2005', 59.

³¹³ NAZ S1193 D1/2 Letter from the Chief Dairy Officer, T. Hamilton, to McDonald (designation not given), 19 July 1928.

was invited by the BSAC to give advice on agricultural matters in 1906, intimated that the country was wasting valuable resources importing products that could be made locally.³¹⁴ With disappointment, he reported:

Your imports of (b)utter and (c)heese, amounting to £20 000 yearly, will continue until such time as you organise for production. The very countries that you are importing from prove this to be the case. You are sending money out of the country which requires but a little education and energy on the part of the farmers to be kept at home. Importing an inferior article at ruinous prices is certainly not to the interests of the country and the economic position created while production at home is at such a low ebb, must be such as to keep out the moderately poor man and the small farmer out of production...³¹⁵

The first official attempt to stimulate some interest in dairy farming among farmers in Southern Rhodesia took place in the 1910 when the BSAC arranged for E.A. Maidment, a Dairy Instructress at Dushaw County Dairy School, England to visit Rhodesia for a few months and to give a series of lectures and demonstrations at various centres, on milk production methods, milk testing, the manufacture of cheese and butter and so forth.³¹⁶ In addition to individual farms, she visited 17 centres throughout the country and lecturing and demonstrating to more than 570 farmers. “From what I have seen from experience of a practical nature,” the instructress commented at the end of her brief engagement with the country’s dairy farming, “Rhodesia is a country in which dairying can be successfully developed with advantage to its people and to its revenue”.³¹⁷ The country’s potential notwithstanding, Maidment expressed disappointment that dairy farming was still undeveloped, hence the huge import bill, which in 1910 stood at £35 000. In explaining the difference in the rate of development between dairy farming and beef production Maidment explained:

The reason probably that up to the present dairying has not been more largely developed is that when people were settling, there was very little railway accommodation and also knowledge of how to prepare milk for distribution in a sub-tropical climate was very little understood. Further, dairying involves rather more capital, organisation, care and attention than the farmer is prepared for in the early

³¹⁴ NAZ G1/5/3 Report on visit to Rhodesia, for the Department of Agriculture by R.J. Moore, Creamery Expert, to the Secretary for Agriculture, dated 11 July, 1906.

³¹⁵ NAZ G1/5/3 Report on visit to Rhodesia, for the Department of Agriculture by R.J. Moore, Creamery Expert, to the Secretary for Agriculture, dated 11 July, 1906.

³¹⁶ NAZ S/ZIM 018 E.A. Maidment, ‘Report of a tour in Rhodesia, 1910’, *Rhodesia Agricultural Journal*, 8, (March, 1911), 423-434.

³¹⁷ NAZ S/ZIM 018 E.A. Maidment, ‘Report of a tour in Rhodesia, 1910’, 424.

days (the country is even still very young), and has to be content with cattle raising for beef and transport, maize growing, poultry keeping, and perhaps later, tobacco growing.³¹⁸

Maidment's statement that dairy farming requires more capital and organisation is quite instructive. As milk is a highly perishable commodity that is produced on a daily basis, it poses serious handling challenges. First, as it is an excellent medium for bacterial growth, milk should be cooled immediately after the milking process to temperatures below the survival of bacteria (below 10 degrees Celsius).³¹⁹ Secondly, milk requires high-cost transportation, on a daily basis to markets before it loses its keeping qualities. Thirdly, and as a consequent of the first two factors, the handling and processing of milk requires trained and hygiene-conscious workers and relatively more sophisticated apparatus such as coolers, cans, and buckets.³²⁰

The above-mentioned factors led to a generally apathetic attitude by settlers towards commercial dairying. Although her visit was aimed at stimulating some interest among settlers to take up dairy farming as a viable agricultural enterprise, Maidment's visit was fated to meet with limited results as long as settler farmers "earned more money by engaging themselves in the less exacting branches of agriculture like cattle ranching, maize and tobacco growing."³²¹ As shall be shown later in this chapter, the dominance of beef cattle ranching meant that dairy farming initially emerged as merely a side line.

Cattle breeding policy

With the incidence of disease reduced by 1908, the Company sought to re-stock the settler herd with a view to kick-starting the dairy and beef industries. The Company sought to import pure-bred stock from the Union of South Africa, the Northern Territories, Britain and Australia for distribution, on easy payment terms, to aspiring and practising ranchers. However, as the low capitalisation of most settler farming enterprises ruled out large-scale importations of European cattle breeds, settlers and ranching companies in Southern Rhodesia depended on indigenous cattle as a foundation upon which the settler herd could be established. Charles Murray, a ranch

³¹⁸ NAZ S/ZIM 018 E.A. Maidment, 'Report of a tour in Rhodesia, 1910', 424.

³¹⁹ H. Schelhaus, 'The dairy industry in a changing world', *Smallholder dairying in the tropics*, ILRI, Nairobi (1999), 1-2.

³²⁰ Schelhaus, 'The dairy industry in a changing world', 2.

³²¹ NAZ S/ZIM 018 E.A. Maidment, 'Report of a tour in Rhodesia, 1910', 425.

owner who served in the Agricultural Department acknowledged that “the old native cow provided the foundation, because she put blood in the foundation, and whatever cattle were brought from South Africa or Scotland, were merely for gradation.”³²² Thus, initial breeding policy in the cattle industry was based on cross-breeding imported stock with indigenous herds.

There has been a great deal of debate focusing particularly on the advantages and disadvantages of indigenous cattle breeds in comparison to the exotic breeds that were imported into the country by the BSAC for settlers. Phimister has argued that one of the disadvantages of the Rhodesian cattle industry in comparison with North and South American and Australia, where the industry was started and built upon cattle imported from Europe, was the “poor beef qualities of the indigenous cattle”, which formed the foundation stock.³²³ He posited that, against a background of an acute shortage of capital with which to purchase pure-breeds for cross breeding, the use of such indigenous breeds was sensible, hence the cattle industry struggled on the international markets.³²⁴ Phimister’s assertion has been challenged, however. In his 1980 thesis, Machingaidze argues – contra Phimister – that the notion that indigenous cattle were inherently of poor qualities is only partially correct and needs rigorous analysis, lest historians fall victim to the very same prejudices (and ignorance) which led to settler mistakes.³²⁵ Machingaidze notes that the ‘Home methods mentality’ – which led the BSAC and the settlers to quickly and indiscriminately import European breeds for cross-breeding with local breeds with little regard to local climatic and ecological considerations – created problems for the beef industry. He argues that the policy which saw many exotic breeds being imported into the country for use in the ‘upgrading’ of the Mashona, Matabele and Tuli breeds was based on misplaced prejudices that local breeds were not suitable for both commercial dairy and beef production.³²⁶

³²² Quoted in Machingaidze, ‘The Development of Settler Capitalist Agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with particular reference to the role of the state, 1908-1939’, 291.

³²³ Phimister, ‘Meat and monopolies: Beef cattle in Southern Rhodesia’, 399.

³²⁴ Phimister, ‘Meat and monopolies: Beef cattle in Southern Rhodesia’, 399.

³²⁵ Machingaidze, ‘The Development of Settler Capitalist Agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with particular reference to the role of the state, 1908-1939.’, 284.

³²⁶ Machingaidze, ‘The Development of Settler Capitalist Agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with particular reference to the role of the state, 1908-1939.’, 284.

Building on Machingaidze's Africanist position, Wesley Mwatwara has recently argued that the differences between local and imported breeds were, by and large, imaginary: the distinction made by colonial officials was thick on racial prejudice and thin on biological or scientific substance.³²⁷ He asserts that "the value of cattle depended more on whose possession they were rather than their biological traits."³²⁸ While there can be no doubt about the racial currents that dominated the socio-economic and political discourse of the time, the argument that the biological differences between indigenous breeds and imported cattle was "perceived" rather than real finds little support from available evidence. Scientific studies on both local and European breeds showed that, owing to the different environments in which they were nurtured, respective breeds did develop certain traits to suit their circumstances.³²⁹ D. Holness, an agricultural scientist in Zimbabwe during the 1990s asserted that although the Mashona cattle had adapted to the local environment over hundreds of years, research also showed that they had smaller masses than imported breeds.³³⁰ Although the fact that the settler herd for both beef and dairy purposes was initially founded on indigenous breeds can be attributed to a lack of financial resources necessary to import foreign breeds during the early period of occupation, it is also true that the continued crossing of European breeds with local breeds was in recognition of the qualities that both breeds brought into the cross-breeds.

In his scientific study of *The Native Cattle of Rhodesia* in 1927, Nobbs distinguished three main indigenous breeds in Southern Rhodesia, namely the Mashona, Matabele and the Tuli (with its origin in Bechuanaland). The Mashona cattle were the predominant type, even in Matabeleland districts such as Gwanda, parts of Insiza and Matopos. Stocky, hardy and resistant to major diseases, Nobbs identified two vital qualities of the Mashona cow: their hardiness and resistance to disease, and also the ability to withstand the barren winters and humid summers. He candidly admitted that:

It is extra-ordinary how they can retain their condition during adverse spells. The crude native method of handling proves how handy the breed must be... they certainly

³²⁷ W. Mwatwara, 'A history of state veterinary services and African livestock regimes in colonial Zimbabwe, c.1890s-1980', PhD Thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 2014, 123-124.

³²⁸ Mwatwara, 'A history of state veterinary services and African livestock regimes in colonial Zimbabwe, c1890s-1980', 123.

³²⁹ Interview with Prof K. Dzama, University of Stellenbosch, Department of Animal Science, 10 July 2014.

³³⁰ D. Holness, *Mashona cattle of Zimbabwe*, (Harare: The Mashona Cattle Society. 1992), 9, 19.

appear to suffer less than improved cattle from redwater and gall sickness, and epizootics seem to acquire immunity to introduced diseases more rapidly than do cross-breeds or foreign breeds.³³¹

Regarding milk production, Nobbs further acknowledged that the Mashona cow calved more frequently, and enjoyed better longevity, than imported dairy cows. He observed that the Shona cow “lived remarkably longer than imported breeds, and that the heifers could give their first calves before they reached three years of age, and could continue doing so until they were 16 years old.” He stated that:

Authenticated cases are recorded of cows giving 18 and even 25 calves in their lifetimes. As regular and persistent breeders, the Mashona cow cannot be surpassed. The cows are very prolific and normally give calves regularly every 10 to 11 months.... A safe calving average would be over 80% and in many cases 100% would be achieved.³³²

These qualities, Nobbs’ study revealed, were also present in the Matabele and Tuli breeds, with the only difference being that these other breeds, especially the Tuli, had larger frames and could attain greater weights under poor management.³³³ Despite these advantages, local breeds could not match imported cows, particularly the Friesland, in milk productivity. Relying on findings from experiments on research stations such as Makaholi, Matopos and Grasslands, John Barrett argued that although the Mashona were good milkers, their lactations rarely lasted 150 days, which is lower than the Friesland breed.³³⁴

A study of colonial breeding regimes shows that the breeding policy for dairy farming was subordinated to the larger cattle breeding policy which recognised the weaknesses of indigenous breeds for commercial purposes, while adopting their positive physical attributes, particularly their ability to withstand long dry seasons and strength against local diseases. George N. Blackshaw, the Agricultural Chemist in 1911 noted that while the three indigenous breeds could, owing to their smaller frames and slower growth, not viably compete with exotic breeds such as the Devon and Shorthorn on the beef market, their milking qualities were good. This was after he

³³¹ E.A. Nobbs, ‘The native cattle of Southern Rhodesia,’ *South African Journal of Science*, XXIV (1927), 3.

³³² Nobbs, ‘The native cattle of Southern Rhodesia’, 4.

³³³ Nobbs, ‘The native cattle of Southern Rhodesia’, 4.

³³⁴ J. Barrett, ‘The economic role of cattle in communal farming systems in Zimbabwe’, paper presented at *The socio-economic impact of improved tick and tick-borne disease control in Zimbabwe workshop*, 9 May 1991, 9.

made an examination of the quality of the milk yielded by two indigenous breeds: the Mashona and the German East African types. The results of the investigation, which constituted “the first evidence recorded regarding the percentage amount of fat in the milk two of our native types, showed that the milk of these animals is of very rich quality.”³³⁵ However, he added that the volumes of milk produced were relatively low, and that the lactation period was short.

In order to maximise milk yields while at the same time retaining the better immunity to local diseases that the local breeds possessed, the indigenous breeds were cross-bred with imports, particularly the Friesland, Coates Shorthorn (dairy type), Lincoln Red Shorthorn, Norfolk Red Polls and Ayrshires which possessed better beef and milking qualities. In her report, Maidment remarked that the “very few farmers will be able to establish herds of pure bred stock, and must be content to improve cattle of the country by importing good animals from England for crossing.”³³⁶ She recommended that the Lincoln Red and Coates Shorthorn (dairy type), Ayrshire, Friesland and Norfolk Red Polls be imported for cross-breeding with local breeds. To this end, the Company embarked on a cattle importation program. Her point was further supported by Simmons, the Chief of the Animal Industries, who gave a breakdown of the suitability of each dairy breed to different areas of the country in 1912 thus:

The breeds of cattle chiefly maintained for dairy purposes, or for the improvement of dairy stock, are Friesland, Coates Shorthorn (dairy type), Lincoln Red Shorthorn, a few Norfolk Red Polls and Ayrshires. So far one may judge at present, the Friesland breed appears more suited to the lower altitudes than to the higher and rather sour veld on the watershed of Mashonaland. Shorthorns are finding favour on good-sheltered and well watered farms, where irrigation on a reasonable scale makes the provision of winter feed always possible.³³⁷

Given the tropical climate of the country which consists of long, humid summers with a short rainy season, few parts of the country were “good-sheltered and well watered”. Consequently, the Lincoln Red Shorthorn, Norfolk Red Polls and Ayrshires, which produced the best milk for the manufacture of butter and cheese, could not be imported in huge numbers. Friesland cattle, which, according to Maidment, “give such a poor quality of milk and butter that they are not

³³⁵ *Report of the Agricultural Chemist*, 1911.

³³⁶ S/ZIM 018 E.A. Maidment, “Report of a tour in Rhodesia, 1910”, 424.

³³⁷ *Report of the Chief of Animal Industries Branch*, 1912.

be recommended”,³³⁸ grew to become the main dairy breed in the country because of its relatively better suitability to the general environmental conditions. This, as shall be seen in later sections of this study, played a major role in the poor quality of milk, butter and cheese that was manufactured in the country.

It is in this light that the BSAC initiated a scheme in which it arranged for the importation of breeding stock from the Union of South Africa on behalf of cattle breeders and ranchers. By the end of 1911, for instance, £4 345 had been expended on the importation of cattle, and between 1911 and 1913, 16 000 bulls and heifers of the Shorthorn, Hereford, Sussex, Friesland, Devon and Africander breeds were imported into the country by the Company.³³⁹ These animals after being immunised to redwater, or “tick fever”, by inoculation, were sold at cost price on easy terms of repayment to bona fide breeders and ranchers throughout the country. Writing in 1913, the Chief of the Animal Industries Branch reported that:

With a view to assisting farmers to obtain cattle, the Government has for some years past followed a policy of purchase of stock from the south and from overseas for individuals. The system has proved popular and helpful, on account of the easy terms of payment, to many who could not otherwise have procured cattle. During the twelve months under report there has been a notable increase in the number of cattle imported...³⁴⁰

The importation of cattle was, however, negatively affected by the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. The rise in sea freights made it more expensive for the BSAC to import stud cattle for the distribution to farmers. In 1914 Nobbs reported that:

The development of agriculture in Rhodesia during the past year has, of necessity, been affected by the conditions [brought about] by the war. Those conditions have been entirely adverse to progress, for the high war prices, which have benefitted farmers in Britain, have in this country been more than counter-balanced by an excessive rise in sea freights. Therefore, in making any comparison with previous years, these unfavourable circumstances must be taken into account.³⁴¹

For as long as the war continued, the BSAC depended on the Union of South Africa for the provision of pure-bred stock. This source, however, was not entirely trusted by the settler

³³⁸ S/ZIM 018 E.A. Maidment, “Report of a tour in Rhodesia, 1910”, 424.

³³⁹ *Report of the Chief of Animal Industries Branch*, 1913.

³⁴⁰ *Report of the Chief of Animal Industries Branch*, 1913.

³⁴¹ *Report of the Director of Agriculture*, 1914.

community. In addition to the fear of disease discussed earlier, it was generally believed that “the class of the bull available in the Union, with the exception of perhaps Friesland and Africander, is not, as a rule, all that could be desired.”³⁴² The formation of a Cattle Owners’ Association of Rhodesia in 1918, with the primary object of promoting and safe-guarding the cattle industry and to bring together all who have the common interest of raising cattle in Rhodesia, should be viewed in light of the difficulties that were encountered in importing stock during the war.

The BSAC, on behalf of the Cattle Breeders Association, forged an agreement with the Friesland Breeders’ Association of South Africa in 1915 that led to increased importations of dairy stock from the Union. In a letter to the Director of Agriculture, the chairman of the Cattle Breeders Association stated that the

agreement with the Union Friesland Breeders Association, itself a tangible indication of confidence, has resulted in the significant increase in the Friesland herd in the country. This should enhance the development of dairy farming in this country, an industry that has hitherto been neglected for so long.”³⁴³

This arrangement between the Cattle Breeders Association and the South African Friesland Breeders Association was in operation until 1939, when the outbreak of war disturbed trade between the two countries.

Despite the existence of cattle trade between the BSAC and the Friesland Breeders Association, it should be stated that first priority seemed to be put on the importation of beef cattle. Largely as a result of the preference by farmers for the less exacting beef cattle production, many farmers were more interested in beef breeds such as Devon, Hereford and Shorthorn and Africander. Although a considerable number of dairy cattle were purchased, an examination of the number of cattle imported during the period under review will show that most of the cattle imported were of a beef strain. For instance, of the 461 bulls imported from the Union of South Africa in 1914, only 18 were pure dairy breeds. Similarly, only 80 Friesland heifers were among the 4 950

³⁴² *Report of the Director of Agriculture*, 1915.

³⁴³ NAZ G3/24/5 Letter from the Chairman of the Cattle Breeders Association (Bulawayo), to Dr Eric.A. Nobbs, the Director of Agriculture, 13 February, 1915.

heifers that were imported in 1918.³⁴⁴ Nobbs himself gave a list, in order of importance, of the Government's priority in terms of cattle imports thus:

The various breeds imported have been represented in order of preponderance as follows:- Bulls: Shorthorn, Africander, Hereford, North Devon, Polled Angus, Sussex, Friesland Red Poll and Cross-breds. Heifers: Cross-bred, Africander, Friesland, Shorthorn, Hereford, Red Poll, North Devon, Polled Angus and Sussex. The cross-bred heifers form by far the greater portion of these.³⁴⁵

This trend continued beyond the First World War. The number, according to statistical returns at the end of 1922 showed that 4 684 cattle were imported into the country, and were made up of the following breeds:- Shorthorns and Red Lincolns, 1 736; Devon, 775; Frieslands, 690; Herefords, 673; Aberdeen Angus, 405; Sussex, 215; together with a few South Devons, Ayrshire, Red Polls and Jerseys. The prioritisation of beef cattle may also be seen in the fact that the dairy cows that were kept at the Gwebi Experimental Farm³⁴⁶, where they were kept for experimental and demonstration purposes were disposed of. As Nobbs reported in 1918:

The Friesland cattle at the Gwebi were purchased five years ago out of advances, not out of administrative funds, and the decision was reached during the year to dispose of them in the hope of replacing them by a beef breed, Hereford, Devon, or Berdeen Angus, for any of which there is a very keen demand for bulls. Accordingly, the herd was dispersed by auction sale, very satisfactory prices being realised. The original herd was selected at the dispersal sale of Mr. Maclaurin's Friesland herd in 1913, and no additions by purchase were made.³⁴⁷

Despite the importation of many exotic breeds for breeding and cross-breeding with local types, it should be understood that the demand (for both beef and dairy cattle) was at no time during this period satisfied. Largely because of shortage of funds, both on the part of settlers and the BSAC, the number of cattle imported during the era of Company rule were never adequate. The chairman of the Rhodesian Landowners and Farmers Association (Bulawayo) lamented in 1923 that:

Notwithstanding the numbers of stud stock introduced into Rhodesia, there is yet a large unsatisfied demand for pure-bred bulls, chiefly of the following breeds:

³⁴⁴ *Report of the Director of Agriculture*, 1914.

³⁴⁵ *Report of the Director of Agriculture*, 1918.

³⁴⁶ Facilities were provided at the Gwebi government experiment farm for the reception of resident pupils, who received practical tuition on the details of arable and stock farming. The sole object at present aimed at was to give prospective settlers some insight into local methods before commencing on farms on their own.

³⁴⁷ *Report of the Director of Agriculture*, 1918.

Shorthorn, Friesland, North Devon, Hereford, Sussex and Afrikaner; indeed, bulls are the chief need of the Rhodesian cattle breeder today.³⁴⁸

Stock diseases

It has been shown in the previous chapter that the major stumbling block to the development of the cattle industry during the early years, besides the BSAC's largely futile fixation with the Second Rand dream, was the high prevalence of livestock disease. The new focus on agriculture and the cattle industry in particular led to the Veterinary Department's making more concerted efforts to deal with stock diseases, particularly East Coast Fever and lung-sickness. This section discusses the impact of stock diseases on dairy farming between 1908 and 1923, particularly the recession in incidence of diseases. It demonstrates that although farmers felt that government controls were too stringent, the imposition of disease control restrictions played a crucial role in the growth of the national herd. Weinmann has noted that from 1908, the development of the industry suffered no major outbreaks of diseases among cattle for a number of years, which created "a sense of security based on the knowledge that any such outbreaks could now be dealt with effectively."³⁴⁹ Incidences of diseases, both locally and in neighbouring countries, became fewer and further apart and thus farmers became confident enough to make long term investments in the cattle industry. Writing at the end of 1908, the Director of Agriculture optimistically noted:

A great impetus has also been given to the industry by the modification of the restrictions placed on the movement of cattle, made possible by the absence of disease, and the fact that the areas regarded as still infected with East Coast Fever were gradually but surely being cleansed. Farmers were able to get on to their farms the draught and breeding stock necessary for the proper working of their land.³⁵⁰

As a means of combating East Coast Fever and other tick-borne diseases voluntary dipping was introduced in the country in 1910, and about 100 dip tanks, including 23 constructed by the Government, were used in the country.³⁵¹ The dipping of cattle was made compulsory by the proclamation of the Compulsory Dipping Ordinance in 1914, and it rendered dipping on the

³⁴⁸ NAZ G3/24/5 Letter from the Chairman of the Cattle Breeders Association (Bulawayo), to Dr Eric Nobbs, the Director of Agriculture, 13 February, 1923.

³⁴⁹ Weimann, *Agricultural Research and Development in Southern Rhodesia*, 104.

³⁵⁰ *Report of the Director of Agriculture*, 1908.

³⁵¹ Weimann, *Agricultural Research and Development in Southern Rhodesia*, 105.

commonages of towns and villages mandatory.³⁵² By 1917, there were more than 1 000 dipping tanks, covering approximately 78% of European areas, and “including numerous tanks constructed, with the encouragement of the Native Department, by natives who showed a “remarkable willingness to adopt the practice of universal dipping.”³⁵³ The 1914 Ordinance was replaced by the Cattle Cleansing Ordinance, 1918, which provided for compulsory dipping weekly. This development helped in curbing stock diseases between 1908 and 1918.

While this legislative intervention, contributed in reducing cases of diseases, Coast Fever made frequent re-appearances in the country throughout the period under review. In fact, as Machingaidze shows, at no time during the period under review was the country entirely free from East Coast Fever.³⁵⁴ Although Lung-sickness and Contagious Abortion re-appeared in some parts of the country, particularly in the Umtali district, such cases became less frequent. It was the recession in East Coast Fever, however, that boosted the cattle industry. Imports could be made with confidence that the cattle would not all perish due to the disease.

The reduced incidence of disease in the Northern territories, Cape, Transvaal, and the Orange Free State made importation of breeding cattle much easier too. The prohibition against the importation of cattle from North-Western Rhodesia, which had been in force since the turn of the century, was withdrawn early in 1908. The result was that very large numbers of breeding cattle were brought into the territory by local owners, “who for years have been awaiting the removal of the prohibition.”³⁵⁵ However, importation was allowed subject to the issuance of a permit from the Veterinary Department; branding of all cattle with the letters of identification; a six weeks’ period of quarantine, north of the Gwaai River; segregation for 12 months on the owner’s land after release from quarantine after veterinary inspection.³⁵⁶

³⁵² Weimann, *Agricultural Research and Development in Southern Rhodesia*, 105.

³⁵³ NAZ N3/18/2-3 Livestock: General 1917-23, letter from N.C. Inyati to Superintendent of Natives, 21/11/1917.

³⁵⁴ Machingaidze, ‘The Development of Settler Capitalist Agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with particular reference to the role of the state, 1908-1939’, 294.

³⁵⁵ Machingaidze, ‘The Development of Settler Capitalist Agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with particular reference to the role of the state, 1908-1939’, 295.

³⁵⁶ NAZ S14876/1 Cattle Diseases: Letter from the Chief Veterinary Surgeon to the Director of Agriculture, titled ‘Cattle from Natal’, 8 October, 1923.

With regards to cattle imported from the Cape and Transvaal, certificates signed by exporters guaranteed that the stock in question had been bred on the farm from which they were exported. Exporters also needed to confirm that the imported cattle had no history of having contracted lung-sickness.³⁵⁷ Imports from Natal, however, were accepted when moved to some other province of the Union under Union regulations. Natal cattle could only be accepted in Southern Rhodesia if they had completed 30 days quarantine at Volksrust or same period of quarantine on a tanked and fenced farm in some part of the Union.³⁵⁸ The result was that pedigree stock could only be brought into the country at great difficulty.

These regulations, however, led to clashes between cattle exporters from the Union, local breeders, and the government. Exporters from southern territories complained about the conditions under which their cattle were admitted in Southern Rhodesia, arguing that the conditions were rather too prohibitive. Exporters from the Union felt that the imposition of such restrictions were aimed at limiting the amount of business they could get from Southern Rhodesia, while local stock-breeders felt that the policy, coming as it did when incidences of disease were receding in both countries, was detrimental to Southern Rhodesia's re-stocking programme. Even louder were complaints from local stock-breeders, who argued that the policy of only accepting quarantined animals from Natal was no longer justified by veterinary circumstances. In a meeting with the Southern Rhodesian Cattle Industry Committee, they argued that since cattle from Natal were subjected to quarantine when they arrived in Johannesburg, it was no longer necessary for them to undergo a further period of quarantine. They contend that if Natal cattle were fit to go to another place within the Union, it should also be safe to send them to Rhodesia.³⁵⁹ This view, however, was not shared by the Southern Rhodesian authorities, who felt that there existed a real danger of East Coast Fever and Lung-sickness from Natal province. Writing to the Director of Agriculture, the Chief Veterinary Officer stated that:

³⁵⁷ NAZ S14876/1 Cattle Diseases: Letter from the Chief Veterinary Surgeon to the Director of Agriculture, titled 'Cattle from Natal', 8 October, 1923.

³⁵⁸ NAZ S14876/1 Cattle Diseases: Letter from the Chief Veterinary Surgeon to the Director of Agriculture, titled 'Cattle from Natal', 8 October, 1923.

³⁵⁹ NAZ S14876/1 Cattle Diseases: Letter from the Chief Veterinary Surgeon to the Director of Agriculture, titled 'Cattle from Natal', 8 October, 1923.

It is perfectly obvious from the nature of this condition that that there is a real danger of Coast Fever and Lung-sickness being carried from Natal. As long as Coast Fever infection here is restricted to two areas, and as long as the conditions in Natal are such as to justify this condition in regard to cattle going to other parts of the Union, I would like to emphasize my position – from a veterinary point of view I do not think it is advisable to alter the existing regulations in regard to cattle from Natal.³⁶⁰

Animals imported from overseas were obliged to be immunised to redwater, or “tick fever”, by inoculation, were sold at cost price on easy terms of repayment to bona fide breeders and ranchers throughout the country. Most of the bulls were distributed to farmers, and the female stock retained for breeding purposes, and for the perpetuation of the pure bulls bred in Rhodesia.³⁶¹ However, most of the England-imported breeds were easily susceptible to disease. Most of the bulls succumbed to redwater, notwithstanding the application of preventive inoculation administered onto them.³⁶² Most of the stock died whilst still in the hands of the Agricultural Department. In 1923, the Chief Veterinary Officer lamented that:

An unusually large percentage of imported cattle, particularly among those from overseas, have succumbed to redwater, notwithstanding the application of preventive inoculation. Ten selected bulls of the Friesland, Shorthorn, Devon and Red Lincoln Shorthorn breeds were imported by the Department for distribution to farmers on easy terms of payment. Unfortunately, several of these succumbed to redwater during the process of immunisation.³⁶³

The death of imported breeds notwithstanding, the importation programme, coupled with the receding disease prevalence levels, led to a rise in the cattle population in Southern Rhodesia. While the cattle population in 1905 was approximated to be slightly above 100 000, with just over 30 000 in the hands of settlers, the number had by 1912 increased to 600 000 head, of which 350 000 were in the hands of Africans.³⁶⁴ A cattle census held in 1919 showed that the national herd had increased to 1 326 000, with the settler herd standing at about 673 431, which, for the first time, was higher than the African herd. While these figures paint a glowing picture concerning the success of the re-stocking exercise after the ravages of Rinderpest and East Coast

³⁶⁰ NAZ S14876/1 Cattle Diseases: Letter from the Chief Veterinary Surgeon to the Director of Agriculture, titled ‘Cattle from Natal’, 8 October, 1923.

³⁶¹ *Report of the Director of Agriculture*, 1922.

³⁶² *Report of the Director of Agriculture*, 1923.

³⁶³ NAZ S14876/1 Cattle Diseases: Letter from the Chief Veterinary Surgeon to the Director of Agriculture, titled ‘Cattle from Natal’, 8 October, 1923.

³⁶⁴ *Report of the Director of Agriculture*, 1912.

Fever, they conceal a vital fact: the great majority of the increase came through natural increase, and thus the herd was predominantly indigenous. Indeed, the number of pure-bred cattle stood at a measly 4 934 in 1919. The cattle census conducted at the end of 1923 showed that more than 1 000 000 cattle, which constituted about 85% of the entire herd, was made up of indigenous cattle. Indeed, by 1939, on the eve of the Second World War, both the beef and dairy industries were largely dominated by the indigenous hard Mashona and Matabele breeds.³⁶⁵ The Director of Agriculture lamented that “notwithstanding the numbers of stud stock introduced into Rhodesia, there is yet a large unsatisfied demand for pure-bred bulls”.³⁶⁶

Production trends

For much of the pre-1920 period, milk and butter production figures remained low, with the country having to rely on imports to supplement local production. While Southern Rhodesia in 1907 imported 239 498 lb. of butter valued at £12 947, 349 384 lb., valued at £24 056 were imported in 1915. Similarly, while cheese imports in 1907 amounted to 17 095 lb., valued at £12 947, the figure had reached 20 078 lb., valued at £18 585 in 1916.³⁶⁷ Commenting on this state of affairs in 1920, Hamilton, the Dairy Officer mourned that a “considerable amount of money is passing out of the country which might be well retained here.”³⁶⁸ The reasons behind the low production of butter and cheese, however, were largely a result of the fact that there were very few genuine dairy farmers in the country. John Richmond Cory, a man whose involvement in the dairy industry in Southern Rhodesia dates back to 1925, when he was engaged as an Assistant Dairy Expert, observed that “the bulk of the cream reaching the butter factories (was) derived from dairy-ranching, a system under which ranch cows – or others of a non dairy-type – were milked for a few months of the year, depending on the nature of the season, the milk separated and the cream sent to the creamery for conversion into butter.”³⁶⁹ Speaking in 1939, Cory expressed the opinion that dairy farming in Southern Rhodesia had grown out of necessity, with little signs of organised effort. “Fourteen years ago when I came to the country, I found the

³⁶⁵ Machingaidze, ‘The Development of Settler Capitalist Agriculture in Southern Rhodesia’, 301.

³⁶⁶ *Report of the Director of Agriculture*, 1923.

³⁶⁷ *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into conditions prevailing in the pasturage of the colony*, 1943, 8.

³⁶⁸ *Report of the Chief Dairy Officer*, 1923.

³⁶⁹ NAZ Oral/ 217 Cory John Richmond, 2. Cory first arrived in the country in 1924 from South Africa, and served as the Assistant Dairy Expert to Hamilton, before becoming the Assistant Chief Native Commissioner. When Hamilton retired in the 1930s, Cory assumed the Chief Dairy Officer’s position.

dairy industry was really in its infancy and it had been established on quite a wrong foundation,” said Cory, before adding:

In many cases, particularly in Matabeleland, the creameries were dependent for their supplies on herds which were not originally bought for dairying purposes. They were ranching cattle and owing to the outbreak of various diseases, particularly East Coast Fever, which had locked these up in quarantine for a number of years, the farmers were forced to start milking them because they could not be sold as live cattle.³⁷⁰

To the extent that they could obtain an extra monthly cheque, especially when they could not sell their cattle profitably, ranchers found it was a tremendous advantage for them to milk their ranch cows. This scenario, which was prevalent until the outbreak of the Second World in 1939, meant that white commercial dairy farming only emerged as a side-line to cattle ranching.

Indeed, an examination of the butter production patterns during the tenure of the BSAC will show that, as in Bechuanaland where dairy production was belatedly stimulated during the 1930s primarily as an alternative to beef production in response to South Africa’s restrictions on the import of cattle,³⁷¹ commercial dairy farming in Southern Rhodesia was heavily reliant on the fortunes of the beef industry. Butter production, which had been quite low for much of the period before 1914, received a boost at the outbreak of the First World War. The War led to the disturbance of the flow of trade with overseas markets. With cattle exports initially disturbed by the outbreak of war, most ranchers began to look to milk and butter production for the local market as a remedy. Consequently, butter production, which stood at 151 916 lb. in 1914, soared to 294 568 lb. the following year. However, as cattle, maize and tobacco exports began to increase due to increased demand overseas from 1916 until the end of the war, butter production began to fall from the 1915 peak, reaching 209 439 lb. in 1918.³⁷² Happening at a time when the demand for beef increased at the end of the War, the decline in butter production after 1915 was undoubtedly a result of ranchers stopping to milk their cows to focus on their core business.

³⁷⁰ NAZ ZAY 2/2/13 Amended Oral and Written Evidence to the Committee into the Economic Position of the Colony, Chaired By Downie. Dairy Produce, Mr J.R. Cory (witness) 25/01/1939.

³⁷¹ L. Mafela, ‘Colonial Initiatives and African response in the establishment of the dairy industry in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1930-1966’, *Botswana Journal of African Studies*, 13, 1 and 2 (1999), 77.

³⁷² NAZ Oral/ 217 Cory John Richmond, 5.

The war-time cattle demand, which had helped cattle owners build up an export trade gave way to a depression in prices by 1921/1922. Inevitably, the 1921/1922 depression in cattle and maize prices saw many ranchers milking their cattle to supplement their incomes. In 1921 Nobbs reported that the dairy industry has received a “considerable stimulus not only from the gradual opening of overseas markets, but also from the low prices of maize and the difficulties foreseen in the way of finding markets for beef cattle.”³⁷³ Not unexpectedly, butter production figures, which had begun to fall from 1916 onwards, received an impetus from 1922, and record levels were achieved successively in 1923 and 1924 when 338 343 lb. and 425 018 lb. respectively were manufactured on farms.³⁷⁴ The inverse relationship between the beef and dairy industries indicates that the cattle that were used for beef production were, indeed, the same that were used for the production of dairy products. Although Southern Rhodesia still relied on imports for her cheese requirements, by 1923, the country had become self sufficient in milk and butter. While the increase in milk, cheese and butter production, both on farms and at creameries might point to the steady development of commercial dairying by 1923, and thus paint a glowing picture of the industry, it hides the fact that this growth was premised, as Cory observed, on a “wrong foundation”.³⁷⁵

By 1923, Southern Rhodesia had begun to export cheese to South Africa in summer, when supply outstripped demand. Although these developments point to an encouraging improvement in the dairy industry, particularly in the marketing system, a lot needed to be done to ensure that creameries and cheese factories operated smoothly. While lauding these developments, the Director of Agriculture in 1923 warned that “those engaged in this work are largely novices with little experience, they still require technical education, and there is need for such personal visits on the part of our expert. There is, of course, much room for improvement.”³⁷⁶ As chapter 4 demonstrates, the effect of the parlous state of both handling and marketing processes at a time when milk and butter figures were soaring from the early 1920s badly hurt the dairy industry at a time when the industry was beginning to look to entering the export market.

³⁷³ *Report Director of Agriculture*, 1921.

³⁷⁴ Ngadze, ‘The development of commercial dairying from an international perspective’, 7.

³⁷⁵ NAZ Oral/ 217 Cory John Richmond, 5-6.

³⁷⁶ *Report Director of Agriculture*, 1923.

Handling and marketing of milk and butter

This section focuses on the handling and marketing systems that were developed prior to 1923. It illustrates that the foundation of commercial dairying as a side-line to beef cattle ranching had a negative impact on the handling and processing of milk and butter fat on the farms. It also outlines the move by government towards playing a more central role in the marketing of butter, particularly with the construction of creameries. Many ranchers did not possess the requisite infrastructure and equipment to handle dairy products, hence the low quality milk and butter fat that was produced on many farms. Unable to purchase fences for the creation of paddocks, many ranchers kraaled their cattle at night and grazed them only during daytime, a system they adopted from the indigenous people. After touring many farms in the country Maidment complained that cattle were only allowed grazing during the day, and were trapped into unhealthy kraals at night. She complained the kraals “are no protection as they are simply pieces of ground, with either walls built round or thick bush fences. Sometimes there are posts in the ground inside the kraal to which the cows are secured with much persuasion for the milking process.”³⁷⁷ For hygienic purposes, the instructress recommended that cow houses be built, as milking cows would do better if sheltered during the cold nights.

With regards to the milking process, the Instructress bemoaned that cows were not trained to give off their milk in the presence of their calves.³⁷⁸ Drawing from indigenous milking methods discussed in the previous chapter, farmers practised the habit of separating the calves from the cows only overnight, and the calves were allowed to feed interchangeably with the milking process, in an attempt to coerce the cow to give off more milk. This system, the instructress said, was unnecessary because cows could be trained to release milk even in the absence of the calf, and crucially, it led to diseases for both the cow and the calf through infection of the udders. In a veiled attack on the ‘old fashioned’ system, Maidment said:

The milking process both in Matabelaland and Mashonaland, I must say it was the funniest thing I ever saw in my life, and I have yet to be convinced that a cow could not be trained to give her milk, if properly managed, after the first calf. Under the present system it is impossible to milk cows properly, and both cows and calves suffer. If the calves were taken away and reared separately, and the cows, which are now kept

³⁷⁷ NAZ S/ZIM 018 E.A. Maidment, “Report of a tour in Rhodesia, 1910”, 425.

³⁷⁸ NAZ S/ZIM 018 E.A. Maidment, “Report of a tour in Rhodesia, 1910”, 425.

for dairy purposes, were thoroughly milked, we should hear less of swollen and diseased udders and calf sickness, and there would be a very much larger quantity of milk yielded by the cows.³⁷⁹

Maidment also recommended that technical education and training be introduced for both stock-owners and farm workers, the majority of whom were Africans, in the handling of milk and production of farm butter. These calls, however, together with many other recommendations concerning the care of dairy stock were not heeded. Besides lack of capital, which acutely affected them, the majority of ranchers were unwilling to invest significantly in an industry they viewed as an aside to the main business of beef cattle production. For as long as the milk, butter and cheese produced was generally consumed within the territory, this scenario did not pose many problems. However, when more butter and cheese was produced over and above local requirements from about 1923 onwards, and Southern Rhodesia entered the international markets for butter and cheese, the challenges associated with the foundation of dairy farming on such a base were more strongly felt.

On the marketing side, neither the government nor producers were directly involved in the establishment of creameries and dairies prior to 1908. These lay in the hands of private enterprise.³⁸⁰ For the first four years after the announcement of the White Agricultural Policy, creameries continued to be solely in the hands of private enterprises, with farmers having limited say in their running. Given the high perishability of dairy products, however, the long distance, and the lack of swift transport for the movement of milk and cream from farms to creameries compromised the quality of the milk and cream that was delivered to creameries. Cory noted that in some instances the cream had to travel considerable distances by road and rail – and in all kinds of weather – before reaching its destination (some of it being several days en route and arriving in barely usable condition).³⁸¹ Faced with this problem, some farmers preferred to market their own milk, butter and cheese directly to the public. With Government not directly

³⁷⁹ NAZ S/ZIM 018 E.A. Maidment, “Report of a tour in Rhodesia, 1910”, 427.

³⁸⁰ The advice of a dairy expert, Moore, in 1906 that the government should encourage farmers to co-operate and run creameries and dairies began to bear fruit after the First World War. See NAZ G1/5/3 Report on visit to Rhodesia, for the Department of Agriculture by R.J. Moore, Creamery Expert, to the Secretary for Agriculture, dated 11 July, 1906. The result was that most creameries were run by private enterprises, a factor that, as chapter 4 and 5 shows, led to constant clashes between farmers and creameries over pricing.

³⁸¹ NAZ Oral/ 217 Cory John Richmond, 6.

involved in the marketing of dairy products, the maintenance of hygienic standards was left in the hands of municipal authorities. As Cory said:

Milk supplies for the larger towns however were better organised as the producers thereof were by this time expected to comply with certain minimum hygienic requirements which were enforced by the local authorities. Nevertheless there was much room for improvement. None of this milk was pasteurised and it was the usual practice in most areas – urban and rural – to boil or scald the milk before use.³⁸²

By 1910, white farmers themselves began to complain about the scarcity of creameries within reasonable distances from farmers. The Rhodesia Stock Owners Association (Bulawayo) mourned that “without the factory to take whatever cream may be obtainable, dairy farming at any distance from towns would have to follow the old-fashioned system of the domestic churn with all its associated drawbacks.”³⁸³ The Department of Agriculture was pushed to take an active role in providing a market for producers. In 1910 Nobbs stated that the “time seems close at hand when the manufacture of butter on factory lines, co-operative or otherwise, is inevitable, the raw product – milk – becoming more and more plentiful.”³⁸⁴

In 1912 the Department of Agriculture established the first state-owned creamery in Gwelo. The creamery received milk cream from producers for the manufacture of butter and cheese. Payment to producers was based on the quality of the butter fat received, and the creamery employed a qualified man for such grading. The butter fat was graded into four classes, each with its own price: first class, second class, third class and ungraded. Occasionally, the Dairy Expert would visit the creamery to test the cream and butter fat sent by farmers, as well as the quality of the butter and cheese manufactured at the creamery. The Rhodesia Stock Owners’ Association (Bulawayo) lauded the development as a major step forward in the development of an organised marketing system. Unlike the old system, the association noted that the system gave stock owners an opportunity to conduct their business on ‘modern lines’, producing the milk at distant points, separating on the farm and despatching the cream to a central factory, where it will be paid for on the basis of actual butter fat supplied.³⁸⁵ However, some dissatisfaction was

³⁸² NAZ Oral/ 217 Cory John Richmond, 7.

³⁸³ NAZ Oral/ 217 Cory John Richmond, 6.

³⁸⁴ *Report Director of Agriculture*, 1910.

³⁸⁵ NAZ G1/5/3 Letter from the Chairman of the Rhodesian Landowners and Farmers Association (Bulawayo), to Dr Eric A. Nobbs, the Director of Agriculture, 13 February, 1913.

expressed by farmers regarding the methods of testing cream, the price paid for butter fat, and the standards used to grade butter fat, among other issues. Farmers felt short-changed by the system, particularly in situations when the Dairy Expert visited and down-graded some cream and butter fat.³⁸⁶ This marked the beginning of contestations between farmers, creameries and the government over grading and pricing mechanisms which, as demonstrated in chapters 4, 5 and 6, dominated their interaction.

The Gwelo Creamery, however, was the only state-sponsored creamery to be opened during the time of Company rule in Southern Rhodesia. As butter and cheese production began to increase from 1921 onwards, the co-operative spirit that had been extinguished by the farmers' failure to take over the Devonshire and Café Creamery in the mid-1900s was re-birthed. Three previously privately owned butter factories were bought off by farmers in Salisbury, and amalgamated to form the Farmers' Co-operative Industries in 1921.³⁸⁷ The number of co-operative concerns continued to increase so much that by 1923, four creameries were operating in the territory, that is, the Gwelo Creamery, the Farmers' Co-operative Creamery Depot, Salisbury; the Rhodesia Co-operative Creamery, Bulawayo and the Model Dairy in Bulawayo.³⁸⁸ In addition, no less than 24 cheese factories were in operation throughout the territory, and as in the case of creameries, most of them were established between 1921 and 1923, when milk, butter and cheese production figures began to soar. With the increase in the number of creameries, the amount of farm-made butter, with all its pitfalls, began to decrease, while creamery butter recorded substantial increases. The output of creamery butter was 554 206 lb. in 1923, as against 282 85 lb. in 1922; whilst that of farm butter fell from 391 058 lb. to 338 343 lb. during the same period.³⁸⁹ Added together, total butter production in 1923 was 892 549 lb. Emerging from this is the fact that although the state had become involved in the marketing of dairy products, most creameries and factories at this stage were either privately or co-operatively run.

³⁸⁶ NAZ G1/5/3 Letter from the Chairman of the Rhodesian Landowners and Farmers Association (Bulawayo), to Dr Eric A. Nobbs, the Director of Agriculture, 13 February, 1913.

³⁸⁷ Weinmann, *Agricultural Research and development in Southern Rhodesia*, 123.

³⁸⁸ From this list, only the Farmers' Co-operative Creamery and the Rhodesia Co-operative Creameries were run by farmers' co-operatives. The Model Dairy in Bulawayo was privately run, and the Gwelo Creamery was state-owned.

³⁸⁹ Weinmann, *Agricultural Research and development in Southern Rhodesia*, 123.

“The squeezing-out process”: The White Agricultural Policy and African livestock and dairy regimes

As noted in the previous chapter, African agricultural producers took advantage of settlers' indifferent attitude towards agriculture during the last decade of the 19th century and produced for the market. The Company's desire to focus on settler agriculture that was awakened from the mid 1900s inevitably meant that settlers had to contend with African competition. Even more problematic was the fact that a thriving African agricultural sector would have the effect of limiting the amount of cheap African labour, itself an important variable in the success of settler agriculture. The position of African cattle owners was generally worse than that of those that tilled the land. With major cattle diseases seemingly under control,³⁹⁰ the settler herd had begun to grow considerably by so much that it overtook the African herd for the first time in 1919.³⁹¹ This meant that settler cattle owners competed for grazing lands with Africans resident on European land. In fact, the African herd itself was on the rebound, more than doubling from just under 200 000 in 1908 to over 400 000 by 1914.³⁹²

The post 1908 period thus witnessed a systematic and intentional crushing of African agricultural enterprise. With regards to dairy farming, as had happened after 1893, the decades following the adoption of WAP were followed by further weakening of African capacity to produce surplus milk and other dairy products for the market. However, whereas during the early years of occupation it was negated mostly by the outbreak of diseases and cattle losses at the hands of the Company and settlers, African prosperity in dairy farming after 1908 was generally a result of a deliberate effort by the colonial administration to ensure minimal competition from indigenous people. The relentless assault on African cattle owners' enterprises was described by the Civil Commissioner for Bulawayo, Marshall Hole, as the 'squeezing-out process'.³⁹³

³⁹⁰ Compared to the outbreaks that had ravaged the country at the end of the 19th century and the early 1900s, fewer diseases, with a much reduced rate of fatalities, still existed in Southern Rhodesia between 1908 and 1914. The most dangerous was East Coast Fever which was not entirely eradicated until the late 1920s.

³⁹¹ *Report of the Director of Agriculture*, 1919.

³⁹² *Report of the Director of Agriculture*, 1914.

³⁹³ NAZ A3/15/11 Letter from the Civil Commissioner, M. Hole to The Administrator, Sir W.H. Milton, 26 November, 1909.

As the implementation of WAP gathered momentum, voices of both the Company and settlers on the need for a revision of existing patterns of land ownership and utilisation were raised. By 1908 the Company, with the support of the few farmers on the land had realised that the position of Africans resident on both alienated and unalienated land, was no longer tenable. They wanted to revisit with a view to move most of them onto the less productive reserves. This, it was hoped, would not only reduce African prosperity, but also create a ready pool of labour on settler farms. The passage of Private Locations Ordinance in 1908 was thus the first of many attempts to move Africans off European land. Modelled along nineteenth century South African landlord-tenant legislation, the Private Locations Ordinance stipulated that all agreements with tenants should be in written form and undersigned by the Native Commissioner; that owners in occupation of land needed licences worth 1 shilling yearly for each African on their farm, while absent landlords had to pay 5 Shilling for every African on the farm.³⁹⁴

Arguing from a paternalist perspective, Lewis Gann argued that the Ordinance was promulgated to “protect” Africans residing on European lands “from the worst of abuses” at the hands of the European land owners. To the extent that the ordinance was passed to deal with labour shortages on settler farms and mines, Gann’s premise has been discredited. Revisionist scholars like Rennie have argued that, though it was disguised as an attack on absent landlords who made a living from rents extracted from African producers, the Private Locations Ordinance was really an attempt to ‘deny Africans the use of white owned land, except in the capacity as labourers.’³⁹⁵ Christopher Youé argues that the ordinance was a two pronged weapon: aimed both at allowing for extensive occupation of European land and reducing the number of Africans occupying alienated land.³⁹⁶

It should be noted, however, that the proclamation of the Private Locations Ordinance was not entirely successful in curbing land tenancy. With some land owners simply passing on the 5 Shilling to willing tenants, a considerable number of Africans remained on European land,

³⁹⁴ Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*, 83.

³⁹⁵ J. Rennie, 'White Farmers, Black Tenants, and Landlord Legislation: Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1930', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 5, 1, (1978), 46.

³⁹⁶ C. Youé, 'Black Squatters on White Farms: Segregation and Agrarian Change in Kenya, South Africa, and Rhodesia, 1902-1963', 575. *The International History Review*, 24, 3 (2002), 562.

possibly producing even more products for the market in order to meet increased rent demands. It was not until 1925, with the institution of the Morris Carter land commission, that a more pointed attack on land tenancy was launched together with the call for segregation, as a result of growing settler fears of African competition for both land and labour. Its weaknesses notwithstanding, the Ordinance led to the movement of many Africans onto the reserves, particularly in Mashonaland. The Chief Native Commissioner for Mashonaland in 1908 reported that 1 335 Africans living on previously expropriated had to move to the reserves as their numbers were in excess of the permitted 40 adult males per farm.³⁹⁷ Similarly, the Chief Native Commissioner for Matabeleland lamented that 199 indigenous people had left European land as a result of the ordinance.³⁹⁸ In effect, however, the number of displaced Africans was much higher: Palmer states that districts like Belingwe, Bubi, Bulawayo Matobo and Umzingwane recorded between 50% and 100% more people leaving European land than what official numbers show between 1910 and 1911.³⁹⁹

The imposition of rents on all Africans occupying unalienated land was yet another step towards stifling African agrarian prosperity. From as early as 1906 officials had begun to voice their misgivings for allowing Africans to prosper on Company land at a time when labour was acutely scarce on settler farms. Indeed, one member of the Legislative Council in 1906 argued that legislating for a rent on unalienated land “might have the effect of sending labour on to the farms.”⁴⁰⁰ Again modelled along the 1884 Natal Squatters Rent Law, the introduction of rentals on unalienated land was done in 1909. Whereas the Private Locations Ordinance aimed at removing Africans from land allocated to settlers for occupation, the introduction of rentals was aimed at driving them off unalienated land. The rentals, as did the Private Locations Ordinance, resulted in the movement of many Africans off this land onto reserves. Unable to pay the high rentals charged by the Company, many Africans were forced to move off the land, with the consequence that some districts were ‘cleansed’ of all Africans formerly resident therein. For instance, the Native Commissioner for Fort Victoria reported in 1910 that nearly all of Chief

³⁹⁷ NAZ A3/21/71, letter from Chief Native Commissioner, Mashonaland to The Civil Commissioner, M. Hole, 22 October 1908.

³⁹⁸ NAZ A3/21/71, letter from Chief Native Commissioner, Matabeleland and Mashonaland to The Civil Commissioner, M. Hole, 5 October 1908.

³⁹⁹ Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*, 96.

⁴⁰⁰ *Legislative Council Debates*, 22 May 1906.

Bere's people had moved onto the reserves, in the process totally dismembering the community under his jurisdiction.⁴⁰¹

Many settler cattle owners took advantage of the introduction of rentals on unalienated land to increase rentals for their own tenants who competed with them in the beef and dairy business. Writing in 1912, the Chief Native Commissioner for Matabeleland complained that many settler cattle ranchers had begun to charge grazing fees on top of the usual rents.⁴⁰² The financial burden placed upon African cattle owners by the rentals and fees was exacerbated by the introduction in 1914 of the Compulsory Dipping Ordinance. Whereas the issue of cattle dipping had been optional since 1910, the 1914 Ordinance made it mandatory for all cattle within an area where the majority of stock owners had expressed the desire to dip their livestock.⁴⁰³ Without any consultations, Africans in some districts were forced to pay dipping fees of 1 or 2 Shilling per head per annum. In 1914, the Compulsory Dipping Ordinance was passed, which “enabled compulsory dipping to be applied in any area where this was the wish of the majority of farmers.”⁴⁰⁴ These financial demands helped to drive African livestock owners away from land earmarked for settler occupation.

Unable to meet the increased financial obligations placed on them, many Africans and their cattle moved out of European areas onto the detested reserves. As happened in South Africa after the passage of the Native Land Act in 1913 which, as Sandra Swart argues, was just as hard on black-owned animals as it was on their owners, the passage of the Private Locations Ordinance and other fees in Southern Rhodesia led to the displacement of many African owned cattle.⁴⁰⁵ The Chief Native Commissioner for Matabeleland reported that numerous Africans were complaining about having to pay so many fees and taxes, noting that he expected no less than 7 400 people, together with some 11 000 head of cattle, to migrate into Belingwe, Gwaai, Lower

⁴⁰¹ NAZ L2/2/117/46 letter from Native Commissioner, Victoria, to the Chief Native Commissioner, Mashonaland, 10 December, 1908.

⁴⁰² NAZ LO 4/1/16 Report of the Chief Native Commissioner, Matabeleland for the year 1912.

⁴⁰³ Minutes of the proceedings of the Legislative Council and Ordinances, Southern Rhodesia, 1900-1923.

⁴⁰⁴ Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*, 96.

⁴⁰⁵ See S. Swart, “It is as bad to be a black man’s animal as it is to be a black man” – The politics of species in Sol Plaatje’s *Native Life in South Africa*, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 40, 4 (2014), 689-705.

Gwelo, Que Que, and Shangani reserves.⁴⁰⁶ The number of cattle that did move with their owners onto the reserves was reduced by the fact that many Africans lost many of their herds as they prepared to leave European farms. A couple of issues led to this scenario: firstly, the imposition of restrictions on cattle movement as a result of the re-emergence of East Coast Fever in 1912. This made it very difficult, and sometimes impossible for cattle to be moved from one district to another. Secondly, some settlers denied Africans evicted from other farms the permission to pass through their farms with cattle on the purported grounds of fear of the spread of diseases.⁴⁰⁷ This forced Africans to sell their cattle to settler farmers at low prices. From the foregoing, it may be safely argued here that while the earlier-mentioned increase in the settler stock was due to a decrease in stock disease, the continued loss of cattle by Africans partly contributed to this phenomenon, thus curtailing their capacity to produce milk.

If the conditions of reserves at their initial creation from the late 1890s were bad, the situation was further worsened by the further reduction in their size that happened between 1908 and 1914. Anxious to accommodate an increasing number of settlers, the Company sanctioned a move aimed at reducing the size of the reserves. The revision of the boundaries was initially done with a view to increasing or reducing the size of reserves, depending on individuals. In 1908, however, the Surveyor-General, W.J. Atherstone, argued that many reserves, mostly in Mashonaland were too big, adding that many of them needed to be reduced. This received the excited support of the Estates Department, which contended that the reduction was necessary in light of the need to find more land for in-coming settlers. As the process of re-configuring the reserves' boundaries began, F.W.A Taylor, an official of the Estates Department, stated that the re-configuring of borders should be done with a view to release more "land considered suitable for (settler) settlement" by creating boundaries which would "exclude from them such land as is recommended for farming purposes."⁴⁰⁸ Despite Company reservations on what it considered inadequate changes, which in itself led to the appointment of another Commission in 1914,⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁶ NAZ LO 4/1/16 Report of the Chief Native Commissioner, Matabeleland for the year 1914.

⁴⁰⁷ NAZ N9/1/16 Report of the Native Commissioner, Bubi, 1913.

⁴⁰⁸ NAZ L2/2/117/1 Letter from F.W.A Taylor, Estates Department, to C.D. Wise, Director of Land Settlement, 20 July 1909.

⁴⁰⁹ When the revision to the reserves had been completed, the Company still felt that the reserves were too big, and that more land needed to be expropriated from the reserves. This was because the Colonial Office had always attempted to 'protect' African land in Southern Rhodesia, arguing that Africans needed land for their own habitation

some half a million acres of land formerly designated as reserves had been expropriated and earmarked for settler occupation.⁴¹⁰ Given that milk is a highly perishable product, as discussed earlier in this chapter, sending milk to creameries and dairies from remote areas became very difficult.

There can be little doubt about the impact of the ‘squeeze’ on African cattle and milk regimes. Although there were no discriminatory laws and policies on the dairy market at this stage, the forced movement of Africans on to the reserves weakened their capacity to produce for the market. The previous chapter has shown that the reserves were inhospitable for both human and animal life. The situation was worse for the Matabeleland province, where the Gwaai and Shangani reserves were notorious for their arid climate, poor soils and debilitating bovine diseases. Marketing of products on the official markets was made nearly impossible by the fact that when re-configuring the reserves’ boundaries, the Estates Department ensured that few reserves were located near the major railways and roads. Because milk is a highly perishable commodity which needs to be transported to the market almost immediately after marketing, few Africans were able to send milk to existing dairies. While there are no official figures showing milk production and marketing in the reserves prior to the late 1920s, Cory remarked that the paucity of figures of milk delivered to dairies and creameries was a result of the fact that very little, if any milk was received from reserves during the period under review.⁴¹¹ He added that as Africans and their stock were still attempting to adjust to life in the reserves prior to the 1930s, it was “predictable that the primary concern of many would be to produce enough for family consumption, with some whatever surplus left circulating within the community.”⁴¹² Owing to the negligibly small contribution of African milk on the official market, the African sector was not included as being part of the country’s dairy industry.

unhindered. With the Colonial Office taking steps to ensure that reduction to the size of reserves was minimal, the Company continued to push for further reductions, and the Company eventually gave in 1914, hence the constitution of the Native Reserves Commission in 1914. However, the Commission’s work was immediately put on ice by the outbreak of the First World War in the same year.

⁴¹⁰ Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*, 83.

⁴¹¹ NAZ Oral 217 Cory John Richmond, 8.

⁴¹² NAZ Oral Cory John Richmond, 8.

It should be noted, however, that a few wealthier Africans managed to participate on the official dairy market in spite of the displacements. A few Africans, mostly of South African and Batswana origin, took advantage of the existence of a clause in the 1898 Southern Rhodesia Orders in Council which gave Africans the right to “acquire, hold, encumber, and dispose of land on the same conditions as a person who is not a native.”⁴¹³ Although the Company was generally disinclined to sell land to Africans, having acquiesced to the clause only to appease the Colonial Office, it however did not have the power to stop settlers from selling land to Africans who had the money to buy freehold farms. A number of well to do black South Africans and a group of Basotho people were able to purchase farms from settlers who had decided to move out of the country. Indeed, 14 farms, constituting 46 966 acres of land, were purchased by Africans between 1896 and 1925. Half of these farms were acquired by black South Africans.⁴¹⁴

However, it was the Basotho who had settled in Fort Victoria district who embarked on commercial dairy farming. Jacob Molebaleng and three others purchased Erichsthal Farm⁴¹⁵ in the Victoria District from the Posselt Family for £1000 in 1907.⁴¹⁶ It was owned in four equal but undivided shares which meant that they lived on the farm as a community rather than as individual private owners. Led by Ephraim Morudu, another group of nine Basotho men bought Niekerk’s Rust Farm, near the Harawe area in 1909, and administered it like a small co-operative society, into which many other people subsequently joined.⁴¹⁷ In his study of the Basotho communities in Southern Rhodesia, Joseph Mujere has demonstrated the manner in which the Basotho on the two farms used their links to the Dutch Reformed Church missionaries to access education and resources to construct relatively well developed infrastructure on their farms which enabled them, among other things, to produce milk and cream for the nearby dairies and creameries in Victoria and Gwelo.⁴¹⁸

⁴¹³ R. Blake, *A history of Rhodesia*, (London: Eyre Methuen, 1977), 153.

⁴¹⁴ Palmer, *Land and racial domination*, 287.

⁴¹⁵ The farm was located between Shagashe and Mutirikwi Rivers in the Ndanga District.

⁴¹⁶ NAZ AT1/2/1/10 Land owned by Natives in 1925.

⁴¹⁷ J. Mujere, ‘Autochthons, strangers, modernising educationists, and progressive farmers: BaSotho struggles for belonging in Zimbabwe, 1930s-2008’, PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2012, 51.

⁴¹⁸ Mujere, ‘Autochthons, strangers, modernising educationists, and progressive farmers’, 51.

The only report of indigenous black people who also acquired land and built dairy infrastructure came from Rugby farm, which was owned by 21 Karanga men who had been trained as teachers at the Dutch Reformed Church Mission at Morgenster. After initially failing to purchase the farm from the BSAC in 1909, they managed to acquire it for 100 head of cattle in 1911.⁴¹⁹ One of the part owners of the farm had accumulated a huge herd of cattle, and by 1920 had managed to purchase a cream separator, among other dairy utensils. By 1925 Rugby farm had become one of the key suppliers of milk and cream at dairies in Victoria and Gwelo.⁴²⁰ The Native Commissioner for Victoria in 1925 reported that together with producers at Erichsthal and Niekerk farms, Rugby farm represented a breed of “progressive” and “intelligent natives” who, because of their level of education, ownership of property and their entrepreneurial skills”, had become a paragon of “hard work and determination”, which fellow Africans in reserves should emulate.⁴²¹ However, the administrator’s sentiments are predicated on an underlying bias and fundamental misconception about the political and socio-economic imperatives that shaped the position of Africans in dairying, and agriculture in general. First is the erroneous assumption that Africans in the reserves were not successful in commercial dairying because of a lack of intelligence and “entrepreneurial skills”. The previous chapter has shown that Africans did take advantage of opportunities on the milk market during the early 1890s, before they were thwarted by the predatory colonial state and new stock diseases. As discussed earlier in this chapter, further steps were taken by the colonial administration to weaken African agriculture, a point which the Commissioner does not mention.

Secondly, the commissioner failed to note the fact that lack of capital, education and training among Africans during the 1920s was a result of the discriminatory policies of the Company government. Whereas the Company offered financial and technical support in the procurement of land, cattle, and labour, no such support was advanced to African communities. Indeed, a look at the Africans who purchased land and erected milk and cream producing infrastructure shows that they had received both their education and capital from non government-related institutions. From the foregoing, therefore, it may be feasibly argued that increased African inactivity on the

⁴¹⁹ Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*, 280.

⁴²⁰ NAZ N9/1/17 Report of the Native Commissioner, Victoria District, 1924.

⁴²¹ NAZ N9/1/17 Report of the Native Commissioner, Victoria District, 1924.

colonial market was a direct result of the “squeezing-out” process on which the Company embarked as it sought to strengthen settler agriculture from 1908 onwards.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the impact of WAP on the development of settler dairy farming in Southern Rhodesia, particularly focusing on the role of the Company in helping – technically and financially – settlers to establish a viable industry that ensured a steady supply of milk, butter and cheese to the growing settler population. It has been argued that notwithstanding this support, dairy farming only grew as a side line to the more popular beef production. Given the exacting nature of milk and butter production, coupled with the fact that it was not as lucrative as beef production, few settlers were prepared to commit resources into dairy farming on a long term basis, preferring to produce milk and butter on a part time basis. With a paucity of dairy cows (both heifers and bulls) in the country, much of the milk that was produced locally was derived from beef cattle ranchers who merely dabbled in dairying when beef prices dropped. The developments, particularly increased milk and butter output and the erection of creameries and cheese factories, did little to mask the fact that dairy farming as an agricultural industry had not yet taken off on a sound foundation.

This chapter further discussed the implications of WAP on African dairy production. It has demonstrated that African success on the dairy market between 1908 and 1923 was further diminished by the displacements which took place after the institution of the Private Locations Ordinance and the introduction of increased rents on unalienated lands. Although some Africans who had purchased farms were able to use their land and livestock on the colonial market, they constituted a small percentage of the total population. In fact, they had defied a system carefully instituted to ensure that Africans would not compete with settler producers on the market. Thus, the period after 1908 marked the heightening of the process of eliminating Africa dairy produce from the colonial market. While issues of hygiene and cleanliness were raised later, the assault during this time was predicated on the need to minimise African agricultural competition in general. The overarching argument in this chapter, therefore, is that while the administration was largely successful in eliminating African competition in the cattle industry, attempts to establish

a sound settler dominated dairy industry were not successful: to all intents and purposes, the country was, by 1923, still suckling on the udders of beef cows.

CHAPTER FOUR

Cream rises? Butter Production, the Dairy Produce Act and the segregation debate, 1924 – 1935

Introduction

The mid-1920s represented a key phase in the development of Southern Rhodesia's dairy industry. Whereas the country had long depended both on the Union of South Africa and Britain for imports to avert domestic shortages, the mid 1920s marked the first time that Southern Rhodesia produced a butter surplus, which, in turn, led to its active participation on the international export market. This coincided with the culmination of political events in the country which led to the induction of a settler government, a development which settler farmers hoped would bring better fortunes for the country's agrarian sector. Within the context of a complex set of socio-economic and political dynamics that prevailed during the period under review, this chapter examines the development trajectory that dairy farming – both settler and African – took during the first decade of self-rule, from 1924 until the mid-1930s. It focuses particularly on butter, which was the flagship dairy product for the entire pre-Second World War period, analysing the implications of increasing butter production on the industry. It will be argued that, owing to an inadequate domestic market, the soaring production levels of the 1920s necessarily meant that Southern Rhodesia was forced to enter the international export market prematurely.

This chapter seeks to add to existing historiography on the performance of Southern Rhodesia's agricultural commodities on external markets (which is currently dominated by beef, maize and tobacco), and the local dynamics that shaped their experiences.⁴²² It outlines the problems that dairy farmers and creameries faced on the markets, and examines the interventions that were

⁴²² The production dynamics and how these shaped maize, beef and tobacco marketing from the 1920s onwards has been explored quite extensively. For instance, see F. Clements and E. Harben, *Leaf of Gold: The story of Rhodesian tobacco*, (London: Methuen, 1962); I. Phimister, 'Meat and Monopolies: Beef Cattle in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1938', *Journal of African History*, 19,3 (1978), 391-414 and V.E.M. Machingaidze, 'The development of settler capitalist agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with particular reference to the role of the state, 1908-1939' PhD Thesis, University of London, 1980, and R. Hodder-Williams, *White farmers in Rhodesia, 1890 – 1965: A History of the Marandellas District*, (Hong Kong: MacMillan Press, 1983).

taken to help the industry to participate on the export market profitably. In the main, it focuses on the Dairy Produce Act that was passed in 1925. Modelled along similarly named and couched Australian legislation, but implemented under different socio-economic circumstances (as this chapter will show), the Dairy Produce Act was meant to provide Rhodesian farming with the much needed respite both locally and internationally. It demonstrates that the state missed the key point that farmers were largely responsible for low quality butter exports.

While very little was done by the state to intervene in the farm processes, white farmers and some consumers raised their concerns about the continued participation of African producers on the colonial dairy market, blaming them for producing low grade cream under unhygienic conditions. This chapter ends with an examination of the debate within the settler community on the suitability of African participation on the market, and the racial prejudices that accompanied it. It engages literature on the African body, culture and cleanliness in analysing the premises on which settler arguments against African commercial dairy farming rested. The core argument made in this chapter is that the state's insistence on reforming manufacturing processes and ignoring farm production methods, and white farmers' position that African producers alone were responsible for producing low grade cream were tantamount to missing the point; hence Southern Rhodesia continued to struggle on the export scene until the 1930s.

Background: Self-Rule and its implication for agriculture

The relationship between the Company and the settler community in Southern Rhodesia had become strained by the second decade of the 20th century.⁴²³ With the white population growing in number and influence, this community began to question the basis of the Company's claim to land in the country, and by 1910 the matter of land ownership had become contentious. The majority of settler farmers felt the Company was too pre-occupied with making profits for its shareholders at the expense of settler agricultural development. Indeed, as early as 1901 this body of people, which was beginning to operate as a group, had begun to argue that the private interests of the stakeholders were outweighing the interests of the settlers and the country at

⁴²³ For more on the nature of the Company-settler relations see M. Lee, 'Politics and pressure groups in Southern Rhodesia, 1898-1923', PhD Thesis, University of London, 1974.

large.⁴²⁴ These calls grew louder with Charles Coghlan, himself a prominent lawyer, criticising the dual role of the Company (as both a government and a commercial entity) as “repugnant to anyone of British stock.”⁴²⁵ The general sentiment was that “it was no longer desirable to have a commercial company as a governing body.”⁴²⁶ In 1914, the Colonial Office agreed to refer the matter to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

With the Company, settlers, the Crown and Africans all taking an active interest in the matter, the Privy Council in 1918 ruled that the Crown – rather than the Company – was the ultimate owner and custodian of all land in Southern Rhodesia. The ruling effectively meant that the Company could not trade in land, its treasured asset and out of which it had intended to make long-term profits. The result was that the Company lost its desire to administer the country; it intimated to the Colonial Office that it would cease its administrative duties upon the charter’s expiry in 1923.⁴²⁷ In a referendum in October 1922, settlers were given the option of self-rule or amalgamating with the Union of South Africa as its fifth province. The vote was in favour of self-rule (also called Responsible Government). Thus did settler nationalism, defined by loyalty towards the ideal of ‘political individuality’, triumph over the lure of economic inducements offered by General Smuts, then Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa. From October 1923, the colony acquired self-rule under the Responsible Government Party, under the leadership of Charles Coghlan.

The impact of self-rule in Southern Rhodesia has received considerable scholarly attention. Martin Loney has argued that self-rule meant that the country enjoyed significantly enhanced autonomy to chart its socio-economic trajectory.⁴²⁸ Scholars like Astrow and McBride, on the other hand, argued that settlers in Southern Rhodesia continued in their role as the local face of global imperialism.⁴²⁹ However, Phimister, has posited that the state of the international markets,

⁴²⁴ B.V. Mtshali, *Rhodesia: Background to conflict*, (New York: Hawthorns, 1967), 60.

⁴²⁵ Mtshali, *Rhodesia: Background to conflict*, 60.

⁴²⁶ *The Rhodesia Herald*, Thursday 28 August, 1919.

⁴²⁷ M.E. Lee, ‘Politics and pressure groups politics in Southern Rhodesia, 1898-1923’, PhD Thesis, University of London, 1974, 189.

⁴²⁸ M. Loney, *Rhodesia: White Racism and Imperial Response*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), 12.

⁴²⁹ A. Astrow, *Zimbabwe: A revolution that lost its way?* (London: Zed, 1983), 6. Also see R. McBride, ‘Race, class and national liberation in Zimbabwe and Southern Africa: a review of recent studies’ *Insurgent Sociologist*, 10, 2, (1980), 105.

and Southern Rhodesia's subservient role on them played a greater role in shaping the colony's economic fortunes.⁴³⁰ Using dairy farming as a lens, this chapter and chapter 4 demonstrate that although the colonial state did acquire more control over local politics, especially in the subjugation of African agricultural enterprise, the fledgling settler agricultural sector suffered as a result of the harsh realities on the international markets. Although the Department of Agriculture provide more administrative apparatus for research, and provided more technical assistance and advice to settler farmers through agricultural colleges and demonstration farms and the new Land Agricultural Bank formed in 1924,⁴³¹ the dairy industry struggled to penetrate international and regional markets profitably. The next section discusses the factors leading to Southern Rhodesia's entrance onto the export market.

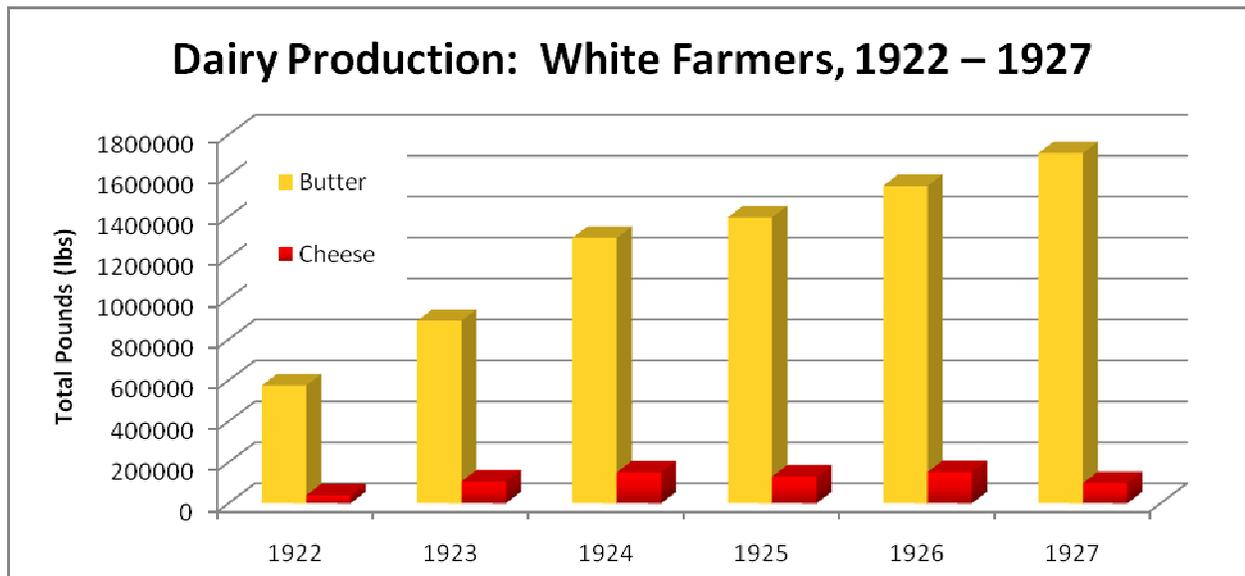
Increasing production and entrance onto the export market

The circumstances in the beef industry, which had been largely responsible for the dairying 'boom' as explained in the previous chapter, persisted throughout the 1920s, hence contributing to the continued expansion of butter, milk and cheese production. As early as 1923, Nobbs had reported that "as a direct result of the difficulties in the way of selling slaughter cattle, attention is being forced towards dairying. This, in the case of the smaller man, is a most desirable development."⁴³² This led to increased butter output. It is argued here that increasing butter production beyond local requirements forced the country to enter the highly competitive export market at a time when the local industry was not in a position to participate competitively with the major producing countries of the world. The ensuing debate between farmers, creameries and the government precipitated legislative intervention aimed at addressing problems lying at the base of commercial dairy farming. The post 1923 decade was characterised by an unprecedented growth in both farm butter (butter made on the farm by the cattle owner) and creamery butter. As the table below shows, output had been trebled between 1922 and 1927.

⁴³⁰ I. Phimister, 'Accommodating Imperialism: The compromise of the settler state in Southern Rhodesia, 1923-1929', *Journal of African History*, 25, (1984), 279-294.

⁴³¹ Machingaidze, 'The development of settler capitalist agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with particular reference to the role of the state, 1908-1939', 57-78, and Murray, *The governmental system in Southern Rhodesia*, 61.

⁴³² *Report of the Director of Agriculture*, 1923.



Graph 2: Dairy Production, white Farmers, 1922 – 1927.⁴³³

A significant feature in the distribution of the increase in butter production was the geographical imbalance that had begun to emerge by the early 1920s. Although the Matabeleland region had, over time, become perceived to be more suited to a cattle economy, the output of butter was generally much lower when compared to Mashonaland, which had begun to contribute the “great bulk” of the country’s butter and cheese.⁴³⁴ In his 1928 report, Hamilton stated that “Mashonaland farmers continue to make the great bulk of our locally produced butter and cheese.”⁴³⁵ He added in 1930 that the minimal butter supplies from Matabeleland actually came from African producers.⁴³⁶ Although, topographically, Matabeleland was better suited to cattle ranching, its considerably more arid climate was less suitable for milk production in comparison with Mashonaland.

⁴³³ The figures shown in the table were derived from the Annual Reports of the Dairy Expert 1923 and 1927.

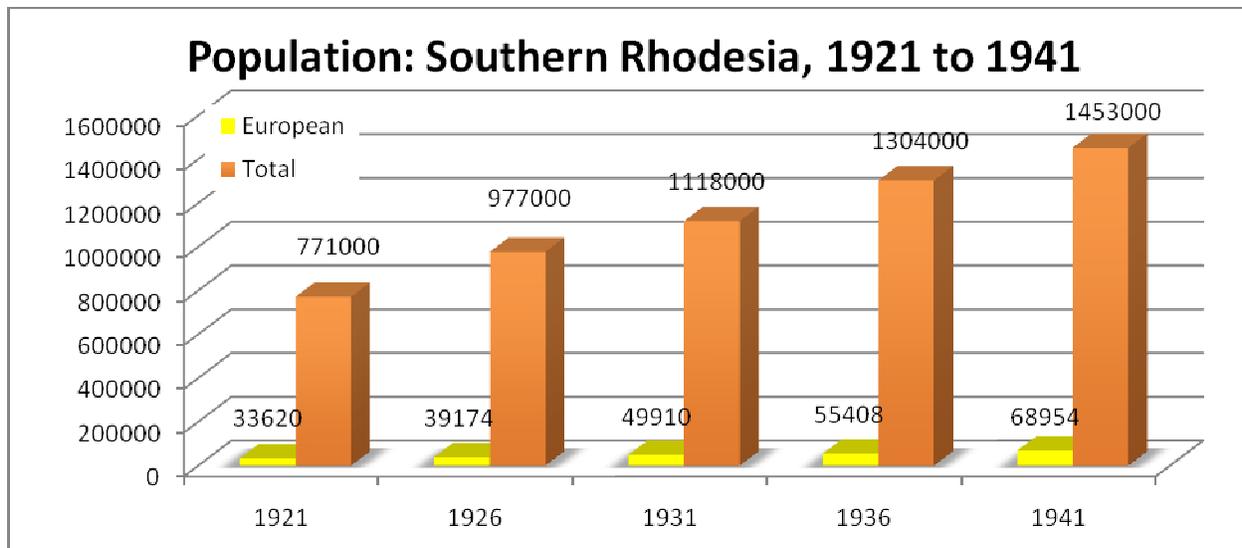
⁴³⁴ *Report of the Dairy Expert*, 1928.

⁴³⁵ *Report of the Dairy Expert*, 1928.

⁴³⁶ *Report of the Dairy Expert*, 1930.

An important consequence of the increase in dairy production was that the country was faced with the necessity to enter the export market by 1924. Even during the years when droughts necessitated a decrease, the figures were still higher than local demand. This development, therefore, was not so much indicative of the growth and maturation of the dairy industry as it was a result of a limited internal market. Indeed, it is argued here that the relatively small settler population in the country during this time meant that there would always be more butter than the internal market, comprising almost exclusively the settler community, could consume. Despite the policy to attract as many settler immigrants into the country as possible, the settler community constituted a very small proportion of Southern Rhodesia's total population at any time in the country's history. Besides the slow inflow of immigration, also contributing to the low white population in Southern Rhodesia was the fact that over half of new arrivals did not settle in the country permanently, but soon emigrated to other British colonies. As Josiah Brownell and Alois Mlambo demonstrate for the pre-Federation and post-UDI periods respectively, although immigrants who came to Southern Rhodesia were referred to as settlers, few of them actually did settle in the country.⁴³⁷ As the table below shows, the white population constituted about 4.4% of the total population in 1921, and had risen to a mere 4.7% by 1941.

⁴³⁷ See A.S. Mlambo, *White Immigration into Rhodesia: From occupation to Federation*, (Harare: University Press, 2002) and J. Brownell, *The population demographics and the politics of race*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 71-84.



Graph 3: Settler and total population in Southern Rhodesia, 1921 to 1941.⁴³⁸

The African population, which comprised the country's majority, could not be regarded as a stable market at this time. Predominantly rural, the vast majority of Africans did not consider butter, cheese and market milk as an important part of their diet. As discussed in chapter 2, Africans had their own 'traditional' methods of processing and preparing milk products which did not only pre-date but subsisted parallel to the colonial market systems. Timothy Burke's study on the dynamics shaping the consumption of commodities in Southern Rhodesia reveals that although the "tastes" and "needs" of Africans were slowly changing as they became more integrated into the cash economy through proletarianisation, their response to the consumption of market butter and cheese was slow.⁴³⁹ In any case, their position on the periphery of the colonial socio-economic system meant that creamery butter, milk and cheese were beyond the reach of most rural Africans. Thus, Southern Rhodesia began to look beyond its borders for the disposal of butter, and to a lesser extent, cheese. Although fresh milk production was also soaring during the period under review, the rate of increase was relatively lower as most farmers chose to produce cream for the manufacture of butter. Considering its keeping qualities and the limited contemporary technology available, the movement of milk within the country, let alone outside the borders for export, was restricted. The country was faced with surplus butter each year from

⁴³⁸ Adapted from B.M. Shutz, 'European population patterns, cultural persistence and political change in Rhodesia', *The Canadian Journal of African Studies*, vii, 1, 1973, 10.

⁴³⁹ T. Burke, *Lifebuoy men, lux women. Commodification, consumption and cleanliness in Modern Zimbabwe*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), 63-77.

1924 until the late 1930s. In 1926, for instance, 774 961 lbs valued at £55 537 were exported to the Union of South Africa, Congo and Northern Rhodesia.⁴⁴⁰ Cory admitted then that the industry would have to depend on the export market for the disposal of surplus butter not so much because the country was producing huge stocks of butter in comparison with other countries, but because of the low consumption levels at the time.⁴⁴¹

Yet, the country's successful participation on the international market hinged on its ability to produce commodities of a reasonably high quality, which would enable it to compete with other established countries in the world. Whereas the issue of quality had not been given much attention prior to 1924, the low quality of Southern Rhodesian butter was dramatically exposed when the state began to look to the regional and international markets for the disposal of its product. A government-authored report describing the general state of agriculture in 1924 succinctly captured the state of affairs in the dairy industry at the time:

The old days in Rhodesia when there was a local market for all that a farmer could produce have passed...as late comers into these (foreign) markets, it may be difficult to dispose of Rhodesian dairy products unless it can be proved that they are as good in quality as those produced by our competitors.⁴⁴²

In the same article, the government conceded that nearly all the butter that was made on farms was unsuitable for export on account of the “unacceptably bad conditions under which it was made.”⁴⁴³ For instance, reflecting on the 1924 season, Hamilton, the Dairy Expert, lamented that the “proportion of low grade butter coming out of the creameries’ churns is quite high”.⁴⁴⁴ This state of affairs, as shall be explained later in this section, derived from a miscellany of factors, ranging from lack of dairy cows, inadequate infrastructure on the farms, unhygienic practices and the manufacturing procedures.

Creamery and farmers’ representatives acknowledged the need for a concerted effort if Southern Rhodesia’s dairy industry were to participate competitively on the international stage where

⁴⁴⁰ *Report of the Dairy Expert*, 1926.

⁴⁴¹ NAZ Oral/217 Cory John Richmond, 4.

⁴⁴² NAZ GEN/WEM ‘The dairy industry in Southern Rhodesia’, Wembley British Empire Exhibition, 1924.

⁴⁴³ NAZ GEN/WEM ‘The dairy industry in Southern Rhodesia’, Wembley British Empire Exhibition, 1924.

⁴⁴⁴ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Dairy Industry Correspondence: Letter from T. Hamilton to the Secretary for Agriculture, 29 December 1924.

countries like Canada, New Zealand and Denmark had long established themselves. A representative of the Rhodesia Creameries of Bulawayo lamented that the small local demand for butter was forcing creameries to look to “enter the highly competitive regional and international markets at a time when the industry was still dominated by low grade butter and cheese.”⁴⁴⁵ In the same vein, the chairman of the Umtali District Farmers’ Association admitted in 1925 that his association “considers that something should be done to improve the grade of butter that is produced in this country, [the] quality of the article is very bad.”⁴⁴⁶ The Assistant Dairy Expert, Cory, admitted that “not less than half of the country’s butter was either second or third grade, particularly in the Matabeleland province where temperatures (are) higher and rainfall erratic.”⁴⁴⁷ In this light, the Minister of Agriculture tabled the Dairy Produce Bill in the Legislative Assembly in 1925 while the Dairy Division introduced the Milk Recording Scheme three years later, both of which were intended to redress the problems which bedevilled the dairy industry.

The Dairy Produce Act of 1925

As a response to the new circumstances facing the dairy industry, the Dairy Produce Act was passed in 1925. The legislative intervention was aimed at putting the dairy industry on a firmer economic basis through improving the quality of Southern Rhodesian butter. In outlining the anticipated impact, the Dairy Expert stated that the Act would “raise the standard of our dairy products”, and that this was vital if “as appears likely, Southern Rhodesia is to compete on the overseas markets where older colonies and other countries have so firmly established themselves.”⁴⁴⁸ The Secretary for Agriculture described the passage of the bill as a “momentous occasion” for dairy farming, while its provisions were anticipated to have “a revolutionary impact on the entire spectrum of the industry.”⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁵ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Dairy Industry Correspondence: Letter from the Secretary (name not given), Bulawayo Creameries, to Cory, 1 February, 1925.

⁴⁴⁶ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Dairy Industry Correspondence: Letter from A. Howat, Umtali District Association, to Downie, Minister of Agriculture and Lands, 8 February 1925.

⁴⁴⁷ NAZ ZAY 2/2/13 Amended Oral and Written Evidence (Dairy Produce) to the Commission of Enquiry into the Economic Position of the Colony.

⁴⁴⁸ Report of the Dairy Expert, 1925. The older colonies he was referring to probably were Australia and New Zealand, and other countries such as Denmark and Netherlands.

⁴⁴⁹ NAZ S1193/D1 Dairy Produce Act Correspondence, 1925-1927. Letter from the Secretary for Agriculture to T. Hamilton, the Dairy Expert, 18 March 1926.

While there was a general consensus on the need for remedial action to improve the quality of Southern Rhodesian butter, there was very little consultation between the government, farmers and creameries on the nature and extent of reforms that needed to be made during the period leading to the passage of the Act. Instead, government officials seemed more eager to emulate legislation from Australia – a similar settler state that had long established itself as a major dairying country. Explaining the context of the proposed legislation, Hamilton said:

Dairy farming in Southern Rhodesia is profitable for neither the farmer nor co-operative creamery. This has come about as a result of the country's entrance onto the regional and international butter market, and our product has not fetched a decent price as a result of its inferior quality. It is prudent that we study how successful dairying countries in the Dominion worked to improve the quality of their butter article over the years. Australia, for example, introduced a uniform butter production standard at all creameries...our (butter) article shall continue to be inferior unless our processes are similarly regulated.⁴⁵⁰

It is thus not surprising that the Dairy Produce Act was modelled along the similarly couched Australian Dairy Produce Act of 1903 which put in place standards of cream grading and butter manufacturing at creameries and factories.⁴⁵¹ The Secretary for Agriculture also referred to similar Irish legislation (The Dairy Produce Act of Ireland which had been passed in 1924) during intra-department correspondence on the issue.⁴⁵² The first piece of legislation specifically dealing with dairy farming in Southern Rhodesia, the Dairy Produce Act focused, in the main, on regulating the processes in the manufacture and packaging of butter and cheese. As shall be demonstrated in this section, while the focus on the manufacturing processes should be lauded, its failure to effectively address issues that affected farmers at the production level greatly limited its effectiveness in strengthening the position of the industry. In any case, the countries after which the legislation was modelled had established dairy farmers whose experience in the industry was much greater than Southern Rhodesia, whose settlers were still experiencing teething problems in dairy farming.

⁴⁵⁰ NAZ S1193/D1 Dairy Produce Act Correspondence, 1925-1927. Letter from the Dairy Expert, Hamilton, to the Secretary for Agriculture and Lands, 10 January 1925.

⁴⁵¹ Gilmore, 'Kill, cure or strangle', 135.

⁴⁵² Irish Dairy Produce Act, No 58 of 1924 as quoted in NAZ 1193/D1 Letter from H. Mundy, Secretary, Department of Agriculture to T. Hamilton, Dairy Expert, 14 January 1925.

One of the key provisions of the Act was in relation to the compulsory registration of all creameries, cream depots and cheese factories which received processed and packaged milk and cream.⁴⁵³ In order for any such enterprise to qualify for registration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, the enterprises needed to satisfy an appointed inspector that their premises met set standards in the manufacture of butter, fresh milk and cheese.⁴⁵⁴ As a quality control measure, the chemical composition of butter was regulated, with a stipulation that all creamery butter should contain no less than 80% milk fat, no more than 16% water and a maximum of 4% salt.⁴⁵⁵ Seven creameries were registered in 1926, which increased to 11 by 1935. Similarly, four cheese factories were registered in 1925, with the number rising to 9 in 1935.⁴⁵⁶ Dairy officers were employed within the Dairy Division to regularly monitor and inspect registered premises, to ensure that minimum hygienic and quality standards were followed.

The thinking among government officials throughout the 1920s was that processes at the creameries were largely responsible for the low quality of the butter produced in the country. In an analysis that explained the rationale behind the legislative intervention, Cory reasoned that “the butter-maker at local creameries is not able to churn out the desired article...the majority of them do not have the necessary expertise and experience”.⁴⁵⁷ Giving the example of inspection of the Co-op creamery in Salisbury, he added:

During my visits to one of the creameries I paid particular attention to the treatment the cream received from the time of arrival to that of churning, and apart from the testing, grading, weighing, it received none...the most important part of the manufacture was overlooked, namely cooling and blending, due to no cooling apparatus being installed. The cold chamber...was too hot for storing butter. Apart from the few reasons given which are significant to justify a change, there are many others such as site, floor space, and not sufficient provision for chill water. In my opinion, the local creamery is totally unsuitable to be used as such.⁴⁵⁸

The scathing report, which was generally representative of the majority of the creameries which Cory and other inspectors visited, was used as further evidence that the major contributing factor

⁴⁵³ *Statute Law of Southern Rhodesia, 1925: The Dairy Produce Act, 1925, Proclamation Number 18 of 1925, 100.*

⁴⁵⁴ J. Cory, ‘The Dairy Produce Act’, *Rhodesia Agricultural Journal*, 22, (1925), 575.

⁴⁵⁵ *Statute Law of Southern Rhodesia, 1925: The Dairy Produce Act, 1925, Proclamation Number 18 of 1925, 99.*

⁴⁵⁶ Cory, ‘The Dairy Produce Act’, 575.

⁴⁵⁷ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Letter from J. Cory to Hamilton, 14 October, 1929.

⁴⁵⁸ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Letter from Cory to Hamilton, 14 October, 1929.

for the poor quality butter was the inadequate facilities and bad manufacturing practices at the premises. To this end, the Dairy Division organised a conference to discuss ways in which creameries, cheese factories and depots could be assisted to comply with the new regulations. Held in Bulawayo in February 1927, creamery representatives appealed for financial assistance from the government for the capitalisation of their operations. For instance, one Mr Walker, representing the Rhodesia Creameries Bulawayo, argued that, “more than anything else, government should urgently find ways of granting financial assistance to all creameries if Rhodesian butter is to make an impact on the export market”.⁴⁵⁹

This view led to calls to the Ministry of Agriculture by the Dairy Division for the provision of increased financial and technical assistance to creameries, which would, in turn, help them to recapitalise their operations. Besides their perceived lack of expertise and experience, most creameries were too small to be able to handle the “ever increasing volumes of cream and milk they are handling each year.”⁴⁶⁰ In his submission to the Secretary for Agriculture, Hamilton argued that creameries could not continue to solely depend on their limited funds and that “it is time government became more directly involved in assisting co-operative creameries in acquiring implements they so badly need at the present moment”.⁴⁶¹ Consequently, the government reserved £10 000 each year between 1927 and 1935 for the purchase of churns, separators and testing glassware which would enable “Rhodesian creameries to manufacture butter which could be safely placed on the overseas market.”⁴⁶²

Although the belief held by most officials of the Dairy Division that many of the problems besetting the industry were caused by inadequate manufacturing processes was not entirely without merit, there is evidence that the root of the problem lay at the production level. As illustrated in the previous chapter, most dairymen were either unable or unwilling to invest in dairying on a full time basis, preferring to produce as a mere side-line to beef production. This was due to undercapitalisation or the perceived profitability of beef production. Hence, the Dairy Produce Act represented a missed opportunity to tackle problems at the root of the dairy farming

⁴⁵⁹ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Minutes of the Dairy Conference held at Bulawayo, 12 February, 1927.

⁴⁶⁰ J. Cory, ‘The Dairy Produce Act’ *Rhodesia Agricultural Journal*, 22, (1925), 578.

⁴⁶¹ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Letter from Hamilton to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, 10 October, 1927.

⁴⁶² NAZ S1193/D1/2 Letter from T. Hamilton to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, 19 July, 1928.

sector. In fact, the expenditure that was involved in assisting creameries came under some criticism from the 1935 Commission of Enquiry into the Dairy and Pig Industries. In light of the relatively small dairy industry in the country at the time, the commission argued that instead of increasing government spending on creameries, “a reduction in the number of creameries operating is imperative if the industry is to be placed on a sound footing.”⁴⁶³ It illustrated that the 976 000 lb. of butter produced in 1935 could be handled in one creamery, and recommended that only four creameries should be left to operate in the country to cater for all geographical regions of the country.⁴⁶⁴ Besides the wasting of resources on underutilised plants, the existence of many creameries presented the Dairy Division with more financial and human challenges in monitoring and controlling the processing plants.

Officials of the Dairy Division and some creamery officials during the 1920s believed that the grading and testing procedures were generally lax and inconsistent, leading to poor quality butter receiving a higher grading. To resolve this, the Dairy Produce Act provided that dairy officers would, in addition to visiting dairy farms, monitor cream grading and butter testing procedures at creameries to ensure uniformity.⁴⁶⁵ Writing to the Secretary for Agriculture in 1927, Hamilton captured this thinking thus:

A stricter grading due to the administration of the Dairy Produce Act should result in a higher standard of grades being adopted by the creameries. Now that Southern Rhodesia has entered overseas markets with dairy products the necessity for this higher standard is at once apparent.⁴⁶⁶

As a result, dairy officers spent more time inspecting creamery operations than they did on the farms. Some creamery owners also believed that the solution to the country’s butter quality problems lay with their grading and testing methods. For instance, the manager of Lal Bagh, a private creamery based in Bulawayo argued in 1926 that “now that the supply of cream is becoming very great, and the country aims at export to compete with the world’s greatest communities, I would advocate stricter grading, especially for manufacturing export quality

⁴⁶³ *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries, 1936, 12.*

⁴⁶⁴ *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries, 1936, 12.*

⁴⁶⁵ Cory, ‘The Dairy Produce Act’, 578.

⁴⁶⁶ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Letter from T. Hamilton, the Chief Dairy Officer, to the Secretary for Agriculture, 11 March, 1927.

butter.”⁴⁶⁷ The secretary of the Creamery Committee, a creameries’ representative body, also agreed that “the time has now come for the creamery proprietors to adopt a stricter and more consistent grading system, one which would reward that producer who sends good cream for butter manufacture.”⁴⁶⁸

The cream grading procedures at most creameries had, indeed, been quite inconsistent, and were partially responsible for the production of cream of an inferior quality by farmers. Creameries often changed grading schedules in response to seasonal fluctuations. It was customary for creameries during winter, when dry conditions⁴⁶⁹ prevailed, to pay the first grade price for second and third grade cream, in order to encourage farmers to maintain production. Butter which would normally be graded as third grade would be given a first grade rating when production of milk and cream was low, then revert to the normal grading during other seasons of the year, when production had increased. After touring the Gwelo Creamery towards the end of 1926, Cory was outraged that of the 23 cans of third grade cream he inspected, no less than 15 had received 1st grade rating. Of the 18 cans of 2nd grade cream, no less than 14 had received a 1st grade rating.⁴⁷⁰ In explaining this practice, which was adopted from South African creameries in Mafeking and Johannesburg, the Umtali Farmers’ Association contended that the practice at least encouraged farmers to increase production in winter, when there would be little natural pasturage to feed cows, thus limiting the amount of imports during winter, and then exporting during other seasons.⁴⁷¹ Although it is true that incentives were considered necessary instruments in encouraging winter milk and cream production in countries such as South Africa, Australia and England, none of the said countries used a differential grading system to achieve that object.⁴⁷²

⁴⁶⁷ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Letter from the Manager of Lal Bagh Dairy to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, 25 November, 1926.

⁴⁶⁸ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Letter from the secretary. Cream Committee, to T. Hamilton, Chief Dairy Officer, 21 February, 1927.

⁴⁶⁹ For tropical Savanna climate, in which Southern Rhodesia was located, winters are generally characterized by dry conditions which results in significantly diminished natural pastures. The result is that, with very little supplementary feed, milk output is generally lower than in summer. In fact, most farmers preferred their cows to calve in summer when water and pastures are more readily available.

⁴⁷⁰ NAZ S1193/D1 Dairying: 1926-1930. Memorandum by the Assistant Chief Dairy Officer, 21 January, 1927.

⁴⁷¹ NAZ S246/798 Farmers Associations’ Resolutions and Correspondence: 1926 -1929. Minutes and Resolutions of the Rhodesia Agricultural Union Congress, 1928.

⁴⁷² See D. Taylor, ‘Growth and Structural Change in the English Dairy Industry, 1860-1930’, *The Agricultural History Review*, 35, 1, (1987), 47-64. Also see D. Taylor, ‘The English dairy Industry, 1860-1930’, *The Economic*

The standard instrument in most cases was the use of a higher price for milk and cream delivered to creameries, without necessarily lowering the grading system. In Australia, for instance, cream prices were increased in winter beginning 1916 in order to avert a significant fall in butter production.⁴⁷³ While it had the effect of increasing the quantity of cream available for butter making purposes, changing the grading schemes had the effect of painting a misleading picture concerning the quality of farmers' produce, with the result that "very little inducement is held out to the supplier to improve the quality of his product."⁴⁷⁴ This provided the context for the post 1925 reforms which sought to regularise grading systems at all creameries. However, although the push to regularise grading systems was a noble step towards improving the butter quality, it was bound to have limited success if other factors that contributed towards low grade butter on the farms were not addressed. Writing in 1936, the Committee of Enquiry into certain aspects of the dairy and pig industries criticised the obsession on grading to the disregard of farm processes thus:

It must be remembered that any system of grading, no matter how strict, is only effective up to a point – the grader is compelled to classify cream according to the condition in which he finds it – he has no knowledge of the conditions under which the cream has been produced, nor is the extent to which it may have been contaminated always revealed in its appearance.⁴⁷⁵

On this evidence, it is clear that for as long as production processes were not regulated, interventions at the grading level were bound to meet with limited results in improving the quality of butter.

Registration of Depots

The focus on the processing and manufacturing processes was further underlined by the fact that the legislation provided for the mandatory registration of all depots that received milk and cream for transmission to creameries and dairies. Most depots were located in remote areas, especially

History Series, 29, 4, (1976), 593, and Gilmore, 'Kill, cure or strangle: The history of government intervention in three key agricultural industries on the Atherton Tablelands, 1895-2005', 150.

⁴⁷³ Gilmore, 'Kill, cure or strangle: The history of government intervention in three key agricultural industries on the Atherton Tablelands, 1895-2005', 150-152.

⁴⁷⁴ NAZ S1193/D1Dairying: 1926-1930. Memorandum by the Assistant Chief Dairy Officer, 21 January, 1927.

⁴⁷⁵ *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into certain aspects of the dairy and pig industries, 1936.*

in reserves where Africans continued to produce milk for the market.⁴⁷⁶ African areas were, by design, often located in locations far from the railway lines and major roads. The 1930 Land Apportionment Act set aside land for African purchase, the Native Purchase Areas, but most of this land was not much better than the reserves.⁴⁷⁷ Taking advantage of the long distances producers in remote areas had to travel with milk to creameries, some former transport riders had established depots in African reserves where they purchased milk from which they separated cream and sold to creameries.⁴⁷⁸ When pushing for the compulsory registration of depots, the general thinking had been shaped by the belief that milk and cream would deteriorate while still at the depots, hence contributing to the manufacture of low grade butter. To this end, the new law mandated that all depots needed to have properly constructed buildings with the requisite ventilation and refrigeration facilities. Thus, the compulsory registration was seen as a means of ensuring that all functional depots were sufficiently capitalised with the requisite facilities for the separation, storage and transportation of cream, particularly refrigeration facilities. However, even as late as the 1950s, some of the depots were still housed in poll and dagga structures.⁴⁷⁹

The compulsory inspection and registration processes of depots in African reserves offers a lens into the contentious relations between depot operators on one hand, and government officials on the other. From 1926 until the early 1930s, the Dairy Division received numerous applications from cream depots in Matabeleland province, where, it must be noted, the vast majority of African milk and cream producers were based.⁴⁸⁰ Although Mashonaland produced more dairy products than Matabeleland generally, Africans in Matabeleland produced more in comparison with their counterparts in Mashonaland.⁴⁸¹ Most of the applications were turned down because

⁴⁷⁶ For more on the Native Purchase Areas, see A. Shutt, 'Pioneer farmers and family dynasties in the Marirangwe Purchase Area, colonial Zimbabwe, 1931-1947', *African Studies Review*, 43, 3, (December, 2000), 59-80.

⁴⁷⁷ V. Machingaidze, 'Agrarian change from above: The Native Land Husbandry Act and African response' *The International Journal of Historical Studies*, 24, 3, (1991), 560.

⁴⁷⁸ NAZ S1193/D1/3 Dairy Produce Act, 1925 Correspondence: 1925-927. Letter from Cory to Hamilton, 10 February 1925.

⁴⁷⁹ Poll and dagga structures are basic edifices made from mud and tree poles, with a shallow foundation. Without concrete floors or windows, they were criticised for being unhygienic, hence dairy officials often refused to register depots with such structures under the Dairy Produce Act, although farmers were allowed to continue using them.

⁴⁸⁰ Although Africans in other regions kept cattle, Matabeleland had the highest number of livestock keepers on account of the region's more arid climate which did not favour arable farming (see map in chapter 3).

⁴⁸¹ This was largely because more cattle were in African ownership in Matabeleland than in Mashonaland. Indeed, Hamilton reported in 1929 that although the province was generally lagging behind Mashonaland in cream and butter production, a greater percentage of Matabeleland's cream was hewn from African reserves. The same

their premises were deemed unsuitable for keeping milk and/or separating cream. For instance, Cory noted that buildings at five depots in Kweeneen, Pakwi No 1, Romaquabone and Mphoengs Store Depots in southern Matabeleland lacked adequate space, proper ventilation, cooling facilities, and were not fly proof, and ruled that:

For these and other reasons none of the depots can be regarded as eligible for registration under the Dairy Produce Act, 1925. Before the premises concerned can be registered, various necessary alterations...will have to be made, or alternatively, new and more suitable dairies will have to be erected. I strongly advise that the latter course be adopted.⁴⁸²

Similar responses were made for many other depots in the province, especially in Plumtree and Shangani. At least three white depot proprietors namely, J. Haskins and Sons, J & S Press and Geo Hoare, all of Plumtree, had their operations declared illegal and their applications for registration turned down on similar grounds.⁴⁸³ This set the stage for a clash between officials of the Dairy Division and operators, who felt that they were disenfranchised by a system that deliberately aimed to destroy their role of linking African producers to the colonial market. Conveniently deploying the plight of African producers to his advantage, Jason Haskins argued that although the legislation was well intentioned, officials were “denying the native people of this country an opportunity to eke a living, despite the fact that most depot owners have constructed new buildings in line with the law.”⁴⁸⁴ Although Haskins was raising an important point on behalf of depot operators, there is a high probability that his interest in having his premises registered did not lie with the plight of African producers, but in saving his business from imminent collapse.

Moreover, the implementation of the regulations exposed the differences in opinion between government officials. This may be seen in the way existing and prospective depot operators successfully mobilised Native Commissioners in their confrontation with Dairy officials. The case of Geo Hoare vividly captures the interaction of ideas between dairy officers, Native Commissioners, and depot operators. After Cory had refused to register his two depots in

observation was also made by Cory, whose duties as the Assistant Dairy Expert were mainly restricted to Matabeleland, when he predicted that “in the near future native cream production will constitute an important feature of the Dairy Industry in Matabeleland.

⁴⁸² NAZ S1193/D1/2 Letter from Cory to Hamilton, 14 January 1930.

⁴⁸³ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Letter from Hamilton to the Acting Secretary, Department of Agriculture, 7 January, 1930.

⁴⁸⁴ NAZ S1193/D1 Dairying: 1926-1930. Memorandum by the Assistant Chief Dairy Officer, 21 January, 1927.

Radtladi and Madabi (in Matabeleland) not only because his “pole and dagga building with a thatched roof and an earthen floor” was unsuitable, but also because “the work of separation (of cream) is performed solely by [unsupervised] natives”⁴⁸⁵, Hoare (himself a dairy farmer) enlisted the services of the Chief Native Commissioner in his battle for registration. The Chief Native Commissioner called for the revision of the criteria used in the inspection and registration of depots, arguing that an “unduly strict implementation of the regulations without due consideration to the important role they (depots) play in native reserves will be in the interests of neither the depot owner nor the native.”⁴⁸⁶ He further contended that the mere fact that cream separation was carried out by Africans did not, of necessity, mean that the process was insanitary.⁴⁸⁷ Although Cory may have had a valid case against poorly equipped depots, his refusal to register depots partly because they were manned by African employees presents an irreconcilable contradiction with his position on African production in the reserves. As is shown in the next section, Cory argued, persuasively, that African milk production and cream separation on their own premises in the reserves was not different from methods and processes used by settler producers.

The Dairy Division, however, was adamant that registration licences would not be issued. Cory added that the concern about African interests expressed by Hoare was hypocritical. The Chief Dairy Officer, in defence of Cory’s position to deny them registration, argued that depot owners, as middlemen, were largely interested in making extortionate profits from dealing in African cream at the detriment of the general good of the dairy industry.⁴⁸⁸ Suggesting that depot operators’ were unwilling to invest in the dairy industry, he asserted that:

I think that the point has been missed or obscured that the cream depots which must, under the Dairy Produce Act, 1925, be registered as cream depots are the property of European Native Traders who obviously are making a profit, either directly or indirectly, from dealing in native cream....In this view I cannot understand the attitude of the Native Commissioner at Plumtree as it is obviously highly important that native traders owning separating stations and deriving profits should set an example...These remarks, in my opinion, are subversive to all

⁴⁸⁵ See NAZ S1193/D1/2 Letter from Cory to Hoare, 5 November 1929.

⁴⁸⁶ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Letter from the Native Commissioner, Plumtree, to Hamilton, 10 December 1930.

⁴⁸⁷ E. Kramer, ‘The Evolution of Policy: Trade and Production in the Reserve Economy of Colonial Zimbabwe, 1890-1952’, PhD Thesis, University of Zimbabwe, 2003, 21.

⁴⁸⁸ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Letter from Hamilton to the Acting Secretary, Department of Agriculture, 7 January, 1930.

good order and discipline and are all the more extra-ordinary since they emanate from a responsible government official.⁴⁸⁹

A closer look at the position of depot operators in Matabeleland, however, shows that most of them were unwilling to expend much money on investing in the enterprise, although they were making reasonable profits from the cream trade. Most of them considered the cream trade merely as one among many. Eira Kramer has shown that European traders in African reserves prior to 1944 made huge profits by purchasing many agricultural goods from Africans and marketing them on the main market.⁴⁹⁰ The same traders also established trading shops in African areas where they sold consumer goods at inflated prices.⁴⁹¹ Interestingly, even after they were eventually registered (after constructing the required buildings and facilities), most cream traders stopped purchasing cream from African reserves by 1935 (whom they had earlier claimed to be protecting), preferring instead to purchase cream from Bechuanaland producers who offered lower prices.⁴⁹²

Hoare's premises, together with many similarly constructed premises were not registered until they presented 'acceptable' plans to construct brick and mortar buildings, with concrete floors. The policy, however, seems not to have been pursued with any consistence. Indeed, 'Magodi and the Dairy', a short educational film, shot during the federal period depicting African milk and cream production – with a view to encourage sanitary and 'modern' African production in light of the post World War Two milk and butter shortages – shows that although depots were equipped with the required cream separating implements, the buildings were still standing on poorly ventilated poll dagga walls and earthen floors.⁴⁹³ Hence, a considerable number of depots continued to operate without the prescribed structures.

⁴⁸⁹ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Letter from Hamilton to Acting Secretary, Department of Agriculture, 7 January, 1930.

⁴⁹⁰ See Kramer, 'The Evolution of Policy: Trade and Production in the Reserve Economy of Colonial Zimbabwe, 1890-1952', 97-133.

⁴⁹¹ Kramer, 'The Evolution of Policy: Trade and Production in the Reserve Economy of Colonial Zimbabwe, 1890-1952', 134-193.

⁴⁹² NAZ ZAR2/1/1 Oral Evidence by W.R. Benzies, Superintendent of Natives, to the Commission of Enquiry into certain aspects of the dairy and pig industries, Bulawayo, 2 September, 1935.

⁴⁹³ See NAZ F56 'Magodi and the Dairy, Central African Film Unit.' The film depicts milk and butter production and marketing by peasant farmers in an African reserve.

Problems of transport

Besides unsanitary conditions at depots, another reason behind the delivery of poor quality at the creameries was the inadequate transport system available to both farmers and depot operators to ferry cream to creameries. As noted in chapter 3, dairy farming requires reliable transport, on a daily basis, for the movement of milk and cream to creameries and dairies before it becomes adulterated. Most farmers and creameries depended on the services of the national railway company for the transportation of cream from farmers or depots to creameries. However, the train trips were too few and far between for the smooth transportation of perishable products such as cream. For example, nearly all cream producers in Matabeleland relied on the trains that ran between Bulawayo and West Nicholson for the transportation of cream to Bulawayo. However, only two trains ran every week, with the result that cream could only be sent to the creamery a similar number of times each week.⁴⁹⁴ Settler producers were dissatisfied with the arrangement, arguing that cream, even if it had been of very good quality at production, would have deteriorated by the time it reached the creameries, which in turn affected their earnings. Humphrey Gibbs, the secretary of the Bulawayo Cream Producers' Association painted the impact of the transport situation thus:

Under the (hot) conditions which obtain in this part of the country, it is essential that cream be sent to the creamery more frequent than this; the two trains mentioned depart from West Nicholson on Tuesday and Friday mornings and arrive at Bulawayo in the afternoon. Cream arriving at Bulawayo on Tuesdays afternoons, therefore, is generally five days old, has been travelling for almost 12 hours, and in warm weather is invariably of very poor quality when received at the creamery.⁴⁹⁵

Similar challenges existed in other parts of the country. The train running between Sinoia and Salisbury often either ran behind schedule or missed trips altogether, with the result that farmers' associations in the Sinoia area complained to Rhodesia Railways that the value of their products such as cream, butter, cheese, eggs, pigs and poultry often deteriorated while they waited for the

⁴⁹⁴ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Letter from the Humphrey Gibbs, secretary of the Cream Producers' Association, Bulawayo, to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, 5 March 1927.

⁴⁹⁵ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Letter from Humphrey Gibbs, secretary of the Cream Producers' Association, Bulawayo, to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, 5 March 1927.

train or in transit to Salisbury.⁴⁹⁶ This state of affairs was aggravated by the railway workers' strike in 1929, which virtually paralysed the railways, particularly in Salisbury and most districts in Mashonaland. The strike resulted in creameries, which paid transport costs, resorting to hiring private motor lorries, at a higher cost.⁴⁹⁷ Thus, the Dairy Division lobbied the Department of Agriculture to introduce a regular refrigerated motor truck to replace the railway service.⁴⁹⁸ However, the lobby was unsuccessful at this time due to what the Secretary said was a "lack of fiscal space" to finance a road motor service on a nationwide scale, with the result that a road service was introduced only for the Marandellas/Salisbury route.⁴⁹⁹

The erratic and unreliable transportation by train was compounded by the unsuitable vehicles that were used to ferry cream to railway stations. Given that many farms were located a considerable distance from the railway lines a Railway Motor Lorry, provided by the national railway company, drove between farms and depots to collect agricultural products and transported them onto railway stations at a fee. The trucks, however, were generally inefficient, and without a refrigeration system, cream lost its freshness in transit to the railway lines. The same complaint applied to the road motor service that ferried cream from certain areas direct to creameries. Introduced in 1926, the service was both unpredictable and intermittent in its movements. It was not uncommon for farmers to complain that the lorries arrived late and then took too long to arrive at railway lines, as they went around farms. The comments of one member of the Cream Producers' Association, West Nicholson, identified only as Parkes, are quite revealing on the operations of the lorries:

The van in which the cream is carried is frequently overloaded, and, usually, some of the cans are exposed to the direct rays of the sun. The cream is carried in the guard's van, in which fish, dogs, vegetables etc is transported.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁶ NAZ 482/476/39 Farmers' Associations: Letter from the Secretary, Sinoia Farmers' Association (name not given) to the Superintendent of Transportation, Rhodesia Railways, Ltd, 14 January, 1930.

⁴⁹⁷ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Letter from Hamilton to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, 18 February, 1929.

⁴⁹⁸ The Dairy Division began its lobby for the use of a road motor service from around 1926, when Hamilton argued that a special refrigerated truck was needed to transport cream from all farms and depots. He was constantly turned down by the Department of Agriculture on account of limited funds, until the post Second World War period, when production figures began to increase substantially, thus rendering existing transport arrangements untenable.

⁴⁹⁹ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Letter from Hamilton to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, 10 March, 1929.

⁵⁰⁰ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Letter from Humphrey Gibbs, secretary of the Cream Producers' Association, Bulawayo, to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, 05 March 1927.

Yet this motor service played an even more critical role in reserves which were situated even further from the railway network. This was exacerbated by the passage of the Land Apportionment Act in 1930, which saw huge tracts of land near the railway lines being set aside for settler agriculture, while many Africans were pushed further onto unproductive lands further from the railway network.⁵⁰¹ Considering the distances they had to move cream to reach railways, depot operators almost invariably faced far reaching challenges in ensuring that cream arrived at the creameries in a condition good enough to make butter of a decent grade. Although the complaints raised by depot operators and some white farmers concerning unreliable transport arrangement were valid, this does not fully account for the poor state in which milk and cream reached creameries. As shall be shown in this chapter and chapter 5, methods of production at the farm were largely responsible for this state of affairs. As these lorries were often unreliable, farm employees sometimes carried cream to the railways lines, and often directly to creameries and depots, as the picture below shows.

⁵⁰¹ For more on how land was allocated under the Land Apportionment Act of 1930, see B.N. Floyd, 'Land Apportionment in Southern Rhodesia', *Geographical Review*, 52, 4, (October, 1962), 566-582.



Figure 1: A picture of African dairy farm workers carrying cream to a depot in 1932. Chipinga, Manicaland.⁵⁰²

Although the legislation provided that dairy officers should occasionally visit farmers' premises to give 'advise' to producers, no policy instrument were put in place to ensure that producers met specific hygienic and quality standards in the production and handling of milk, butter and farm butter. Nor did the Act provide for mandatory presence of any infrastructure such as milking sheds and utensils such as separators, cans and buckets. Moreover, no provisions were made to ensure that farmers possessed the right dairy livestock, or that a proper livestock management

⁵⁰² NAZ 1932/ 1265 (Illustrations section).

system, such as proper feeding of dairy livestock, breeding, and milk recording were implemented. In fact, relatively fewer visits were made to farms (both African and white) in comparison with the frequency with which dairy inspectors visited creameries and depots. The general feeling among creamery owners was that the Dairy Division “had not hired enough inspectors to cover both creameries and primary cream producers themselves”, with the result that “very few farms have hosted these officials, yet it is from the farms where the primary problems in the industry are emanating.”⁵⁰³ With the law providing specific requirements for the manufacture of butter and also making creamery and depot inspection mandatory, dairy officials tended to spend more time at the creameries and depots, hence limiting the frequency with which they could visit farms.

The Milk Recording Scheme

As part of ongoing efforts to improve the quality of dairy products, the Dairy Division introduced a Milk Recording Scheme in 1928. Modelled along Australian and South African practice, the Dairy Division employed an official recorder, who paid monthly visits to dairy farmers that entered the programme and compiled a record of the milk and butter fat production capacity of each animal on test, the feed consumption, feed cost and the gross income for each cow.⁵⁰⁴ The underlying rationale was to measure – and ultimately improve – the productivity of each cow, and the elimination of unproductive animals from the dairy herds. The programme, which was entirely voluntary, thus facilitated interaction between producers and state experts.

The scheme, however, was poorly subscribed. In 1930, Hamilton reported that only 1 333 cows belonging to some 32 farmers had been placed under the programme.⁵⁰⁵ This was aggravated by the fact that each participating farmer was charged 6d. per cow per month for the first 10 cows, and 3d for each additional one.⁵⁰⁶ More worrying for the Dairy Division was the ever decreasing number of farmers who had initially presented their cows for the test. By 1934, milk recorders were complaining that many farmers who had initially entered their cows for recording were

⁵⁰³ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Minutes of the Dairy Conference held at Bulawayo, 12 February, 1927.

⁵⁰⁴ *Report of the Dairy Expert, 1929.*

⁵⁰⁵ *Report of the Dairy Expert, 1930.*

⁵⁰⁶ *Report of the Dairy Expert, 1930.*

pulling out of the scheme.⁵⁰⁷ The following statement by a member of the Eastern Victoria Farmers' Association succinctly reflects the general attitude towards the scheme:

A few of our members initially registered to participate in the Milk Recording Scheme, (because) it is standard practice in all successful dairying countries. However, in light of the shortage of pedigree dairy stock and supplementary feed, some have had to withdraw in order to save themselves from embarrassment the recorders' results brings.⁵⁰⁸

The low number of subscribing producers should be viewed within the context of a dairy industry that was still dominated by dilettantes whose long term interests lay in ranching, and the shortage of capital among bona fide dairy farmers. The dearth of good dairy cattle, as discussed in the previous chapter, had been the Achilles heel of the dairy industry. Although good dairy cattle could be imported from South Africa through the Friesland Cattle Breeders' Association (with which the government had established an arrangement),⁵⁰⁹ or overseas from England, many of Southern Rhodesian farmers opted for beef cattle, or dual purpose breeds which could enable them to produce beef. Indeed, Hamilton lamented that "(dairy) farmers are, however, not supporting the government loan scheme for the purchase of dairy stock to the same extent as was anticipated."⁵¹⁰ J.S. Brown, a member of the Dairy Industrial Control Board, commented that "in herds I know of, there are not more than 20 dairy cows."⁵¹¹ Although mixed farming was generally encouraged, especially when it applied to maize growing and cattle rearing, the milking of beef cattle was discouraged.⁵¹² As late as 1935, the Committee of Enquiry into the Dairy and Pig Industries complained that:

The sale of cream from beef herds has increased...This practice is very much against the interests of both the dairy and beef industries, inasmuch as, while increasing the colony's surplus cream supplies, it retards the growth and injures the constitution of beef calves.⁵¹³

⁵⁰⁷ *Report of the Dairy Expert, 1934.*

⁵⁰⁸ NAZ S482/476/39 Farmers' Associations, 1926-1942: Letter from Woodward (position not given), Eastern Victoria Farmers' Association, to Cory, 21 June, 1929.

⁵⁰⁹ Weinmann, *Agricultural research and development in Southern Rhodesia*, 157.

⁵¹⁰ *Annual Report of the Dairy Expert, 1926.*

⁵¹¹ NAZ S1215/1366/2 Dairy Industry Control Board Minutes, 11 October, 1939.

⁵¹² Growing maize, and other products like beans, and legumes is considered helpful for livestock keepers insofar as the crops provide cheap feed for livestock, while livestock also provide cheap manure for crops. The two are symbiotic. See, for instance, J. Cory, 'The Feeding of dairy stock in Southern Rhodesia', *Rhodesia Agricultural Journal*, 27, (July 1930), 24-32.

⁵¹³ *Report of the Committee of enquiry into certain aspects of the dairy and pig industries*, 1926, 3.

Undercapitalisation also contributed significantly to the paucity of dairy herds, and pedigree cattle in general. Machingaidze has demonstrated that despite the colonial government's earnest efforts to develop settler agriculture, lack of capital was one of the chief hindrances to its success.⁵¹⁴ With direct reference to the cattle industry, Samasuwo contended that “the process of economic expansion in the cattle sector itself was hampered by severe under capitalisation on the part of most white ranchers.”⁵¹⁵ Although loans had been available to prospective farmers through the Land and Agricultural Bank, itself a creation of the Responsible Government in 1924 after the dissolution of the Land Bank, the funds made available were often inadequate for the purchase of many bulls and cows. Whereas attempts were made to circumvent similar problems – with little success – in the beef industry by inviting international capital, particularly Liebig's, local dairymen and creameries had to go it alone.⁵¹⁶ Consequently, a significant number of prospective dairy farmers resorted to purchasing only a few cows and a bull with available funds, and then relying on the inevitably slow natural increase to expand their herds.⁵¹⁷

The management of dairy herds was one problem with which those farmers who had gained access to good dairy cattle had to contend. Given the climatic difficulties, particularly in the south-western regions, dairy cattle needed supplementary feeding for most of the dry months in the country, when pastures were low. However, most farmers did not have sufficient funds for this purpose. After a reconnoitring tour of settler dairy farms in 1939, T. Adams, a member of the Dairy Industry Control Board reported that he had never “seen a dairy herd in this country that was properly fed all through the year [as] it could not be done.”⁵¹⁸ With most farmers unable to afford supplementary feed, Friesland cattle which had been imported from South Africa tended to deteriorate from the time they arrived in the country due to ill-feeding, especially during the dry winter months. As Adams observed, “the quality of stock around Salisbury in 1939 is inferior to that of the 1920s.”⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁴ See Machingaidze, ‘The development of settler capitalist agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with particular reference to the role of the state, 1908-1939’, 3.

⁵¹⁵ Samasuwo, “‘There is something about cattle’: Towards an economic history of the beef industry in colonial Zimbabwe, with special reference to the role of the state’, 20.

⁵¹⁶ Phimister, ‘Meat and monopolies’, 413-414.

⁵¹⁷ NAZ S482/180/13 (13) Dairying, 1929-1930. Memorandum by L. Lammas, Bulawayo District Dairy Officer, 18 August, 1930.

⁵¹⁸ NAZ 1215/1366/2 DCB Minutes, 7 June 1939.

⁵¹⁹ NAZ 1215/1366/2 DCB Minutes, 7 June 1939.

The impact of the above scenario on dairy farming was the production of low quality milk and cream. The general outlook was succinctly captured by the Senior Officer in Animal Husbandry who, while acknowledging that “considerable improvements in plant and organisation have been made at creameries”, added that:

Little improvement is evident as far as the general quality of cream supplies is concerned. Large quantities of second and third grade cream, which become increasingly difficult to market each year, continue to be produced. Much of this low grade cream is produced by dairy farmers situated long distances from the railway, who have gone into the dairy business, but who, in many cases, would be wiser in the long run to confine themselves to beef production.⁵²⁰

As long as no measures were taken to ensure that a well funded crop of authentic dairymen who possessed the requisite pedigree dairy stock was developed, the Milk Recording Scheme would not help improve the economic fortunes of the dairy industry.

Hence, it is not surprising that, notwithstanding the passage and implementation of the Dairy Produce Act and the Milk Recording Scheme, there was no noticeable improvement in the quality of butter produced at the creameries. In fact, Southern Rhodesian butter continued to struggle on the international market throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Officials often bemoaned the deteriorating quality of butter at a time when they expected an improvement as a result of the 1925 legislative intervention and the Milk Recording Scheme. Speaking in 1935, a member of the Rhodesia Butter Agencies only identified as Straith, stated that although Southern Rhodesia produced the highest amount of butter in Southern Africa after South Africa, “there is a dearth in first grade butter in this country.”⁵²¹ The veracity of Straith’s comments may be corroborated by the fact that at a time when the country was exporting surplus second and third grade butter in the region as well as to Britain, Southern Rhodesia was annually importing first grade butter to supplement faltering local production throughout the late 1920s to the 1930s.⁵²²

⁵²⁰ *Report of the Senior Officer in Animal Husbandry, 1930.*

⁵²¹ NAZ ZAR 2/1/1 Oral and Written Evidence to the Commission to enquire into certain aspects of the dairy and pig industries, 3 September, 1935.

⁵²² This point is mentioned many times in correspondence between the the Ministry of Agriculture officials and the Dairy Expert. For example, see NAZ S1193/D1/2 Letter from Hamilton to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, 18 February, 1929.

Even more disturbing was the fact that exports were often conducted at a loss. In 1929, for instance, 15 000 lb. of second and third grade butter were exported to the Union of South Africa alone at a loss of 4d per lb.⁵²³ With no government subsidies in place during this time, Rhodesian farmers and the creameries bore the brunt of low prices which their butter was fetching on the international markets. Although the beef industry was undergoing similar problems regarding lack of capital and low quality beef, dairy farming was in a much worse position because it is highly perishable, thus requiring more care at the production level.⁵²⁴ Writing in 1940, F. Harris, the Minister of Agriculture attested that dairy farming was neglected by farmers because “they could not get a price remunerative enough to continue producing either cream or butter.”⁵²⁵ Hence, to the extent that it ignored the dynamics affecting dairy production among farmers, the Dairy Produce Act fell short of improving the economic position of the dairy industry.

“Dairying is a white man’s industry”: Debates on the conditions of production on farms

Despite the absence of any laid down stipulations, the conditions under which milk was produced and cream separated came under discussion within the settler community as well as the government itself. The general perception among settlers, and some government officials was that African producers were too slovenly and sloppy to produce clean milk and cream for commercial purposes, and thus needed to be eliminated from the trade. Although the colonial establishment viewed the elimination of African competition as a vital component of the White Agricultural Policy, this section suggests that white perceptions towards African hygiene also played an important role. This is particularly so as consumers also participated in bringing pressure to bear on the government to banish African cream and milk from the market. Also, some officials of the department appeared uncomfortable with the employment of unsupervised Africans on settler dairy farms.⁵²⁶

⁵²³ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Letter from Hamilton to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, 28 November, 1929.

⁵²⁴ For more on the problems afflicting beef production and marketing during this period see, Phimister, ‘Meat and monopolies’, 395-412.

⁵²⁵ NAZ S1215/1363/1 Letter from F.E. Harris to O.B. Nilson, a Gwanda farmer, 10 July 1940.

⁵²⁶ As outlined later in this section, the Chief Dairy Officer himself, Hamilton was particularly concerned about the employment of unsupervised Africans on dairy farms, depots and creameries.

This perspective contrasts with mid-19th century narratives of some white travellers, missionaries and traders.⁵²⁷ Most traders and missionaries' narratives of African embodied practices and hygiene show that they appreciated Africans, especially the Ndebele, as clean and healthy. Thomas Morgan Thomas, for instance, a missionary who lived within the Matabele palace during the 1860s, described the Ndebele people as "not wanting in good taste in respect to beauty, cleanliness and dress."⁵²⁸ With reference to the Shona, Stanley Hyatt, a trader who operated in Mashonaland during the 1880s and 1890s, seems to have developed a close appreciation of their 'alternative' practices and forms of social organisation. Despite the Ndebele derogatorily referring to them as 'amaswina' (dirty people), Hyatt noted the rationality behind some of their practices. For example, he observed that they shared sleeping huts with their goats, and smeared their floors with cow dung. The former was a protective measure from predators while in the latter case cow dung acted as a cleansing agent.⁵²⁹ The use of cow dung to smear floors and as an aid in fermenting milk, as shall be noted in the next chapter, was criticised as an unhygienic practice which facilitated the contamination of milk.⁵³⁰

The period after 1890, when the colonial political and socio-economic system was beginning to take root, brought with it a change in attitudes towards the African body and social practices. Mobilising a crude populist social Darwinism, most settlers believed that whites were at the vertex of the human racial hierarchy in mental, physical and cultural terms.⁵³¹ This belief, which was widely held within the settler community in the country, was used to justify the use of segregation laws, particularly to limit African access to certain privileges such as land and state support which were accorded to whites in virtually all colonial states throughout the Southern African region. As Sauer, a member of the Southern Rhodesian Legislative Council had argued in 1899, "neither in mental capacity nor in physical fitness could the aborigine ever become the

⁵²⁷ Burke, *Lifebuoy men, lux women: Commodification, consumption, and cleanliness in modern Zimbabwe*, 19.

⁵²⁸ T.M. Thomas, *Eleven Years in Central South Africa*, (Bulawayo: Books of Rhodesia, 1970), 171.

⁵²⁹ S.P. Hyatt, *The Old transport Road*, (London: Andrew Melrose, 1914), 91.

⁵³⁰ Although it was disparaged by officials of the Dairy Division and agricultural demonstrators, this practice is still practiced in some rural areas today. Interview with Rhoda Hove, born 1933, Mataruse area of Mberengwa, 16 July, 2013.

⁵³¹ For the origins and application of social Darwinism, see G. Claeys, 'The "Survival of the Fittest" and the Origins of Social Darwinism', *Journal of History of Ideas*, 61, 2, (2000), 223-240.

equal of the European.”⁵³² Timothy Burke’s study extensively discusses settler attitudes towards Africans – their bodies and social practices from the 1890s onwards.⁵³³ He argues that white settlers after 1890 viewed Africans as “filthy, depraved, and ugly”, and thus inherently diseased.⁵³⁴ Jean Comaroff has noted that the increasing common image of Africans as ‘greasy’ and diseased reflected a growing and racially charged antipathy towards African bodies.⁵³⁵ While they make interesting analyses regarding settler attitudes towards the African body, Burke and Comaroff do not explain the fluidity of attitudes depending on the spaces in which the prejudices were made. The attack on African commercial dairying was in tandem with the general segregationist debate that had begun to gain traction since Southern Rhodesia’s attainment of Dominion status in 1923,⁵³⁶ which itself had brought a renewed sense of white nationalism in the country. These calls for a more segregated society culminated in the passage of the Land Apportionment Act, which settlers came to regard as their ‘Magna Carta’.⁵³⁷ Influenced by the above prejudices, many settlers, including some government officials, began to question the wisdom of allowing Africans to produce dairy products on a commercial basis from the mid-1920s onwards. Although the 1925 Dairy Produce Act did not expressly mandate the exclusion of African producers, some settlers and government officials did attempt to take advantage of its provision for the inspection of farmers’ premises and production methods to minimise or even exclude African involvement in dairy farming.

The notion that Africans were not sufficiently systematic or ‘smart’ for dairying was raised, albeit indirectly, by Hamilton in 1926 when he suggested one of the chief reasons for the production of poor quality cream on settler farms was the employment of Africans for milking cows. Announcing the arrival of the first consignment of milking machines in the country in

⁵³² Statement by Dr Sauer, Matabeleland Representative of the Legislative Council, First Session, First Council, 15 May 1899, 13.

⁵³³ T. Burke, *Lifebuoy men, lux women: Commodification, consumption, and cleanliness in modern Zimbabwe*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 17-35.

⁵³⁴ Burke, *Lifebuoy men, lux women: Commodification, consumption, and cleanliness in modern Zimbabwe*, 20.

⁵³⁵ See, J. Comaroff, ‘The diseased heart of Africa: Medicine, colonialism, and the black body’, in S. Lindenham and M. Lock (eds), *Knowledge, Power and practice: The anthropology of medicine and everyday life*, (Berkeley: University of Californian Press, 1993), 321.

⁵³⁶ For a detailed discussion of the segregation debate of the 1920s see, Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination in Rhodesia*, 280.

⁵³⁷ See, V.E.M. Machingaidze, ‘Agrarian change from above: The Southern Rhodesian Native Land Husbandry Act and African response’, *The International Journal of Historical Studies*, 24, 3, (1991), 558.

1927, Hamilton claimed that the machines would “obviate all risk of infection due to uncleanly [sic] or unhealthy native milkers.”⁵³⁸ In fact, he further suggested that all Africans involved in the production of milk – either as employees on settler farms, or as producers themselves – should be subjected to regular medical inspection, a routine which he did not recommend for settler producers.⁵³⁹ Simmering discontent within the settler consuming community was also building. One of the most direct attacks on African involvement in dairying came from one T. Nangle, in a newspaper article, who questioned thus:

I should like to ask...the Minister of Native Affairs, the Chief Native Commissioner or the Department (of Agriculture), if they consider that natives have “rights” in the dairy or pig industries. Have they asked consumers if they are prepared to eat scavenged pigs or give their children dairy products made from milk produced under the most filthy [sic] conditions, knowing that no food is more easily contaminated than milk. Dairying is a white man’s industry and I hold the native should under no conditions be allowed to enter it.⁵⁴⁰

Underscoring the contempt with which they viewed African production, another settler went as far as threatening to boycott Southern Rhodesian dairy products until Africans were barred from commercial dairying. He complained that:

Strong criticism of unhygienic production is bad enough, but when one reads that there was a definite tendency for the supply of cream from the natives to increase, it is the limit. So butter from cream out of kaffir kraals has been sold to the public? No more creamery butter for me, sir.⁵⁴¹

Such attacks on African milk and cream production prompted the Chief Dairy Officer, Hamilton, to push for an examination of the position of African producers in dairying. To this end, Hamilton, who did not spend much time on either the dairy premises or creameries, proposed that more attention be paid on African dairy premises with a view of exploring “the possibility of placing an embargo” on cream produced by Africans.⁵⁴² He added:

In view of the groundswell of complaints and general disapproval within our consuming population, we need to evaluate the position of the native in cream supply, especially the cleanliness of both the producer and his premises. It is our

⁵³⁸ *Annual Report of the Dairy Expert*, 1927.

⁵³⁹ *Annual Report of the Dairy Expert*, 1927.

⁵⁴⁰ *Rhodesia Herald*, 31 January, 1936.

⁵⁴¹ Letter to the Editor, *Rhodesia Herald*, 27 January, 1936.

⁵⁴² NAZ S1193/D1/2 Letter from Hamilton to Cory, 12 February, 1927.

prerogative as custodians of this industry to ensure that basic hygienic standards are followed...and that unseemly producers are weeded out...⁵⁴³

In this light, Cory personally embarked on a fact finding mission in the major milk and cream producing reserves of Matabeleland, particularly in Gwanda, to inspect methods and conditions of production. Although all settler premises were also mandated to be inspected, these were mostly done by junior dairy inspectors. The emerging differences in opinion between Hamilton, the Chief Dairy Officer whose duties were largely administrative and Cory, the Assistant Chief Dairy Officer who was the chief inspector of creamery and dairy premises, reveals the difference between general prejudice and the actual situation on the ground. Numerous inspections of African cream and milk production methods showed that although a suite of malpractices existed in African milking processes, similar malpractices were also rampant among settler farmers. For instance, Hamilton, who had earlier asserted in another context that Africans needed to be medically inspected before dealing with milk products, paradoxically now maintained that the general conditions under which cream was produced on settler farms were “of the crudest possible description” after receiving Cory’s reports.⁵⁴⁴

One of Cory’s most commonly repeated criticisms against African milking systems was that in nearly all cases, the milking was done inside the kraal. Indeed, the film ‘Magodi and the Dairy’ shows an African man and his children milking cows inside the kraal into a metal container, and taking the milk to the nearest white-owned depot within a few hours of production, where the milk was sold, before being processed into cream and despatched to a creamery.⁵⁴⁵ This system, which dates back to pre-colonial times, was roundly condemned by dairy officials as unhygienic. Cow dung and flies created a fertile ground for the breeding of bacteria within the kraals, leading to the contamination of milk.⁵⁴⁶ While it is incontrovertibly clear that this system had an inimical impact on the quality of milk, and thus needed to be curbed, it is important to realise that the majority of settler dairymen milked their cows in a similar way. It was not uncommon for dairy officials to complain that most settler dairymen had not erected any milking sheds, and that

⁵⁴³ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Letter from Hamilton to Cory, 12 February, 1927.

⁵⁴⁴ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Letter from Hamilton to the Secretary for Agriculture, 11 March, 1927.

⁵⁴⁵ NAZ F56 ‘Magodi and the dairy’, (Motion pictures) Central African Film Unit. Describes milk and butter production and marketing by peasant farmers in an African reserve.

⁵⁴⁶ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Letter from Cory to Hamilton, 20 May 1927.

milking in open kraals was “too frequent a practice”.⁵⁴⁷ Giving evidence to the 1935 Commission of Enquiry, Dan Judson admitted that settler cream producers had not erected milking sheds with the result that milking in the kraals was the norm, rather than the exception.⁵⁴⁸

Most reports by dairy inspectors show that both African premises and settler farms were not equipped with proper infrastructure and implements. With no government financial and technical support, many African producers in the reserves could not afford to construct the required infrastructure such as milking sheds, proper dairies with concrete floors, cooling implements for cooling and treating milk and cream. Aggravating the situation for many of them was the general scarcity of water, itself a deliberate and long standing characteristic of the reserve areas into which most Africans were thrown from the 1890s, but magnified by the passage of the Land Apportionment Act in 1930.⁵⁴⁹ After visiting African cream producers in Gwanda, Cory reported that:

One of the most serious difficulties natives in the Gwanda district have to contend with at the present time is scarcity of water...this scarcity is one of the most unsatisfactory features observed on my recent tour of inspection and is responsible for the poor quality of cream produced by natives in this part of Matabeleland.⁵⁵⁰

While he noted that water was indispensable for maintaining the health and general cleanliness of the individuals engaged in milking and separating cream, he reasoned that:

It is futile to expect the native cream suppliers concerned to observe any great degree of cleanliness in their habits or in their methods of producing milk and cream, and until such time as this matter receives attention, the cream produced by natives in these and similarly situated areas will continue to be of inferior quality.⁵⁵¹

Having made this observation, Cory described the average African producer in Gwanda as “an intelligent type”, adding that the majority of them were “fairly conversant with the general

⁵⁴⁷ NAZ S1216/D1/4 Dairy Industry: Regulations for and Registration of farm dairies: 1930-32. Memorandum by T. Hamilton, Dairy Expert, 15 May 1930.

⁵⁴⁸ NAZ ZAR 2/1/1 Written Evidence to the Commission of Enquiry into certain aspects of the dairy and pig industries. Colonel Dan Judson, 2 September, 1934.

⁵⁴⁹ See Floyd, ‘Land Apportionment in Southern Rhodesia’, 567-570.

⁵⁵⁰ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Letter from Cory to Hamilton, 20 May 1927.

⁵⁵¹ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Letter from Cory to Hamilton, 20 May 1927.

principles to be observed in the production of milk and cream...conditions under which cream is produced by natives are by no means as unsatisfactory as we have been led to believe.”⁵⁵² Noting that, in any case, most settler farmers employed African labour for their own dairying operations and other domestic duties, and in stark contrast to the general belief embedded in the settler community, Cory persuasively concluded:

It is true that certain features of the methods employed by the natives engaged in cream production could undoubtedly be improved, but at the same time it should be borne in mind that such criticism as may be levelled against the methods practised by native cream suppliers may with equal justice be directed against the methods commonly in vogue on the average Rhodesian dairy farm...it would be obviously unjust, therefore, to prohibit the natives in these districts from producing cream or to compel them to improve their methods unless a similar improvement could be effected in methods employed by cream producers generally.⁵⁵³

Although, as explained in chapter 5, no policy framework was introduced specifically banishing African cream marketing, the implementation of control legislation without the extension of state financial and technical support ensured that the majority of prospective indigenous dairy farmers were kept out of the mainstream market.

Indeed, owing to the factors discussed earlier (undercapitalisation and settlers’ hesitation to invest in dairy farming) most settler dairy farms were not equipped with the requisite machinery, while milk and cream handling procedures were generally unsanitary. In reference to the Midlands and Matabeleland regions, Hamilton bemoaned that “farmers have of late been compelled to milk owing to sheer necessity, and many possess no dairies, nor facilities for the proper handling of cream and milk.”⁵⁵⁴ The 1935 Commission corroborated this; stating that:

Milking and separating are carried on under unhygienic conditions, resulting in contamination. There is also a great lack of care in the treatment of the milk immediately after milking and of the cream after separating.⁵⁵⁵

Despite the existence of technical assistance through Gwebi College’s demonstration farms⁵⁵⁶, and considerably greater access to financial assistance, most white owned dairy farms were not

⁵⁵² NAZ S1193/D1/2 Letter from Cory to Hamilton, 20 May 1927.

⁵⁵³ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Letter from Cory to Hamilton, 20 May 1927.

⁵⁵⁴ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Letter from Hamilton to the Secretary for Agriculture, 11 March 1927.

⁵⁵⁵ *Report of the commission of enquiry into certain aspects of the dairy and pig industries*, 8.

run along proper dairying lines. The words of F.A. Lammas, the Bulawayo District Dairy Officer, in 1934, help to put the state of affairs into proper context. Describing a farm owned by Kirk, who was also involved in running the Gwelo Dairy, Lammas said; “a more slovenly and dirty farm I imagine would be difficult to find. Mr Kirk by all accounts has had university training, and should be acquainted with the rudiments of dairying.”⁵⁵⁷

Dairy inspectors’ visits to farmers’ premises – both settler and African – from 1926 until the mid-1930s, however, not only brought to the fore the extent of the problems on farms which had been overlooked in virtually all interventions that had been made in the industry thus far, but also revealed analogous production methods between settler and African methods of production. By the late 1920s it had become patently clear that the problem of ill-equipped farmers, due either to undercapitalisation or reluctance on the part of farmers, needed to be addressed urgently. Belatedly noting the inadequacy of the Dairy Produce Act in 1933, the Chief Dairy Officer indicated that the legislation should be extended “to apply to every farmer either supplying cream to a creamery, or making cheese or butter for sale to the public”.⁵⁵⁸ He further suggested that all milk and cream producers needed to be compulsorily registered under the same conditions and regulations that applied to creameries and cream depots. As the next chapters will show, however, these calls went largely unheeded until 1937, when a raft of measures was taken to improve production methods.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the period covering the early 1920s to the 1930s came with a complex set of socio-economic and political dynamics, and these had a profound impact on dairy farming. The arrival of self-rule brought with it high hopes within the settler community that more attention will be paid to their interests. Although some scholars have viewed the advent of

⁵⁵⁶ As discussed in chapter 3, Gwebi College was established to give white farmers farming instruction and to conduct experiments on livestock and arable farming.

⁵⁵⁷ NAZ 1368/7/48 Monthly Reports, Report of the Bulawayo District Dairy Officer for March, 1934.

⁵⁵⁸ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Letter from Hamilton to the Secretary for Agriculture, 11 March 1933.

self-rule as having marked a momentous milestone in the fortunes of settler agriculture, this chapter has argued that although the settler government sought to improve the economic standing of farmers, these attempts were, in the short-term, generally unsuccessful in dairy farming. Although the Dairy Division attempted to fortify the general standing of the industry through the introduction of the first industry-specific legislative intervention, this fell short of addressing the outstanding issues which the Company government had left unresolved. Largely focusing on the manufacturing and marketing facet of dairying, the Dairy Division was unable to help establish farmers on a sustainable and viable basis. Yet this had been the perennial Achilles heel of the dairy industry since the early years of colonial occupation. This chapter has also illustrated that, given the racial discourse of the time, which was informed by the segregation debate of the 1920s, the position of African cream producers came under increasing attack from the settler community, which viewed African producers as unsuitable for dairying and thus responsible for the production of bad quality cream. It has been argued that beyond the need to reduce African competition on the market that characterised other agricultural enterprises, the assault on African production was also caused by deep-seated white attitudes and prejudices towards African hygiene. However, evidence from official reports showed that production methods and conditions were generally inadequate in both African and white sectors. By failing to improve the position of farmers and their production methods, moves towards regulation during the period under review did not yield the required results. Hence, Southern Rhodesia continued to struggle on the international scene – exporting low grade butter at a loss while importing higher grades – throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

CHAPTER FIVE

Crisis, control and contravention: The depression, increased regulation and farmers' responses, c.1931 – 1940.

Introduction

The outset of the Depression marked an important benchmark in the trajectory of Southern Rhodesia's fledgling agrarian economy. The collapse of prices on the international markets ushered in a period of socio-economic and political stress within the farming community, thus forcing the government to expand the scope of its involvement in the country's agricultural life.⁵⁵⁹ By examining the impact of the Great Depression on dairy farming, this chapter seeks to add onto existing historiography on the socio-economic impact of the recession on Southern Rhodesia's agrarian industries. It focuses on state interventions that were made to cushion farmers from tumbling prices and the ensuing interaction between the state and farmers over such remedies throughout the 1930s. The circumstances leading to the formation of the Dairy Industry Control Act (DICB) and, in comparison with other local industries and other dairy interventions within Southern Africa, the nature of its operations are examined.

The previous chapter demonstrated that Southern Rhodesian butter was predominantly of inferior quality and that the 1925 Dairy Produce Act, which was supposed to have a remedial effect in that regard, did not yield the desired results. This chapter also examines the factors leading to the passage of yet another legislative instrument in the late 1930s – the 1937 Dairy Act – which aimed at increasing the extent of state control over farmers' dairying activities in ongoing attempts at improving the quality of the country's dairy products. The differing responses by both white and African dairy producers, and how, in turn, these refashioned policy shall also be discussed. In the main, this chapter demonstrates that although increased state control of farmers was appropriate, it was resisted by white dairying dilettantes. Similarly, to the extent that the

⁵⁵⁹ The impact of the Depression on Southern Rhodesia's agricultural sector in general has been discussed by many scholars. See, for instance, V. Machingaidze, 'The development of settler capitalist agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with particular reference to the role of the state, 1908-1939,' PhD Thesis, University of London, 1979. R. Hodder-Williams, *White Farmers in Rhodesia, 1900-1965: A history of the Marandellas district*, (London: Macmillan, 1983).

implementation of the regulations had the effect of alienating African producers from the colonial dairy market, it also contributed to the growth of a parallel and illicit African milk trade.

Depression and the emergence of the Dairy Industry Control Board

As with most agricultural economies elsewhere in the world, the collapse of agricultural products' prices on the international markets from 1929 onwards ushered in a period of severe crisis for Southern Rhodesia's predominantly agricultural economy.⁵⁶⁰ With international agricultural prices tumbling, the majority of local farmers, particularly those who depended on exporting, operated on the verge of bankruptcy.⁵⁶¹ Under pressure from the white farming community, the state increased the scope of its involvement in agriculture to include finding markets for farmers as well as shielding them from the impact of falling prices on the international markets. Mandivamba Rukuni has stated that government policy in Southern Rhodesia during the 1930s shifted from *laissez faire* to direct intervention in order to channel assistance to white farmers as result of the world depression.⁵⁶² While the scope of government intervention was increased during the 1930s, state intervention had, for long, been a part of agricultural policy, as previous chapters have shown. Thus, strictly speaking, government policy had not necessarily been *laissez faire* prior to the 1930s. An agricultural regulatory framework, covering virtually all sectors of the agrarian economy whose products were earmarked for export was formulated with a view to cushion settlers from the effects of the depression.

Studies by Machingaidze, Samasuwo and Carl Keiter on the beef and maize industries of Southern Rhodesia reveal how the colonial state roped in African producers – whose products

⁵⁶⁰ The impact of the Great Depression on Southern Rhodesia's agricultural economy has received significant attention from economic historians. This period was characterized by over-production of agricultural goods across the world which precipitated a significant fall in prices on the international markets. The result was that farmers fell into debt, and many were driven out of business. For instance, see Machingaidze, 'The development of settler capitalist agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with special reference to the role of the state, 1908-1939'; Hodder-Williams, *White Farmers in Rhodesia*, 140; Maravanyika, 'Soil Conservation and the white agricultural environment in colonial Zimbabwe, 1890-1980, PhD Thesis, University of Pretoria, 2014, 118-123'; and I. Phimister, *A social and economic history of Zimbabwe: Capital accumulation and class struggle, 1890-1948*, (London: Longman, 1988), 171-207.

⁵⁶¹ The dire economic circumstances in which virtually the entire farming community in Southern Rhodesia found themselves has been subject of many studies. For instance, Hodder-Williams, *White farmers in Rhodesia, 1890-1965*, 127-158, demonstrates that many farmers stopped production completely while others sold their farms cheaply.

⁵⁶² M. Rukuni, 'The evolution of agricultural policy: 1890-1990', in M. Rukuni and C.K. Eicher (eds), *Zimbabwe's agricultural revolution*, (Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1994), 24.

were deemed to be unsuitable for export – to subsidise settler export. Illustrating that African cattle were viewed as “the scrub beast” of inferior quality, Machingaidze and Samasuwo convincingly outline how, through a series of Beef Control Acts, the state’s strategy to rescue the beef industry involved making the African peasantry bear the bigger share of the ‘cattle burden’.⁵⁶³ Regarding maize, Keiter and Machingaidze outline how African maize producers, through a levy system, were made to shoulder the burden of exporting at a time when their maize was regarded as unsuitable for export, again due to alleged poor quality.⁵⁶⁴ As shall be demonstrated in this section, however, black producers could not be roped in to subsidise butter exports as their numbers were too small.

The advent of the depression came at a time when Southern Rhodesian butter was already struggling to compete on the international scene on account of its poor quality. As has been pointed out in chapter 4, despite the transformation of creamery and cheese factory operations, dairy farming was already struggling to provide both farmers and creameries with any profitable returns owing to the production of low grade butter. Prices had begun to fall at an accelerated rate from the 1927 season, reaching a record low of 3pence per lb for first grade butter in November 1930.⁵⁶⁵ The pre-Depression fall was a consequence of a low grade butter pile up, especially in Mashonaland where signs of overproduction had begun to show as early as 1925. Thus, the depression of the late 1920s to the mid-1930s did not initiate the marketing crisis in the dairy industry; rather, it served to expose and worsen problems that lay at the root of commercial dairying in Southern Rhodesia. One dairy farmer, who identified himself only as ‘Smiley’, complained that the low prices

We currently receive from creameries for our cream will soon push us out of cream production. I have no doubt in my mind that only a handful of farmers will

⁵⁶³ Given the difficulties farmers encountered, firstly in finding profitable external markets, exporting excess beef was considered a ‘burden’ which was faced by white ranchers, since African livestock was deemed too inferior to be exported. See, chapter 4 of Machingaidze, ‘The development of settler capitalist agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with particular reference to the role of the state’, and Samasuwo, “‘There is something about cattle’: Towards an economic history of the beef industry in colonial Zimbabwe, with special reference to the role of the state’, 35-46.

⁵⁶⁴ C.F. Keyter, ‘Maize control in Southern Rhodesia, 1931-1941: The African contribution to white survival’, 34, *Central Historical Association*, (1978), 3.

⁵⁶⁵ NAZ S1180/13 Dairying, 1929-1930. Memorandum by the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, 26 February, 1931.

continue supplying cream to creameries, soon we will either stop milking the cows or we will make our own butter on the farms and retail it ourselves.⁵⁶⁶

With a considerable number of farmers across the board going into liquidation, the government responded to the marketing difficulties by establishing commodity marketing boards to regulate the marketing of agricultural produce. This led to the passage of legislation which would lead to the formation commodity control boards – the Maize Control Board and the Dairy Industry Board in 1931, the Tobacco Marketing Board and the Cotton Research and Industry Board in 1936, the Cold Storage Commission and the Pig Industry Board in 1937 – whose mandate were to help farmers to bear the burden of exporting.⁵⁶⁷ It should be noted that this was in line with developments in South Africa where statutory bodies were also established in order to regulate the marketing of agricultural commodities.⁵⁶⁸

Although it was partly in response to the desperate situation in which the local dairy industry was trapped, the formation of the Dairy Industry Control Board, itself birthed by the Dairy Industry Control Act of the same year, was also a result of developments within the southern African regional dairying scene, particularly South Africa. A regional dairy conference held in Pretoria in 1928 resolved to encourage that legislation be passed in southern African countries to impose levies upon butter and cheese in order to finance a regional board which would assist in the stabilisation of prices for local producers in member countries.⁵⁶⁹ Pursuant to this, South Africa passed legislation which led to the establishment of the Dairy Control Board in September 1930, which was mandated to impose and collect levies from farmers for the subsidisation of the export burden.⁵⁷⁰

In a move that underlined South Africa's dominant economic position within the region, the South African legislation provided for the participation by adjoining territories in the Union levy and bounty scheme. These territories included Bechuanaland, South-West Africa, Swaziland and

⁵⁶⁶ NAZ 1368/7/48 Monthly Reports, Report of the Bulawayo District Dairy Officer for March, 1930.

⁵⁶⁷ Rukuni, 'The evolution of agricultural policy, 1890-1990', 23.

⁵⁶⁸ For a wider discussion of developments in South Africa during this period see Albertyn Y., 'Upsetting the applecart: Government and food control in the Union of South Africa during World War II, c1939-1948', Masters' Thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 2014, 8-17.

⁵⁶⁹ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Minutes of the Dairy Conference, Pretoria, January 1928 (date not given).

⁵⁷⁰ Albertyn, 'Upsetting the applecart: Government and food control in the Union of South Africa during World War II, c1939-1948', 57.

Southern Rhodesia. The Act provided that these territories adopt similar control legislation and paid a proportion of the levies to the Union Dairy Control Board.”⁵⁷¹ Unwilling to subsidise the export of its surplus for the benefit of its neighbours, South Africa suggested that these territories should be treated as one economic unit for marketing purposes, and that they should all take fair part in adjusting the surplus in order to avoid an invasion of its local markets by surplus butter from South Africa.⁵⁷² Bechuanaland, South-West Africa and Swaziland immediately joined in the voluntary scheme because, like South Africa, they were faced with surplus butter. Under the regional arrangement, contracting territories collected a levy from farmers and paid over to the Central Industries Control Board. The board would then pay the same amount of bounty on each territory’s exports overseas of butter and cheese as it did on South Africa’s exports.⁵⁷³

Anxious to safe-guard Southern Rhodesia’s local producers and its northern markets – which constituted over half of the market for the country’s butter – creamery representatives, under the banner of the Rhodesia Butter Agencies, in 1930 joined the voluntary levy and bounty scheme. Pending the passage of the Dairy Industry Control Act, they established a temporary board to collect levies for onward transmission to South Africa’s Central Industries Control Board. After its establishment in 1931, the DICB collected levies from creameries, cheese factories and farm butter makers, and these levies were used for the payment of bounties on butter and cheese exports.⁵⁷⁴ The inception of the DICB played an important role in providing a cushion to farmers from the vagaries of the prices on the international market. In 1933, for instance, 5 895 948 lb. of butter were exported on which bounties of £136 684 was paid, on an average of 5.5d per lb.⁵⁷⁵ With regard to the 1932 season, Cory observed that without the bounty, local prices would have dropped to as low as 3d or 4d per lb. in 1932 – this being the return for export exclusive of the subsidy – which was paid from the levy funds. Instead, in the same year, the producer received sixpence on each lb. of butterfat sold.⁵⁷⁶ It is thus not surprising that during the first year of the

⁵⁷¹ NAZ S1215/1369/1 Letter from Cory to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, 1 August 1938.

⁵⁷² This explanation was given in the Editorial of the *Rhodesia Agricultural Journal*, 30, 11, (November 1933), 889.

⁵⁷³ *Annual Report of the Dairy Industry Control Board, 1934.*

⁵⁷⁴ Creameries, in turn, would make up for levies by charging all farmers who sent cream and milk to them.

⁵⁷⁵ *Annual Report of the Dairy Industry Control Board, 1933.*

⁵⁷⁶ See the Editorial of the *Rhodesia Agricultural Journal*, 30, 11, (November 1933), 889.

DCIB's operations, the production of butter and cheese reached a level previously not attained in the history of the country.⁵⁷⁷

The levy principle, however, was only useful if the bulk of the country's dairy produce was consumed locally, with only a small fraction being exported. This was because 1d per lb. levy was collected in respect of all creamery butter manufactured; an increase in the quantity of butter exported on bounty against total production effectively meant a reduction in the amount that could be paid as bounty on each lb. of butter exported. Given the limited domestic market discussed in chapter 4, which in turn necessitated the export of most of the country's butter, this scheme could only be regarded as a short-term measure while other fundamental issues (such as the high proportion of low grade butter and high production costs) were addressed. As it turned out, neither the Dairy Industry Act (nor the DCIB it birthed) made provisions for the regulation of the production methods, which would have helped farmers and creameries to realise better prices in the longer term. The inter-territorial levy arrangement was, however, suspended in 1934 following the passage of the Consolidated Dairy Bill in South Africa which, by replacing the South African Dairy Industry Control Act, effectively ended the regional arrangement.⁵⁷⁸ The consequent dissolution of the Central Board in 1935 effectively signalled the end of the levy scheme in Southern Rhodesia. Although the effects of depressed prices had somewhat subsided by then, Southern Rhodesian farmers continued to struggle on the regional markets as a result of the continued production and exportation of low quality butter. Reporting on the crisis, E.R. Jacklin, the chairman of the DICB explained that:

competition was being felt from butter imported from overseas sources at very low prices, and it was apparent that this would result in a serious loss to creameries. The position could either be met either by the abandonment of the market, or by considerable drop in butter fat prices to farmers, or by the payment of bounties. Neither the loss of such important markets nor a severe drop in butter fat prices could be contemplated with equanimity.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁷ The butter production figures for the year reached 1 495 626 lb. while 257 805 lb. of cheese were produced during that year. See, Memorandum by E.R. Jacklin, Chairman, Dairy Industry Control Board, 15 November, 12 June 1932.

⁵⁷⁸ *Annual Report of the Southern Rhodesia Dairy Industry Control Board, 1935.*

⁵⁷⁹ *Annual Report of the Southern Rhodesia Dairy Industry Control Board, 1935.*

The farmers' predicament after the termination of the regional agreement was aggravated by the fact that the DICB did not have powers to fix producer prices prior to the passage of the Dairy Act in 1937. Although farmers received more or less uniform prices because of loose agreements creameries made under the banner of the Rhodesia Butter Agencies (an umbrella body representing creameries), these were subject to fluctuation depending on the operating costs of individual creameries.⁵⁸⁰ The Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries (whose origins are discussed in the next section) noted that farmers had been left exposed at the mercy of "inefficient" creameries, and recommended that the DICB should be granted powers to fix prices, and introduction of a local levy scheme.⁵⁸¹ Thus, the incorporation of a clause which granted the DICB powers to fix prices paid to farmers and wholesale prices in the 1937 Dairy Act should thus be viewed as an attempt to stabilise producer prices after the collapse of the regional agreement.

Moreover, the government availed funds to the DICB for the payment of bounties on butter and cheese exports to the Congo and Portuguese East Africa. Unlike in the maize and beef industries where African production was roped in to subsidise the burden of export, the absence of a strong African sector on the official dairy market meant that the state itself had to shoulder this burden. The fixing of producer prices and the payment of bounties on exports by the government should also be viewed as part of self preservation measures under very difficult circumstances. As happened in beef and maize, the government sought to shield farmers, who constituted a vital political constituency, and the creameries from economic hardships. Prime Minister Godfrey Huggins was aware that he had swept into power in 1933 on the back of virulent opposition to his predecessor over perceived inability to decisively deal with the agricultural crisis.⁵⁸²

Although these efforts, as did the Maize Control Act and the Cold Storage Act of 1937, managed to protect settler farmers from the vagaries of the international markets somewhat, the underlying issues contributing to the dairy industry malaise, however, remained unaddressed by both the state and the farming community. So long as there existed no broad and holistic control measures

⁵⁸⁰ *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries*, 5.

⁵⁸¹ *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries*, 5.

⁵⁸² D.J Murray, *The governmental system of Southern Rhodesia*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 52-53. Also see L.H. Gann and M. Gelfand, *Huggins of Rhodesia: A man and his country*, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1964), 50-54.

to deal with the complex problems that afflicted dairy farming at the production level, whatever interventions were made at the marketing level were bound to meet with limited success. Although the price intervention only just managed to keep the farmers' financial nostrils above the turbulent economic waters of the 1930s, much more needed to be done to improve production methods. The following sections examine factors that led to the introduction of tighter controls of farmers' operations, and the farmers' responses to increased regulation.

Origins of the Dairy Act and control of farmers' operations

As dairy farmers and creameries continued to struggle to compete on the export market, despite the payment of bounties, officials of the Dairy Division began to call for a review of farming operations. For instance, E.R. Jackson, the chairman of the board, requested the Minister of Agriculture to introduce regulations for the inspection and licensing of all cream and butter producers, and the setting up of minimum standards of production, arguing that "the main scope for improvement of the industry lies on the farms."⁵⁸³ F.A. Lammas, the Bulawayo District Dairy Officer, concluded in 1935 that "until the type of dairying is set on a more sanitary foundation, we can hope for very little progress in the dairy industry of this colony."⁵⁸⁴ In 1935 the government appointed a commission of enquiry whose mandate was to investigate the positions of the dairy and pig industry. Although it was one of many agricultural Commissions that were instituted during the 1930s, the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industry was the first to specifically investigate the dairy industry.⁵⁸⁵

It would be incorrect, however, to suggest that the main cause of its establishment was the short term circumstances related to the Depression. The commission represented the apex of thoughts and ideas regarding dairy farming that, although triggered by the immediate Depression-induced marketing crisis, spanned a significantly longer period of time. Indeed, the mandate of the commission was to, among other things, investigate and make recommendations on the operations of the Dairy Industry Control Board, the large amount of low grade cream delivered to

⁵⁸³ *Annual Report of the Dairy Industry Control Board, 1934.*

⁵⁸⁴ NAZ 1368/7/48 Monthly Report of the Bulawayo District Dairy Officer, May 1935.

⁵⁸⁵ Besides the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries, and other commodity specific enquiries, two Commissions covering the position of the country's agricultural sector were instituted during the 1930s decade. *These were the Committee of Enquiry into the Position of the Agricultural Industry, 1935 and the Committee of Enquiry into the Economic Development of the Colony, 1939.*

the creameries and the resultant high percentage of low grade butter produced in the country, the position and impact of farm butter in the industry, and the general means by which the industry could be expanded.⁵⁸⁶ “Regarding the dairying aspect of our cattle industry,” the Minister of Agriculture said when commissioning the committee, “the policy antecedent thus far shows that we have been missing something...this Committee is the first step towards the transformation of the dairy and pig industries.”⁵⁸⁷

The evidence given to the Commission suggests that some settler farmers had come to realise that their own methods, and not only those of African producers, were the chief hindrance to the production of better quality butter. For instance, a member of the Eastern Victoria Farmers’ Association, identified as Richards, admitted that:

There should be an improvement with regard to our milking conditions, our storing and handling of cream, especially from the cow to the separator. I feel that a lot of infection takes place and once that contamination takes place, all the care in the world cannot stop it from deteriorating the final product.⁵⁸⁸

The following exchange between Jan Judson, a farmer who was also a director of the Rhodesia Co-op Creameries and Jacklin, a member of the Committee, captures the general sentiment expressed by both farmers and creameries:

Judson: Low grade cream...it seems that there should be some supervision on the bad conditions in which the milking takes place.

Jacklin: What, in our view, should be done to improve the situation? Regulation, perhaps?

Judson: I would absolutely approve of any regulations. Take the milk production round about here. The milk is sent to Bulawayo. An officer comes out and inspects the milking arrangements, the dairies, and all that sort of thing, but it does not seem to be universal. Some places are missed. But further afield, where cream is produced, there is no supervision at all. As a farmer-producer I welcome the most stringent

⁵⁸⁶ *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries*, 1.

⁵⁸⁷ NAZ S1215/1087/1 Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries: Correspondence, 1934-1935. Letter from the Minister of Agriculture and Lands to William Purdie Currie, Chairman of the Committee, 18 September, 1934.

⁵⁸⁸ NAZ ZAR 2/1/4 Written Evidence to the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries, Fort Victoria, 15 August 1935.

regulations in regard to this, and I do not think any right-minded man would object.⁵⁸⁹

Lammas concurred that the present control mechanisms would not bear the expected results for as long as farmers' operations were left unregulated. He stated that "if you could get farm dairy inspection going properly, it would tend towards more economical production of cream."⁵⁹⁰

While the majority of farmers had come to realise that farmers' production methods needed to be regulated, a few others, appeared to be still in denial. Arguing that settler cream production methods were sufficiently good, they attributed the high proportion of low grade butter to African producers, whose cream was mixed with settler cream, leading to 'contamination'. The testimony of one farmer, F.R. Peach, is particularly revealing of the racial prejudice which tainted their views:

A lot of it (low grade butter) is from native creameries. It is produced under insanitary conditions. The only thing I advocate is that native cream should be branded as 'native cream' and butter branded as 'native butter'. Also, a European collects the cream from the kraals. Europeans supply the natives with separators and cans and go round and pick up the cream. It is produced under the most insanitary conditions.⁵⁹¹

It is thus evident that a section of the settler community, still trapped in the racial discourse of the time, was unwilling to admit publicly the inadequacy of their methods, and opted to lay the blame on African producers. Yet, such views persisted despite the fact that, as illustrated in the previous chapter, farm inspections by officials of the Dairy Division had already indicated that both settler and African methods needed to be improved if dairy farmers were to successfully penetrate the international markets.

⁵⁸⁹ NAZ ZAR 2/1/1 Written Evidence to the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries, Bulawayo, 2 September 1935.

⁵⁹⁰ NAZ ZAR 2/1/1 Written Evidence to the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries, Bulawayo, 28 August 1935.

⁵⁹¹ NAZ ZAR 2/1/1 F.R. Peach, Written Evidence to the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries, Bulawayo, 28 August 1935.

Notwithstanding the opposition of a small section of settler farmers, the Committee recommended that all producers needed to meet certain official standards of sanitation and hygiene.⁵⁹² It had concluded that the focus on creamery processes during the 1920s had missed the point since the large amount of low grade cream produced was primarily due to the methods of producers.⁵⁹³ The corollary to this observation was the espousal of regulations under the Dairy Act, which provided for the compulsory registration of all urban dairies, both white-owned and African owned, and the increased inspection of rural dairies. The specific nature of the regulations, their impact on both settler and African producers, and their responses is discussed in the following section.

Compulsory registration of milk and cream producers and farmer responses

The passage of the Dairy Act in 1937 saw the adoption of a stringent set of requirements which farmers needed to meet in order to be allowed to supply milk and cream to processing concerns. It stipulated that all dairy premises throughout the colony from which milk, cream, butter, cheese or ice cream was sold or supplied for sale must comply with certain minimum hygienic requirements, while all dairies from which milk or cream was sold, for consumption as whole milk or cream, in a municipal area or area controlled by a Town Management Board, had to be registered.⁵⁹⁴ In such cases, registration was to be effected by the Chief Dairy Officer, with Bulawayo being the only exception as the powers of registration were left in the hands of the municipality.⁵⁹⁵

In response to the old tradition of milking in kraals, and also in line with new sanitary standards prescribed in established countries such as Australia and England, the Dairy Act stated that milking operations must be carried out in an approved place, including a properly constructed cow-shed, a simple lean to shed with a concrete floor or an open milking kraal with a concrete or earthen floor; such kraal, however, had to be kept solely for the purpose, that is, cattle may not be kept therein at night. Also, the legislation stipulated that the milking place must be situated at

⁵⁹² *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries*, 7-9.

⁵⁹³ *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries*, 7.

⁵⁹⁴ J. Cory, 'The Dairy Industry', *The Rhodesia Agricultural Journal*, XLIV, 4, (July-August 1947), 276.

⁵⁹⁵ Cory, 'The Dairy Industry', 277.

least 300 feet from any residential quarters and at least 100 feet away from any other kraal.⁵⁹⁶ As shown in the picture below, milking sheds did not need to be sophisticated or expensive. As Cory suggested, these would cost no more than £20, considering that it would be thatched with grass (which was cheaper and more readily available).⁵⁹⁷



Figure 2: An example of a milking shed that farmers were advised to construct after 1937.⁵⁹⁸

The same legislation stated that facilities had to be provided for the proper cleaning and sterilisation by steam or boiling of all dairy utensils such as milking cans and buckets, while a separate room had to be constructed specifically for the straining, cooling and storage of milk and cream. This room needed to have a cement floor, be fly and rat proof, be well ventilated, be provided with a ceiling, and had to be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected on a regular basis.⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁶ These regulations were summarised by Cory in 1947, who had become the Chief Dairy Officer. See, J. R. Cory, 'The Dairy Industry', *Rhodesia Agricultural Journal*, XLIV, 4, (July-August, 1947), 275-276. Bulawayo was left in the hands of the Municipality largely because, in the eyes of the Dairy Division, the town had proved to have a satisfactory inspection system.

⁵⁹⁷ J. Cory, 'An Experiment in feeding of cows', *Rhodesia Agricultural Journal*, 27, (July 1930), 703.

⁵⁹⁸ NAZ 637/12637, A model milking shed.

⁵⁹⁹ Cory, 'The Dairy Industry', 276.

Premises which were not compliant were barred from producing milk and cream for commercial purposes.

It should be noted that the overarching aim of these regulations and, indeed, the entire legislation was the elimination of part-time cream and butter producers who only produced cream and butter in order to earn an occasional monthly cheque, especially during the summer months when their beef cows calved. It also sought to establish a professional, well trained corps of dairy farmers in the country. However, although these were arguably the most important measures taken in the dairy industry thus far, – considering that low quality products had been a long-standing problem in the industry – most settlers who had the desire to become *bona fide* dairy farmers still lacked the key to full time professional dairying: capital.

Indeed, a significant number of farmers lamented that their inability to access dairy cows and basic dairying implements – for lack of adequate funding – was one of the chief impediments to their operations. As early as 1930, the government had expressed its awareness of the financial problem facing farmers. Hamilton observed that:

Most farmers who are at present sending cream to the creameries are in such a straightened financial position that to compel them to provide such premises would have the effect of driving them out of business altogether, and this would deprive them of what at present is their source of livelihood.⁶⁰⁰

As a reflection of official thinking during the early 1930s, Hamilton's statement above is noteworthy for two reasons. Firstly, it serves as a belated and inadequate defence of the lack of regulation in the 1920s. Secondly, it explains new efforts by the state to grant settler farmers with financial and technical assistance with which to improve their herds as well as to provide proper premises and implements.

The DICB decided to grant small loans to white farmers of up to a maximum of £20 without interest. These loans, which were recoverable by stop orders through creameries and cheese creameries, were given for the purpose of “assisting farmers to improve their dairy buildings or

⁶⁰⁰ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Regulations for and registration of farm dairies, 1930-32: Letter from Hamilton to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, 7 February 1930.

to purchase modern dairy utensils.”⁶⁰¹ This was a temporary stop gap measure, while awaiting the passage of the Dairy Act. This farm loan scheme was short-lived – lasting only four years – and was financed by a modest budget of only £500 per annum.⁶⁰² Considering the cost of constructing milking sheds and purchasing separators and cooling utensils, which totalled up to £70, the scale of this programme was inadequate.⁶⁰³

A much bigger scheme was introduced for white farmers in 1938, after the adoption of regulations to govern cream and milk production standards. Under this scheme, the government, through the DICB, offered farmers considerably bigger loans for the purchase of implements. If a farmer required more than £50 for constructing milking sheds and purchasing separators, officials of the Board would visit the farmer’s premises for evaluation and, depending on the officials’ report, funds would be made available through the creamery to which the farmer sent cream and milk. No such visit from Board officials was necessary if the farmer required £50 or less for buying small utensils such as a few cans and buckets. In both cases, however, the creamery would purchase the apparatus on behalf of the producer.⁶⁰⁴ In turn, a stop order account would be opened by the creamery leading to the deduction of some money from the farmer’s earnings for cream and milk.⁶⁰⁵ By 1943, 138 settler farmers had accessed funds through the scheme.⁶⁰⁶ This was intended to professionalise the industry and to eliminate dilettantes.

This sector actively resisted the introduction of minimum requirements for commercial dairy farm operations, and the compulsory registration system for farmers supplying in urban areas. Evidence suggests that some livestock owners, in collaboration with some private depots, attempted to elude the registration system. This was done either through depot owners seeking permission to continue receiving milk and cream from unregistered producers from the government, or producers clandestinely delivering milk and cream to depots without official

⁶⁰¹ *Annual Report of the Dairy Industry Control Board*, 1934.

⁶⁰² *Annual Report of the Dairy Industry Control Board*, 1934.

⁶⁰³ NAZ S1193/D1/2 Regulations for and registration of farm dairies, 1930-32: Letter from Hamilton to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, 7 February 1930.

⁶⁰⁴ NAZ 1368/48 Chief Dairy Officer’s File: Letter from Cory, Chief Dairy Officer, to R.E. Nicol, Assistant Dairy Officer, 13 February 1938.

⁶⁰⁵ NAZ 1368/48 Chief Dairy Officer’s File: Letter from Cory, Chief Dairy Officer, to R.E. Nicol, Assistant Dairy Officer, 13 February 1938.

⁶⁰⁶ NAZ DICB Minutes: Minutes of a meeting held on 24 June 1944.

records. Writing to the Chief Dairy Officer in 1940, the Fort Victoria District Dairy Officer informed him that “it has come to our attention that two depots have continued to receive cream from unregistered dairy producers.”⁶⁰⁷ Most of these producers, he added, “had expressed an unwillingness to get themselves registered, as dairy production is not one of the main agricultural activities on their premises.”⁶⁰⁸ The incidence of such practices subsided significantly after the Dairy Division threatened to annul the registration of conniving depots.

It is not surprising, therefore, that some depots in Fort Victoria sought official permission to receive milk and cream from unregistered producers, citing the diminishing cream and milk receipts from farmers since the mid-1930s. For instance, a depot proprietor from Fort Victoria, Curtis, wrote to the District Dairy Officer initially applying for a registration licence on behalf of Browne, who was one of his main suppliers.⁶⁰⁹ After his supplier was denied registration because of the lack of infrastructural improvements at the farm premises, Curtis, however, successfully applied for a temporary exemption from complying with the regulations for his supplier, arguing that his depot would have been robbed of its principal supplier if Browne were pushed out of the cream business.⁶¹⁰ Emerging out of this scenario, however, is a situation in which some livestock owners (despite not being interested in engaging in dairy farming on a full time basis,) wanted to continue earning extra income from part time dairy farming. Indeed, even after getting a six month exemption, Browne still had not constructed dairy premises, leading to the deregistration of his operations.⁶¹¹

The Dairy Act and African commercial dairy

The nature and impact of state assistance to African agriculture has been a subject of active scholarly attention. Colonial historians such as Gann have argued that the state played a

⁶⁰⁷ NAZ 1215/1363/1 Inspection of and Registration of Dairies, 1940: Letter from the District Dairy Officer to Cory, Chief Dairy Officer, 26 September 1940.

⁶⁰⁸ NAZ 1215/1363/1 Inspection of and Registration of Dairies, 1940: Letter from the District Dairy Officer to Cory, Chief Dairy Officer, 26 September 1940.

⁶⁰⁹ NAZ 1215/1363/1 Inspection of and Registration of Dairies, 1940: Letter from Curtis to the District Dairy Officer, 30 September 1940.

⁶¹⁰ NAZ 1215/1363/1 Inspection of and Registration of Dairies, 1940: Letter from Curtis to the District Dairy Officer, 16 October 1940.

⁶¹¹ NAZ 1215/1363/1 Inspection of and Registration of Dairies, 1940: Letter from the District Dairy Officer to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, 18 May 1941.

liberator's role by setting aside some funds for African 'development' by emphasizing the little funds that were expended on African technical training.⁶¹² Yudelman has suggested that, in the final analysis, low productivity in the African sector was generally caused by cultural patterns of livestock management and land tenure.⁶¹³ These views, however, ignore the fact that colonial agricultural policy was deliberately aimed at promoting white – and not African – agriculture. Machingaidze has argued that although settler farmers (and also some African farmers) sought to build up resources of capital from profits, settler farmers had an advantage in that the state extended financial assistance and extension services which ensured that African agriculture would not compete with white agriculture.⁶¹⁴ In any case, African agriculture did not fall under the Ministry of Agriculture, but was administered by the Department of Native Affairs, with the result that the two sectors did not develop along the same lines. Jocelyn Alexander has argued that the interventions of the NAD, which fell under the rubric of 'technical development' from the late 1920s onwards, and the legislative interventions in individual agricultural industries in the 1930s were aimed at "undercutting African competition and subsidise white production."⁶¹⁵ Using dairy farming as a window, this section examines the impact of the Dairy Act on African commercial production. It is demonstrated here that African inability to comply with regulations had nothing to do with general inability or cultural limitations, but was necessarily a result of lack of access to public resources that were availed to white farmers.

While white dairy farmers had access to financial and technical support, which in turn helped them to comply with provisions of the Dairy Act, African farmers were excluded from such schemes. This effectively meant that only white dairymen and a small number of 'middle-class' Africans in Native Purchase Areas (NPAs) (particularly the Msengezi and Dewure Purchase areas) were in a position to comply with the requirements of the Dairy Act. As shown in chapter 3 of this thesis, NPAs had been set aside for 'progressive farmers' as a political sop to "advanced natives for the loss of their rights to buy non-reserve land anywhere in the colony of Southern

⁶¹² Gann, *A history of Southern Rhodesia*, 332.

⁶¹³ Yudelman, *Africans on the land*, 100-101.

⁶¹⁴ Machingaidze, 'The development of settler capitalist agriculture in Southern Rhodesia with particular reference to the role of the state, 1908-1939', 4.

⁶¹⁵ J. Alexander, *The unsettled land: state making and the politics of land in Zimbabwe, 1893-2003*, (Oxford: James Currey, 2006), 24.

Rhodesia.”⁶¹⁶ However, as Shutt argues, the level of agricultural productivity in these areas was, in comparison with white agriculture, quite low.⁶¹⁷ Writing to the Secretary to the Prime Minister’s Office, the Secretary for Native Affairs informed that “the sale of milk and cream to depots and creameries by natives had considerably gone down. The percentage of native cream and milk at the creameries and factories has gone below 5%.”⁶¹⁸ Although most of those sending milk and cream to creameries from the Msengezi Purchase Area were local Africans, some dairymen from Dewure were not of Southern Rhodesian descent. A considerable number of them were Sotho, Xhosa and Zulu migrants who had moved onto the NPAs after being displaced from land they had bought prior to the passage of the Land Apportionment Act.⁶¹⁹ As Mujere points out, most of these immigrants had used their links with the Dutch Reformed Church missionaries to acquire education and capital, which they used to purchase land.⁶²⁰ As most of them were businessmen, or were employed by government, they used their relatively stronger financial position to enter commercial dairying.

These farmers’ position prior to the passage of the Land Apportionment Act had, however, been stronger than it became after 1930, when they were displaced from their original areas, which caused them to buy land in the Purchase Areas. Whereas they were initially able to construct modern commercial dairy enterprises through combining their resources prior to their displacement after the Land Apportionment Act, such joint ventures were generally discouraged by the state, with the result that farmers bought land and engaged in agriculture individually.⁶²¹ Nevertheless, records show that some individuals from Msengezi and Dewure Purchase Areas had their dairy premises and operations approved by officials of the Board, and thus continued to produce cream and milk for the official market after the passage of the Dairy Act.⁶²² In 1942, the

⁶¹⁶ A.P. Cheater, ‘Formal and informal rights to land in Zimbabwe’s Black freehold areas: A case study from Msengezi’, *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute*, 52, 3, (1982), 77.

⁶¹⁷ A.K. Shutt, “‘We are the best poor farmers’: Purchase Area Farmers and economic differentiation in Southern Rhodesia, c1925-1980”, PhD Thesis, University of California, 1995, 56.

⁶¹⁸ NAZ S1542/T11 Milk Sales by Africans, 1936-1942: Letter from the Secretary for Native Affairs to the Secretary to the Prime Minister, 18 April 1939.

⁶¹⁹ Mujere, ‘Autochthons, strangers, modernizing educationists, and progressive farmers’, 73.

⁶²⁰ J. Mujere, ‘Evangelists, Migrants and Progressive Farmers: Basotho as ‘Progressive Africans’ in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1927’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 40, 2, (2014), 296-302.

⁶²¹ Mujere, ‘Autochthons, strangers, modernizing educationists, and progressive farmers’, 78.

⁶²² NAZ S1542/T11 Milk Sales by Africans, 1936-1942: Letter from the Secretary for Native Affairs to the Secretary to the Prime Minister, 18 April 1939.

Secretary for Native Affairs observed that while African contribution to creameries had fallen significantly:

A handful of Africans in Msengezi and Dewure had their premises and methods approved for cream production, and this is a signal that Africans may still contribute to this industry, if they are progressive enough to abandon old tribal methods...⁶²³

Also remarkable in the official's thinking is his view that the inability of Africans to comply with the regulations was solely an indication of individuals' level of 'progressiveness', and not the discriminatory policies of the time. More than anything, this was a case of availability of financial and technical resources and knowledge.

If only a few African farmers in the Purchase Areas continued to send cream to creameries and depots after the passage of the Dairy Act, then virtually all Africans living in the reserves had ceased to do so by 1939. The Secretary for Native Affairs intimated that "native cream sales (on the official market) have been stopped."⁶²⁴ This situation, as he explained, came about as a result of the fact that "the methods of nearly all African cream producers have been found to be in contravention of the Dairy Act."⁶²⁵ While the fact of the unacceptability of African premises under the new regulations is indisputable, state officials seemed reluctant to acknowledge that the major cause of the situation was the paucity of financial schemes to help Africans to comply with the regulations, despite African contribution to the state treasury through taxes. In this regard, therefore, it may be safely argued that although the Dairy Act did not explicitly pronounce the banishment of African farmers, its implementation led to the exclusion of Africans from commercial dairy farming. Indeed, to the extent that the government helped settler producers – and not African farmers – to comply with its provisions, events that followed the passage of the Act effectively ended African reserve participation on the official dairy market, a sector which had hitherto endured the impact of other negative factors such as land and cattle losses and displacement during the early years of colonial occupation. In this way, settler

⁶²³ NAZ S1542/T11 Milk Sales by Africans, 1936-1942: Letter from the Secretary for Native Affairs (name illegible) to the Superintendent for Natives, 18 June 1942.

⁶²⁴ NAZ S1542/T11 Milk Sales by Africans, 1936-1942: Letter from the Secretary for Native Affairs to the Secretary to the Prime Minister, 18 April 1939.

⁶²⁵ NAZ S1542/T11 Milk Sales by Africans, 1936-1942: Letter from the Secretary for Native Affairs to the Secretary to the Prime Minister, 18 April 1939.

consumers' complaints about the unsuitability of African dairy farming and settler farmers' fears of African agricultural competition in general were quelled.⁶²⁶

African responses to exclusion

The exclusion of Africans from the official market should not, however, be misconstrued to mean that African dairy production and marketing came to a standstill. Their inability to market cream and milk on the official market contributed to increased illicit African milk trade on the mines and centres where a ready market existed among mine workers. Employing what James Scott described as 'weapons of the weak' – a situation in which peasants respond, in subterranean ways, to authoritarian state policies through smuggling, theft and pilfering, among other things – African dairy producers smuggled their produce into the mine compounds and other centres where a market existed.⁶²⁷ Many producers admitted to transporting fresh milk (depending on distance) and sour milk from the reserves to nearby mines and urban settlements where a ready market existed. Referring to the mid 1940s, one informer from the Mberengwa district of Midlands reminisced:

My mother would send us to Zvishavane (then Shabanie) to sell milk and other goods. We carried milk in clay pots and plastic containers. Since we knew that it was illegal, one had to be careful not to be caught, both on the way to the mine, and also while we were on the compound itself. We would visit mine compounds at night, or sometimes customers would leave their rooms to come to our meeting places. While it was common for one to be detained for a few days if caught by authorities, in most cases the milk would be confiscated and spilt in full view of the owner. Although some workers at the mine requested for fresh milk, most of the milk we sold was sour.⁶²⁸

Although their customers were predominantly African, there is evidence that shows that some white consumers did buy from these itinerant African traders. As another source added:

The great majority of our customers were blacks who worked at the mine, and others working in white owned shops. However, a few whites would ask us to provide them with sour milk and cream. In most cases, white customers would tell us never to mention that they purchased African milk if we were caught selling

⁶²⁶ Palmer described the 1930s as a period that was characterized by settler fears of competition. See Palmer, *'Land and racial domination in Rhodesia'*, 195-205.

⁶²⁷ See J. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 251-256.

⁶²⁸ Interview with Rhoda Hove, born 1933, Mataruse area of Mberengwa, 16 July, 2013.

milk. Besides milk, we sold many other items such as fresh mealies and groundnuts during the harvesting seasons.⁶²⁹

These developments should be viewed within the context of Africans who were not only evading the Dairy Act, but an entire trade policy in which, as Kramer has outlined, required African traders to acquire traders' licences.⁶³⁰ While dairy products had been part of the African trade system even within the rural sector and begun to take shape with the establishment of urban and peri-urban areas where an African population existed from the early period of colonial occupation, this phenomenon became even more widespread from the late 1930s onwards.

The secretive and yet increasingly widespread sale of milk on mine compounds by Africans, particularly on the Shabanie Mine compound eventually came to the attention of state officials. Writing to the Secretary for Agriculture, Cory acknowledged that "the sale of milk on mine compounds and other urban spaces by natives has become pervasive on mine compounds in the southern parts of the colony."⁶³¹ This system, he argued, needed to be addressed, not least because "these illegal native traders have begun to sell milk to European consumers."⁶³² This realisation triggered debate among colonial officials on the most appropriate response to illicit milk sales. On the one hand, Dr Ireland, the Medical Officer for Shabanie and the Acting Native Commissioner for the area, albeit for entirely different reasons, argued for the relaxation of the provisions of the Dairy Act as it applied to Africans selling milk on the mine compound. In his push for Africans to be allowed to sell milk, Dr Ireland contended that "it should be within the discretion of the Dairy Officers, without insisting on strict observation of the provisions of the Act." The root of his argument emanated from his belief that:

Children in the Shabani mine compound would suffer from ill health from their inability to receive a certain amount of milk as a result of cessation of purchase of this product by their parents, from native residents in the vicinity, and similar conditions probably apply elsewhere.⁶³³

⁶²⁹ Interview with Musaengana Machita, born 1920s, Mataruse, Mberengwa, 20 July 2013.

⁶³⁰ See chapter 2 of E. Kramer, 'The evolution of policy', 96-134.

⁶³¹ NAZ S1542/T11 Milk Sales by Africans, 1936-1942: Letter from Cory to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, 10 February 1939.

⁶³² NAZ S1542/T11 Milk Sales by Africans, 1936-1942: Letter from Cory to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, 10 February 1939.

⁶³³ NAZ S1542/T11 Milk Sales by Africans, 1936-1942: Letter from G.A. Taylor, on behalf of the Medical Director, to the Chief Native Commissioner, 2 January 1940.

The concern for the nutrition of African children on mine compounds expressed by Dr Ireland, however, smacked of the old paternalist attitudes by the colonial state. Similar attitudes manifested itself in South Africa through the introduction of feeding schemes intended for malnourished children in which milk and vegetables were distributed during the 1940s.⁶³⁴ Very little attention was paid to the root cause of malnutrition in rural areas. Regarding the risk of disease outbreaks as a result of contaminated milk, Dr Ireland added that:

For generations the natives have been consumers from early childhood and that in consequence of consuming a contaminated product for many years, it is more probable the native built up a resistance to casual milk borne diseases...the only control I suggest is that milk offered for sale by natives should be examined at regular intervals for visible dirt.⁶³⁵

He further suggested that African producers would instead need to be forced to use cleaned metal utensils during the milking, storage and marketing of their milk.⁶³⁶ Arguing from a financial viewpoint, this proposal received the support of the Native Department. The Acting Native Commissioner for Shabanie suggested that barring African milk sales would be unfair not only to African traders, but to his Department because he was also expected to collect taxes from the same Africans whose source of income was being blocked.⁶³⁷

The Dairy Division, on the other hand, was opposed to the idea of legalising or even tolerating African milk sales on mine compounds. Lammas strongly expressed himself against the idea of relaxing regulations in the interest of the Africans in the mine compound. After visiting a number of African premises where milk was produced for sale, he averred that:

the native in that area at least, is no more enlightened today than he was years ago. The (African) dairyman lives in a very primitive state, he has only one hut which is used as sleeping and eating quarters, and would of course be used as a dairy....In conclusion, I would suggest that if the native in that area is to be permitted to sell milk, the regulations should be relaxed entirely as I do not think it

⁶³⁴ See, D. Wylie, *Starving on a full stomach: Hunger and the triumph of cultural racism in modern South Africa*, (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 203-237.

⁶³⁵ NAZ S1542/T11 Milk Sales by Africans, 1936-1942: Letter from G.A. Taylor, on behalf of the Medical Director, to the Chief Native Commissioner, 2 January 1940.

⁶³⁶ NAZ S1542/T11 Milk Sales by Africans, 1936-1942: Letter from the Medical Officer to the Director of Native Education, 1 July 1939.

⁶³⁷ NAZ S1542/T11 Milk Sales by Africans, 1936-1942: Letter from the Acting Native Commissioner, Shabanie, to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, 4 January 1940.

possible to exercise any effective control over production...there would appear to be no advantage in this Department examining the milk for the presence of dirt.⁶³⁸

A compromise was reached, eventually. The Minister of Agriculture, after meeting with Ireland and officials from the Native Affairs and Dairy Division, agreed that temporary measures be taken to allow Africans to sell milk on mine compounds, on condition that this milk would only be sold to other Africans. The agreement was that enforcement of requirements would not be feasible, particularly because of the prevalence of the clandestine trade. Part of the resolution, however, was that methods of cleanliness would be inculcated onto African milk producers gradually, but as rapidly as circumstances would allow. The thinking that Africans needed instruction on hygiene and sanitation in order to comply with regulations was, however, flawed. Without equal access to financial and technical assistance, Africans, like white producers, could not be expected to erect the required infrastructure. Nevertheless, medical views, supported by financial interests of the Native Department, triumphed over the Dairy Division. As was the case in South Africa from the 1940s, these medical views which Wylie described as an “apolitical version of the malnutrition syndrome”⁶³⁹, somewhat influenced state policy. Thus, milk trade between Africans on mines and white farms continued to occur throughout the course of the 1940s and 1950s. As chapter 6 shows, figures of this trade were not factored into official data of the dairy industry.

Two conclusions may be drawn from the above. Firstly, through circumventing the law and engaging in illegal milk trade, African dairy producers carved a niche for themselves within the colonial hegemonic system, which forced the state to eventually endorse – albeit reluctantly – their activities. Secondly, besides the importance of granting Africans an opportunity to earn money (which, in turn, would help them to meet their financial obligations to the state), as well as African nutritional issues which were considered in allowing Africans to sell milk in contravention of the regulations for as long as the settler community was not part of the consumers, the state not only acknowledged the existence of a dual dairy marketing system, but effectively contributed towards its sustenance.

⁶³⁸ NAZ S1542/T11 Milk Sales by Africans, 1936-1942: Letter from F. Lammas, District Dairy Officer to the Chief Dairy Officer, 21 October 1939.

⁶³⁹ Wylie, *Starving on a full stomach: Hunger and the triumph of cultural racism in modern South Africa*, 200.

“Cream should be sent to creameries!” White farmers, creameries and the farm butter debate

One of the topical issues that arose during the 1930s was the production of farm butter, whose quantities had begun to adversely affect the quantities of cream sent to creameries for the manufacture of cream butter. As cream prices began to fall, an increasing number of producers began to bypass creameries, opting, instead, to produce butter on their premises and marketing it themselves as farm butter.⁶⁴⁰ This section examines the origins of the problem of increasing farm butter production in the country during the 1930s, and its attendant problems it spewed on the dairy industry. It also outlines the measures that were taken to control farm butter making, particularly the impact of the Dairy Act of 1937, on farmers, and the public discourse that followed its passing.

As noted in chapter 2, most settler cattle owners initially churned butter on their own premises during the first two decades of colonial occupation, particularly before creameries were established. Although it played to the advantage of beef producers who earned more through the sale of farm butter, this phenomenon created a couple of problems for the industry in general. First, because it was relatively cheaper than creamery butter, hence, as farm butter glutted the market, it drove creameries out of business. This happened especially during the summer seasons when most cows calved.⁶⁴¹ Secondly, the quality of Farm butter was comparatively inferior, thus exposing consumers to potential health hazards. Although it had begun during the early 1890s, his phenomenon had, nevertheless, begun to subside during the post First World War period largely as a result of the increasing number of creameries that had been established as the dairy industry began to take shape. Indeed, throughout the period between 1921 and 1929 the percentage of farm butter on the market showed a decreasing tendency, with a corresponding increase in creamery butter.

⁶⁴⁰ Although some of the butter was marketed at the farm, particularly on farms that were situated a considerable distance from urban centres, the bulk of farm butter was seldom sold direct to consumers, and instead farmers would package it and send it to retailing agents who, in turn, sold it to consumers.

⁶⁴¹ *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Dairy and Pig industries*, 1935.

By the early 1930s, however, it had become increasingly evident that a general sense of disillusionment and dissatisfaction pervaded farmers' attitude towards creameries' operations. The increasing volumes of cream which creameries had been handling began to subside considerably during the 1930s, while farm butter quantities evinced a growing trajectory. Although this was partly due to the general decrease in dairy output, as a result of erratic rainfall patterns alluded to in the previous section, also contributing to the decrease in creamery butter production was what farmers perceived to be adverse marketing conditions at the creameries.⁶⁴² As a result of the often low grade cream the ranchers made, they found it more financially rewarding to avoid creameries, and, in the process causing excessive seasonal competition between creamery butter and farm butter in summer.

As early as 1930, dairy officials had begun to lament the ever increasing amount of farm butter on the market. The Senior Officer in Animal Husbandry commented that 500 00lb. of farm butter produced in 1930 represented a "worrying increase", before warning that:

Producers should realise that, however, that farm butter is not an exportable product, and that it is only through the expansion of the creamery system that permanent extension and development of the export butter can be achieved. An increase in the output of farm butter reacts to the detriment of the industry as a whole.⁶⁴³

The proportion of farm butter to total production, however, continued to increase, so much that it had swelled from 16% in 1930 to 25% by 1935.⁶⁴⁴ As creameries continued to handle decreasing amounts of cream, calls for intervention grew louder, with Hamilton warning that "the continued large production of farm butter is a serious menace to the dairy industry in the colony."⁶⁴⁵ Such complaints, however, would not yield the desired results as long as the circumstances that pushed farmers to bypass creameries were not addressed.

The result was that an increasing number – nearly a third – of all producers began to bypass creameries altogether, instead, opting to produce and package butter on their premises for the

⁶⁴² The major complaints amongst farmers were the low grades they received from creameries (which they perceived to be unfair), and the low prices paid for cream as a result of the depressed international markets, which Southern Rhodesia had begun to enter from the mid 1920s.

⁶⁴³ *Annual Report of the Senior Animal Husbandry Officer, 1930.*

⁶⁴⁴ See figures in *Annual Report of the Senior Animal Husbandry, 1930, and 1935.*

⁶⁴⁵ *Annual Report of the Chief Dairy Officer, 1935.*

market. Many of the farmers who ventured into farm butter making defended their decision as being influenced by unsatisfactory prices paid by creameries for cream. What made farm butter making an attractive proposition was the fact that unlike creamery butter whose price was determined by creameries, farm butter could be sold direct to the market at any price. Hence, farmers could earn more by marketing farm butter through their own agency and retailers at prices higher than what creameries paid yet lower than the retail price of creamery butter. In this way, farm butter production became an easy avenue through which farmers could eschew the tightly regulated but unprofitable butter marketing system, which at this time was reeling under the high cost of participating on the export market. A member of the Chipinga based Gazaland Farmers' Association explained his entrance into the farm butter business thus:

It is the grade of the butter fat during the flush season that induced me to make butter. It is simply because the price goes so low. I sell it as butter or ghee. I sell it to the stores for the Indians' consumption.⁶⁴⁶

Another farmer, identified as Mr Tarr, from the Charter District Farmers' Association explained his change-over from sending to the creamery to making butter himself thus:

I have always sent to the creamery before. I made up my mind I would support the creamery and I followed the creamery's instructions as well as I could. I thought for a few years I would try making butter and I found it was very satisfactory. I always got the top price, and I found that I made about 25% more by turning it to butter than by sending it to creameries. I send the butter to the stores. They pay me 1/6d per lb...I found it paid better, and that is why I stick to it.⁶⁴⁷

Farmers' complaints over low prices, however, were hypocritical. A comparative analysis of the prices paid to farmers for cream and butter fat, however, shows that Southern Rhodesian dairymen were in a much better position than their counterparts in South Africa and Australia. South African farmers, for instance, received an average of 4d less than what Southern Rhodesian farmers received for all grades of butter between 1935 and 1937.⁶⁴⁸ By and large, this was a consequence of the fact that South Africa continued to experience huge surpluses – which needed to be exported – at a time when production levels had begun to fall in Southern Rhodesia

⁶⁴⁶ NAZ ZAR 2/1/5 Evidence by Odendaal, Gazaland Farmers' Association: Written Evidence to the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries, Chipinga, 5 August 1935.

⁶⁴⁷ NAZ ZAR 2/1/1 Evidence by Tarr: Written Evidence to the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries, Bulawayo, 27 August, 1935.

⁶⁴⁸ NAZ S1215/1368/7/48 Minutes of the Conference on Dairying Interests of the Union of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, Salisbury, 1938.

from 1933 until 1936 as a result of inconsistent rainfall patterns that characterised most parts of the country.⁶⁴⁹ Indeed, the Rhodesia Butter Agencies conceded that, had it not been for the high cost of transport, they would have considered importing cream from South Africa.⁶⁵⁰ Farmers on Australia's Atherton Tablelands also fared badly during the 1930s. They received 7d and 9d per lb. of butterfat for their cream, which, on average, was about 2d less than Southern Rhodesian farmers were paid.⁶⁵¹

Further contributing to the high incidence of farmers avoiding creameries in preference to farm butter making was the grading system at the creameries towards which, as outlined in the previous chapter, farmers had held misgivings for a long time. The small difference in price between the various grades of cream also made its bearing upon the amount of low grade cream produced, but when the difference became too great, the low grade cream producers turned to the manufacture of farm butter. With most of the cream produced deemed to be third grade, and thus fetching lower prices, unsatisfied farmers found it more profitable to produce direct for the market. For instance, a Gwelo farmer complained in 1935 that three-quarters of his cream was deemed to be third grade by the Gwelo Creamery, a situation he attributed to "either some little defect in the grading mechanism, or (in) the grader himself."⁶⁵²

The farmers' reluctance to send cream to creameries must also be viewed within the context of their attempts to eschew a regulated system, in preference of the relative freedom they enjoyed in the production and marketing of farm butter. In contrast to the legislated procedures governing creameries, farmers made butter at their premises under no restriction. They could also package and market their article in any way they thought could best help sell their produce to unsuspecting consumers. The majority of farm butter was packaged in wrappers which had

⁶⁴⁹ *Report of the Chief Dairy Officer*, 1936.

⁶⁵⁰ NAZ ZAR 2/1/1 Written Evidence to the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries, Bulawayo, 27 August, 1935.

⁶⁵¹ Gilmore, 'Kill, cure or strangle', 166.

⁶⁵² See evidence by F.B. Morrisby, a Gwelo-based farmer. NAZ ZAR 2/1/1 Written Evidence to the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries, Gwelo, 14 August, 1935.

“attractive, but misleading” inscriptions such as “Finest Farm Butter”, or simply “First Grade Butter”.⁶⁵³

Without any regulatory framework governing the production and marketing of farm butter, farmers took advantage of this window of opportunity to enter the market themselves. Indeed, besides pushing creameries out of business especially during the flush seasons when most cows calved, the creation of such an unregulated parallel marketing system, potentially posed a health hazard to consumers. As one farmer candidly opined:

It seems to me the farmer should come under the same regulation as apply to creameries, inspection of his butter and grading. At the present time, so far as I know, all farm butter is labelled first grade and it is sent into Bulawayo for sale. Many farmers are up to neck [in debt] with the merchants and the merchants have to take over produce to cut down the account. It does not matter what is in the wrapper. It is never inspected. All butter I send in is marked ‘First Grade’ and I take the price – I have a right – but I have no objection to its inspection. The buyer takes the description on the label as correct.⁶⁵⁴

By the mid-1930s, the relationship between farmers and private creameries had nearly broken down. Always suspicious of creamery concerns, some farmers’ organisations began to clamour for the shutting down of some creameries, arguing that most of them were not offering any “useful” service to their communities. The farmers’ contemptuous attitude towards creameries is captured by Govan Verran, a member of the Gazaland Farmers’ Association, who said “it is our idea that we want to give up the creameries because of the low price. We are not contemplating starting a new creamery.”⁶⁵⁵ Edwards, from the same association, was even more scathing:

Many creameries in other countries have broken down because of mismanagement; I do not think there is any reason for the continued subsidisation of creameries in this country. There is a need to first find out the reasons behind farmers’ apathy towards creameries. This is important, because most of them are not proprietary concerns and farmers own no stake in them...We were faced by the same problem in New Zealand, and the proprietary concerns found themselves eliminated by non-supply.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵³ NAZ ZAR 2/1/1 Colonel Judson (Rhodesia Butter Agencies): Written Evidence to the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries, Bulawayo, 31 August 1935.

⁶⁵⁴ NAZ ZAR 2/1/1 Mr Bailey (Cream Producers’ Association): Written Evidence to the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries, Bulawayo, 31 August 1935.

⁶⁵⁵ NAZ ZAR 2/1/1 Written Evidence to the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries, Bulawayo, 2 September 1935.

⁶⁵⁶ NAZ ZAR 2/1/1 Written Evidence to the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries, Bulawayo, 2 September 1935.

Moreover, farmers pointed to the long distances and to the unavailability of an adequate and efficient transport system as a major contributor to the production of farm butter. As noted in the previous chapter, some farmers had to travel long distances to reach the railway lines, and then contend with unreliable train schedules, hence cream and milk would lose its keeping qualities in transit. One W.T. Summers, a farmer, argued that far from the alleged unsanitary conditions under which cream was produced, the reason for the production of low grade cream in most cases was that “ a great deal of fermentation takes place either while awaiting the train, on the train itself or in inside the guard’s van”.⁶⁵⁷ Thus, farmers preferred to avoid the ordeal of transporting cream to creameries, opting to transport self-made butter. Although this somewhat accounted for the farm butter boom, it remains valid that the major contributing factor towards farm butter making was the low income farmers fetched at the creameries for predominantly low grade cream, itself a result of the insanitary conditions under which cream and milk were produced.

In spite of the obvious role of the predominantly low grade cream they produced, farmers mainly attributed their failure to earn good prices to what they perceived as under grading tendencies by creameries. They believed that creamery proprietors were acting as greedy middlemen, whose interests lay more with the accumulation of profits than with the welfare of the producers. As one farmer from Fort Victoria, Duncan Pyewell, said:

In my opinion there is not such a large quantity of low grade cream as is made out. There is not the amount we so often read in the papers. I should say the cause was the dairy firms making a good profit. We do not get a good grade....let the creameries give a fair deal and they will not have any of that competition (with farm butter).⁶⁵⁸

Besides the unsatisfactory prices paid by creameries, farmers’ complaints should also be viewed within the context of the ownership structure of most creameries and dairies. As indicated in chapter 3, the majority of creameries were privately owned with only two (the Farmers’ Co-operative Creamery in Salisbury and the Rhodesia Co-operative Creamery in Bulawayo) under

⁶⁵⁷ NAZ ZAR 2/1/7 Mr W.T. Summers, Written Evidence to the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries, Bulawayo, 2 September 1935.

⁶⁵⁸ NAZ ZAR 2/1/4 Written Evidence to the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries, Bulawayo, 15 August 1935.

the ownership and administration of farmers. The Gwelo Dairy was the only owned state-owned creamery by the early 1930s. Thus, state and some farmers' efforts to push for the establishment of more co-operative concerns to run creameries during the 1910s and 1920s, as had been the case in major dairying countries such as New Zealand, had not yielded the desired results by the mid-1930s. As a considerable number of butter producers were more preoccupied with beef production until the 1930s, few of them had any genuine interest in co-operative concerns.

The farmers' argument, however, was not corroborated by circumstances on the ground. While there may be little doubt as to the effects of the international depression on agricultural prices in Southern Rhodesia, it is also incontrovertibly clear that the poor grading argument served as a mere scapegoat to support the making of butter on the farms. The testimony of Morrisby, a dairyman who had accumulated 20 years' experience in dairy farming helps to shed light not only on the relative advantage Southern Rhodesian farmers enjoyed regarding prices, but also on the embellishment many farmers made when disparaging creameries' grading methods. He stated that:

The price given, compared with other countries, New Zealand and Australia, is high. I have supplied for 20 years, and I have always got first grade, but a little time ago I did get third grade. I spoke to the Dairy Officer, but since then I have not had third grade. I am very particular about cattle eating weeds, Mexican marigold, and the cleanliness of my equipment.⁶⁵⁹

Morrisby's admission that his cream always received favourable grading is thus an indication that the low grades that farmers received from creameries for cream, and the struggles Southern Rhodesian butter faced on the international market was proof that the complaints of the majority of farmers over under-grading were unjustified.

Besides compromising the quality of butter, farm butter making placed creameries, most of which had undergone considerable expansion during the 1920s, in a difficult economic position. Always receiving a declining amount of cream, most creameries found themselves generally underutilised and increasingly redundant during the 1930s. It is therefore scarcely surprising that most operators advocated the introduction of regulations that would control the operations of

⁶⁵⁹ NAZ ZAR 2/1/4 Mr Morrisby: Written Evidence to the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries, Fort Victoria, 15 August 1935.

farm butter makers, especially those who only produced in the flush season, as they tended to crowd out cream butter on the local market. As Maclean, a representative of the Rhodesia Butter Agencies, rhetorically asked “In the event of the farm butter maker doubling his output [which is now 50% of the whole needs of the Colony], what would be the position of the creameries.” He added:

Some would have to close, (and) if the creameries had to shut, the butter has to be stored. My idea is that all butter should be made in the creameries and in the meantime to improve conditions in the outlying districts.⁶⁶⁰

The bigger grievance was on the “seasonal opportunist”, whose interests did not lie in dairy farming. Straith, a member of the same organisation, added:

The consistent farm butter maker would not, as a rule, produce low grade butter. He has to feed (the cows). If he is going to supply butter throughout the year, he must have some organisation and will give it his attention. But he is not subject to any control or standard. I would suggest that, first of all, they should get decent conditions of working, and then introduce grading regulations.⁶⁶¹

While it is certainly true that farm butter making constituted a dangerous threat to creameries, *bona fide* dairy farmers and the consuming public, the concerns raised by creameries masked the general inefficiencies which characterised their operations. While acknowledging the deleterious impact of farm butter makers, particularly the seasonal actors, the 1936 Committee noted that most creameries needed to minimise operational costs, particularly reducing overruns, since they impacted negatively on manufacturing costs.⁶⁶² Drawing comparisons with dairy industries in the Australian states, South Africa and New Zealand, the Committee added:

If expansion of the industry is looked for by way of overseas export, it is obvious that the margin required by our creameries must be reduced to a figure bearing more favourable comparisons with those of other countries. There is otherwise no prospect of attaining a competitive position in the overseas market.⁶⁶³

⁶⁶⁰ NAZ ZAR 2/1/1 Mr Maclean: Written Evidence to the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries, Bulawayo, 27 August 1935.

⁶⁶¹ NAZ ZAR 2/1/1 Mr Maclean: Written Evidence to the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries, Bulawayo, 27 August 1935.

⁶⁶² *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries*, 1936, 6.

⁶⁶³ *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries*, 1936, 6.

Indeed, while creameries in South Africa averaged an overrun of 20%, and those in New Zealand 22%, Southern Rhodesian creameries averaged just 16% in 1935.⁶⁶⁴ Interestingly, the Committee attributed these figures, which indicated a “serious degree of inefficiency”, to the creameries’ giving excessive butterfat grades to farmers, among other malpractices.⁶⁶⁵

Two conclusions may thus be drawn. Firstly, although the activities of farm butter makers did contribute to the creameries’ crisis during the mid 1930s, part of the creameries crisis emanated from their own inefficiencies. Secondly, although farmers constantly complained of being under graded by creameries, such complaints were largely unjustified since creameries were in fact paying them more than the average farmer received in the major dairying countries at this time through both the prices they stipulated and over grading.

Given the mutually contradictory views expressed by farmers and creamery operators, the 1936 Committee sought to strike a balance between the two sides while ensuring that the interests of the industry in general were safeguarded. However, it acknowledged the “menace” farm butter constituted to the industry and recommended that farm butter needed to be eliminated, gradually, from the formal butter market. It stated that:

Whilst appreciating the position of these farmers, your Committee does not consider that the seasonal farm butter maker should be allowed to disorganise the industry by flooding the market at certain seasons with low grade butter. Farm butter making is a menace to the industry, and the object in view should be the ultimate elimination of the farm butter maker, as has been done by legislation in Australia.⁶⁶⁶

The proposal for the curtailing of farm butter production was to form the basis of one of the most far reaching provisions of the Dairy Act of 1937. The legislation provided that all farm butter makers were to be registered and be issued with production licences by the DICB.⁶⁶⁷ Renewable annually, the licence was reserved only for producers who had built up a high capital and consistent business in butter making before the Act came into force, or who were so situated that they could not supply cream to a creamery, or dairying in a remote area where the making and

⁶⁶⁴ H. Weinmann, *Agricultural Research and Development in Southern Rhodesia, 1924-1950*, (Salisbury: University of Rhodesia, 1975), 149.

⁶⁶⁵ *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries, 1936*, 6.

⁶⁶⁶ *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries, 1936*, 11.

⁶⁶⁷ Cory, ‘The Dairy Industry’, 276.

sale of farm butter was considered to be in the interests of the local community.⁶⁶⁸ In this case, producers whose premises were situated within 12 miles of a thrice-weekly rail or road motor service were regarded as being able to send cream, and were thus denied licences.⁶⁶⁹

Further, the same legislation stipulated that farm butter makers should be allotted quotas for the production of the commodity on the basis of each individual's granted contingent upon satisfactory methods of production being employed.⁶⁷⁰ The quantity of farm butter made by any individual dairyman was restricted to a quantity not exceeding that which he had made during the 12 months immediately preceding its introduction.⁶⁷¹ Yet, as happened with the issuing of the licence in the first place, the quota would only be increased if the farmer proved that their farm was geographically disadvantaged, in which case cream, as a more perishable commodity, was more difficult to transport to urban centres than butter. These measures should be viewed within the context of Southern Rhodesia's attempts to competitively enter the export market against a background of the comparatively low quality of butter that characterised the dairy industry throughout the 1920s and 1930s. As the Minister of Agriculture explained it, the dairy industry could "not be developed along internationally competitive lines as long as the excessive competition between farm and creamery butter, which arises especially during the flush season is not curbed."⁶⁷² Furthermore, to the extent that it would contribute towards a more tightly regulated system with a higher degree of uniformity of butter manufacturing mechanisms, the elimination of farm butter was viewed as an essential step in the improvement of the quality and uniformity of all locally manufactured butter. The Dairy Act provided for the compulsory grading of all farm butter by dairy inspectors before it could be packaged and sold on the market. It also provided that all packaging should be inscribed with a notification showing that the product had been made at the farm, the producer's address and the grade of the butter.⁶⁷³

⁶⁶⁸ NAZ S/1216/SC27/136/2 Dairy Correspondence: Letter from E.H. Maxwell, Director of the Rhodesian Butter Agencies, Ltd, to E.R. Jacklin, Chairman, Dairy Industry Control Board, 8 August 1934.

⁶⁶⁹ Cory, 'The Dairy Industry', 276.

⁶⁷⁰ *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Certain Aspects of the Dairy and Pig Industries, 1936*, 11.

⁶⁷¹ Cory, 'The Dairy Industry', 276.

⁶⁷² Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates, 14 April, 1937.

⁶⁷³ NAZ 1215/1368/1 Dairy Industry Control Board Correspondence: Letter from the Chief Dairy Officer to the Secretary, Eastern Victoria Association, 31 January 1939.

The gradualist approach towards the elimination of farm butter from the industry evident in these regulations should be viewed as an attempt by the state to ‘protect’ farmers who had long depended on the production of farm butter while at the same time eliminating the seasonal butter producer whose main interests lay in beef production. This aim was expressed by the Bulawayo District Dairy Officer, who argued that this type of producer, for lack of proper dairy cow feed, made an article which contained defects in flavour, the majority being “insipid or flat”. He added that:

Dairying in this colony is no longer a mere side line; to many it has become the most important branch of farming, and for this reason a standard quality and colour should be aimed at. To achieve this, the industry should be rid of the part-timer; he disturbs the equilibrium of the industry.⁶⁷⁴

While the legislation appeared quite straightforward on paper, its implementation was not as seamless. Indeed, the post 1937 period was characterised by constant disagreements, accusations and counter accusations between settler farmers and the state over the implementation modalities of the farm butter quotas, grading and the motives governing the new regulations. In some cases, white farmers employed Scott’s weapons of the weak to circumvent the law because of what they perceived to be the state’s insensitivity to the plight of farmers.⁶⁷⁵ For instance, after unsuccessfully applying for an increased quota, C.B. Nilson of Koodoovale farm began to contravene the regulations by exceeding his allocated quota, and distributing his produce to another dairyman who did not produce enough farm butter to fully utilise his own quota.⁶⁷⁶ After his case – which was one among many – was discovered, Wilson defended himself by complaining that the introduction of quotas was “insensitive to our financial interests”, since he had begun to earn less by sending more cream to the creamery than he had become accustomed to before the advent of quotas.⁶⁷⁷ While acknowledging that farm butter was more profitable, the Minister was eager to remind farmers that “unless we have established a first class creamery

⁶⁷⁴ F.A. Lammas, ‘Dairying in Southern Rhodesia: Some obvious defects in Farm Butter at our Shows’, *Rhodesia Agricultural Journal*, 27, 10, (October 1930), 1074.

⁶⁷⁵ See Scott, *Weapons of the weak: Everyday forms of resistance*, 251-256.

⁶⁷⁶ NAZ 1215/1368/7/4 Dairy Industry Control Board Correspondence: Letter from the Chief Dairy Officer to the Secretary, Eastern Victoria Farmers’ Association, 31 January 1939.

⁶⁷⁷ NAZ S2565/2 Dairy Correspondence, 1932-56: Letter from C.B. Nilson, Koodoovale Farm to the Minister of Agriculture, 28 June 1940.

butter, the industry will be in great trouble (on the international markets). You must look at it for the future.”⁶⁷⁸

While the regulations controlling farm butter were aimed at ensuring that the bulk of Southern Rhodesian butter was manufactured and marketed through the creameries, they also had the inadvertent effect of discouraging some farmers from investing in the industry. The impact of the introduction of farm butter licences and the quota system on dairy farming, and the state-farmer relations in particular is perhaps captured in the case of Schaller, a dairyman based in Mashonaland. By the mid-1920s he had “built a very suitable dairy” and invited inspection by the Dairy Officer. Furthermore, he had constantly grown his herd to about twenty, which was headed by a dairy Shorthorn bull purchased from South Africa.⁶⁷⁹ The major challenge for him, however, was geographical – cream production was virtually impracticable during the summer months owing to the state of the roads and the Umnyiati River linking his farm and the nearest creamer depot in Umvuma.⁶⁸⁰ Consequently, Schaller could only travel to Umvuma once a week, which, while suitable for butter transportation, was unsuitable for cream.

Schaller’s confrontation with the DICB came in 1940, when he was granted a quota of only 740 lb., which he felt was too small considering the investment he had made in an attempt to construct a modern dairy farm with an expensively built dairy herd. He argued that:

This quota is far short of my possible production and cows are calving which I cannot milk, as I am restricted from selling produce. I am very unsettled by the uncertainty of the position. I could produce 4 000lb. if I were to fully utilise my potential. I cannot understand why the government encouraged us to invest in bigger and better dairy herds and better dairy facilities some 20 years ago now that they are limiting us.⁶⁸¹

⁶⁷⁸ NAZ S1215/1363/1 Inspection and Registration of Dairies: Letter from C.B. Nilson, Koodoovale Farm to the Minister of Agriculture, 10 June 1940.

⁶⁷⁹ NAZ S1215/1363/ Inspection and Registration of Dairies: Letter from Mr E.V. Schaller to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, 19 October 1940 .

⁶⁸⁰ Although 30 miles was not considered too long a distance for the transportation of cream, the fact that the road linking the farm and Umvuma was in a bad state made it difficult to frequently travel to Umvuma during the summer months, when conditions were often muddy. In addition, the Umnyiati River was virtually impassable during the wet season owing to the small size of the bridge.

⁶⁸¹ NAZ S1215/1363/1 Inspection and Registration of Dairies: Letter from Mr E.V. Schaller to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, 19 October 1940.

Despite the Land and Agricultural Bank describing Schaller as “extremely hardworking, sound in his methods, economical and thoroughly reliable”,⁶⁸² the Board denied him an increased quota, contending that “a producer who takes butter to town once a week may reasonably be expected to take cream to town together with butter once a week.”⁶⁸³ On this evidence, it may be argued that besides its noble ambitions to set the dairy industry on a more stable foundation through eliminating side-liners, the implementation of the Act also discouraged genuine dairy farmers who had invested in the dairy industry.

Indeed, the result of the blanket application of the regulations was that some long-serving *bona fide* dairy farmers who, for complex geographical and economic reasons, could not send cream to creameries abandoned dairy farming altogether. With his herd and infrastructure acutely underutilised, and scale of business determined on an annual basis, Schaller was denied a temporary quota increase of an additional 300 lb., which could cushion his business while he made the transition to beef production. With resignation, he stated that he was

prepared to cease production altogether, but will require time, but I have already started breeding type animals for fattening. Until the changeover is effected, I must rely on dairying to provide my working and living expenses.⁶⁸⁴

Indeed, the number of registered white dairy producers decreased from 201 in 1937 to 183 by 1942.⁶⁸⁵ In the same vein, although farm butter production declined from 483 000 lb. in 1937 to 124 000 lb. by 1943,⁶⁸⁶ it did not necessarily translate to any significant increase in creamery butter production, since total butter production fell from 1 656 000 lb. in 1936 to 1 299 000 lb. by 1944.⁶⁸⁷ The significance of this loss on the industry can be understood better when put within the context of shortages of dairy products that emerged with the advent of the Second World War, as illustrated in the next chapter. While the circumstances leading to the withdrawal of dairy farmers may not necessarily be identical to Schaller’s case outlined above, there is

⁶⁸² NAZ S1215/1363/1 Inspection and Registration of Dairies: Letter from the Manager, Land and Agricultural Bank of Southern Rhodesia, to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, 12 October 1940.

⁶⁸³ NAZ S1215/1363/1 Inspection and Registration of Dairies: Letter from Chairman, Dairy Industry Control Board, to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, 26 October 1940.

⁶⁸⁴ NAZ S1215/1363/1 Inspection and Registration of Dairies: Letter from Mr E.V. Schaller to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture, 19 October 1940.

⁶⁸⁵ NAZ 1216/1366/2 Dairy Industry Control Board Reports and Minutes: Minutes of a meeting held at Salisbury, 18 March 1942.

⁶⁸⁶ *Report of the Commission to Enquire into the Conditions Prevailing, etc, into the Pasturage of the Colony, 1943.*

⁶⁸⁷ *Report of the Commission to Enquire into the Conditions Prevailing, etc, into the Pasturage of the Colony, 1943.*

nevertheless sufficient evidence to contend that besides reducing the amount of farm butter in the industry, the regulations also had the unintended effect of pushing some producers out of the industry altogether.

Conclusion

Drawing contextualising comparisons with other dairy industries within the sub-region and the Commonwealth, this chapter has discussed developments within Southern Rhodesia's dairy industry during the economically volatile 1930s. This chapter has sought to add to available literature on the 1930s depression in Southern Rhodesia and its impact on agricultural industries. It has shown that the establishment of the Dairy Industry Control Board managed to ease the plight of the farmers in the face of the agricultural crisis of the 1930s, but proved inadequate to improve the quality of butter that was produced at the creameries. Clearly, regulating manufacturing processes at the creameries as had been enforced during the 1920s had proven to be inadequate, hence both the government and some farmers began to call for the improvement of infrastructure and utensils, and general hygiene on the farms – both African and settler owned.

The passage of the Dairy Act in 1937 was a watershed event in the history of local dairy farming in that it sought to bring farmers under increased control and regulation. Some settler producers stood against the introduction of controls, primarily because they were side liners whose main interests lay in beef production. Since the presence of sideliners had been at the core of the problems the country faced on the international market, this move was overdue. However, it has been argued here that a section of white producers and the majority of African farmers resisted the espousal of regulations to control farmers' operations, with circumvention being a common resort among both black and white producers, albeit in different ways. The few settlers who resisted the regulation of farm processes, especially the forcible introduction of dairy utensils and milking sheds and farm butter controls, did so either because they had no interest in investing in dairy farming, or were preoccupied only with profit making at the expense of the professionalization of the industry generally. In examining increased state control over white farming activities, this chapter has sought to show that the interests of white farmers were not always synonymous with the state. For Africans, however, lack of capital and government support led to the development of a parallel milk market on mine compounds, which the state

was eventually forced to recognise. Using the dairy industry as a lens, the chapter has added to available scholarship on the colonial state and African agricultural development and responses during the 1930s.

CHAPTER SIX

The Cream of Empire? The Second World War and the Food Production Drive, 1939 – 1951

Introduction

The outbreak of World War II (WW II) marked an important shift in the development of Southern Rhodesia's fledgling economy. Previously, most agricultural industries had depended on external markets for the disposal of produce, but the rapid increase in white immigration and the increasing African urban population necessarily meant that production began to fail to meet domestic needs. At the same time, the local food industry was brought under increasing pressure from Britain to provide foodstuffs as part of Southern Rhodesia's imperial war effort. This chapter discusses state and farmers' responses to British calls for butter supplies at a time when the local production was struggling to meet internal demand. It demonstrates that despite public expressions of support to British calls for increased butter supplies by the state and farmers, no exports were made due to the changing internal consumption dynamics. In doing so, this chapter engages two historiographical strands. Firstly, it engages, and seeks to add to existing historiography on the cattle industry in Southern Rhodesia during WWII, which so far has focused on beef production.⁶⁸⁸ Secondly, it engages scholarship on regional and international dairy industries during and after the Second World War for comparative purposes, illustrating that some of the Southern Rhodesian experiences and interventions were modelled along international experiences.

⁶⁸⁸ E. Mufema, 'The impact of the Second World War on Rhodesian agriculture with particular reference to tobacco, maize and beef cattle', Honours Dissertation, Department of Economic History, University of Zimbabwe, 1992; Samasuwo, "'There is something about cattle' Towards an economic history of the beef industry in colonial Zimbabwe, 1939-1980', PhD Thesis, University of Cape Town, 2000 and N. Samasuwo, 'Food production and war supplies: Rhodesia's Beef Industry during the Second World War, 1939-1945', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29, 2, (2003), 487-502.

This chapter also draws from local studies that have focused on the role of the war in boosting the manufacturing and mining industries.⁶⁸⁹ It examines the effect of the increasing white immigration rate, and the growing black urban population in war-time and post war Southern Rhodesia. It demonstrates that the expanding demand which followed the population growth precipitated a radical change both in the patterns of production and consumption of dairy products. In light of shortages that characterised war-time and post war Southern Rhodesia, this chapter discusses the interventions that were effected to avert shortages. It argues that, although the state resorted to *ad hoc* interventions as the emergency of shortages escalated, the war generally led to the intensification of the reform process of white commercial dairying that had begun during the late 1930s.

Whereas previous historiography on the impact of the war on the country's livestock industry has focused on the beef crisis and state attempts to coerce Africans to dispose of their livestock through forced de-stocking measures, very little has been done to examine the impact of such measures on African milk regimes.⁶⁹⁰ This chapter examines the impact of de-stocking measures, and other steps that were taken to create a 'native beast' for African livestock owners. It demonstrates that while these measures were helpful to the state in increasing beef supplies, they further undermined African dairy production and marketing.

“But, where is the butter?": War, the war-effort and expanding domestic consumption

The outbreak of WWII in 1939 had a revolutionary effect on Southern Rhodesia's agrarian economy and the cattle industry in particular. Whereas both the beef and dairy industries had, prior to 1939, depended on external markets for the disposal of meat and dairy products, war-time and post war conditions meant that focus shifted towards a rapidly expanding domestic market. This section discusses war-time calls for increased butter supplies that were made by

⁶⁸⁹ See G. Arrighi and J.S. Saul, *Essays on the political economy of Africa*, (New York: Heinemann, 1973); I. Phimister, *A social and economic history of Zimbabwe, 1890-1948: Capital accumulation and class struggle*, (London: Longman, 1988); A.S. Mlambo, 'From Second World War to UDI, 1940-1965', in B. Raftopoulos and A.S. Mlambo (eds), *Becoming Zimbabwe: A history from the pre-colonial period to 2008*, (Harare: Weaver Press, 2009).

⁶⁹⁰ Focusing on war-time beef production, Samasuwo's article outlines the extent of the de-stocking regulations that were introduced from the early 1940s, and delineates the factors that led to the adoption of such measures. See Samasuwo, 'Food production and war supplies: Rhodesia's Beef Industry during the Second World War, 1939-945', 497-499.

Britain on Southern Rhodesia as part of the war effort. It argues that, expanding white immigration immediately after the outbreak of war, and the disturbances in international trade associated with war ultimately rendered such an arrangement untenable. Instead, the rise in local demand led to acute dairy shortages which, in turn, precipitated a shift from butter towards whole milk as the major dairy product.

In early 1939, when the outbreak of war appeared inevitable, the Committee of Munitions and Food Supplies, which had been established in Britain to ensure food security in the event of war, intimated that Britain would require food supplies from Southern Rhodesia and the rest of the Empire. It stated that although maize and beef were the principal commodities needed, the imperial government may “issue orders requisitioning stocks of cereals, dairy produce, flour, sugar, meat, oilseed and fats” from Southern Rhodesia and other colonies as part of their Allied war effort.⁶⁹¹ The committee noted that although Southern Rhodesia had been a net importer of processed milk products such as condensed and desiccated milk from the United Kingdom, the colony needed to increase its butter production with a view to exporting more butter to the United Kingdom for the duration of the war.⁶⁹²

Initially, Southern Rhodesia positively responded to the imperial call for increased supplies of food from Britain. Increased demand for foodstuffs from Britain from Southern Rhodesia and other British Dependencies led to the Southern Rhodesia government signing a contract with the British Ministry of Food to supply British troops in March 1940. The Dairy Division encouraged farmers to produce more cream so that more butter could be sent to Britain. Because of the familial British connection within the majority of the white population in the country, most farmers responded positively to the call from the Empire. Speaking at a farmers’ meeting, the chairman of the Figtree Farmers’ Association said he

felt sure (that) more cream could be produced. I am certain that England could do with all the butter she could get, as farmers are paying more attention to cream

⁶⁹¹ NAZ S1801/6030/6043 Office of the High Commissioner for Southern Rhodesia: Organisation of agricultural Community in case of war: Memorandum by the Committee of Munitions and Food Supplies titled ‘United Kingdom Food Control Plans in event of War, 12 March 1939.

⁶⁹² NAZ S1801/6030/6043 Office of the High Commissioner for Southern Rhodesia: Organisation of agricultural Community in case of war: Memorandum by the Committee of Munitions and Food Supplies titled ‘United Kingdom Food Control Plans in event of War, 12 March 1939.

production. We need to support Britain at her hour of need, and it is part of our war effort. Government should give some inducement in the form of a small bounty on each pound of butterfat produced.⁶⁹³

Such jingoism, however, did not last long. The rapid white population increase that followed the war meant that the colony's initial expression of patriotism towards Britain did not translate into material provision of butter supplies.

The establishment of Empire Air Force Training Centres in Salisbury, Bulawayo and Gwelo in 1939 led to a material increase in the white population in the country. In total, these were responsible for the arrival of about 20 000 Royal Air force personnel, their wives and families into the country during the first two years of the war. Further, at least 6 000 internees and war refugees had settled in Southern Rhodesia by 1945.⁶⁹⁴ Consequently, the country's white population grew by nearly 20% from 68 954 to 82 386 between 1941 and 1946, with up to 10 000 new arrivals recorded in 1942 alone.⁶⁹⁵ In the short-term, these developments helped to create a much wider domestic market for the agricultural industry. Lewis Gann and Michael Gelfand have observed that farmers and industrial firms suddenly encountered an almost insatiable market as a result of the exploding white population in the country. In the long term, the dairy industry was to be indirectly affected by the demand generated by the expansion of sectors directly linked to the war effort. Samasuwo has stated that the war boosted the production of strategic base minerals such as chrome, tungsten and copper, particularly after Turkey ceased to supply chrome shortly prior to the outbreak of hostilities.⁶⁹⁶ This opportunity led to the expansion of the mining sector, which, in turn, led to an increased demand for food on the mines. Moreover, the increased demand for pipe tobacco and cigarettes in Britain (as a result of its inability to acquire it from South America during the war) and the corresponding increase in its price from the early 1940s led to a tobacco boom in Southern Rhodesia. With the 'leaf of gold'

⁶⁹³ Minutes of a meeting of the Figtree Farmers Association held on 30 July 1940, quoted in, *Vuka*, August, 1940.

This magazine was the official mouthpiece of the Matabeleland Farmers' Association.

⁶⁹⁴ Southern Rhodesia was used as a training venue for the Royal Air Force and as a safe haven for war internees comprising mainly of Italian prisoners of war during the Second World War. In fact, at least 15 000 Royal Air trainees entered the country during the first few months of the war alone. See R. Blake, *A History of Rhodesia*, (London: Eyre Methuen, 1977), 274.

⁶⁹⁵ *Official yearbook of Southern Rhodesia*, 4, 1952, 412.

⁶⁹⁶ Samasuwo, 'Food production and war supplies: Rhodesia's Beef Industry during the Second World War, 1939-1945', 493.

arguably the most rewarding agricultural commodity, many farmers' focus was diverted from food production, with the result that the country lost its food self-sufficiency at a time when its domestic needs were expanding.⁶⁹⁷ Although Southern Rhodesia was expected to – and actually did – provide man power on the war front as part of the Allied war effort, the government was equally eager to ensure that most white commercial farmers stayed on the land. The production of sufficient food to send to Britain and to feed Empire Air Training personnel and other European refugees within the country was in itself considered a vital part of Southern Rhodesia's war effort on the 'home front'.

The corollary of this was that milk and butter shortages began to be experienced in the major urban areas by the 1940s. It should be remembered that, as illustrated in chapter 5, Southern Rhodesia had already begun importing butter from South Africa to meet its regional obligations as a result of a drought-induced reduction in production levels since the mid-1930s in order to maintain supplies to regional markets. Although production had begun to improve somewhat since the droughts of the 1930s, the rapid domestic population increase acted as a huge countervailing force, leading to Southern Rhodesia's failure to satisfy its local requirements, let alone regional markets. The gravity of the shortages was vividly captured by the Chief Dairy Officer thus:

Though we are likely to have a record (production) this year, we shall have to import some dairy produce, mainly butter. This is due to an increasing domestic consumption which has taken place in the last five years. Five years ago it was 750 000 lb., now it is 1 400 000 lb. If the domestic consumption continues to expand at this rate we shall be hard put to find sufficient butter for our own requirements, let alone to maintain our export trade to adjoining territories. We would have preferred to maintain our supplies abroad, **but where is the butter required for that?**⁶⁹⁸ [emphasis mine]

Indeed, Southern Rhodesia experienced a deficit in both milk and butter production throughout the duration of the war. For instance, in 1942 alone, the country experienced a deficit of 1 520 000 litres of milk and 614 568 lb. of butter.⁶⁹⁹

⁶⁹⁷ F. Clements and E. Harben, *Leaf of Gold: The story of Rhodesian tobacco*, (London: Methuen, 1962), 130.

⁶⁹⁸ Quoted in, *The Bulawayo Chronicle*, Monday 11 March 1940.

⁶⁹⁹ *The Official yearbook of Southern Rhodesia*, 4, 1952, 412.

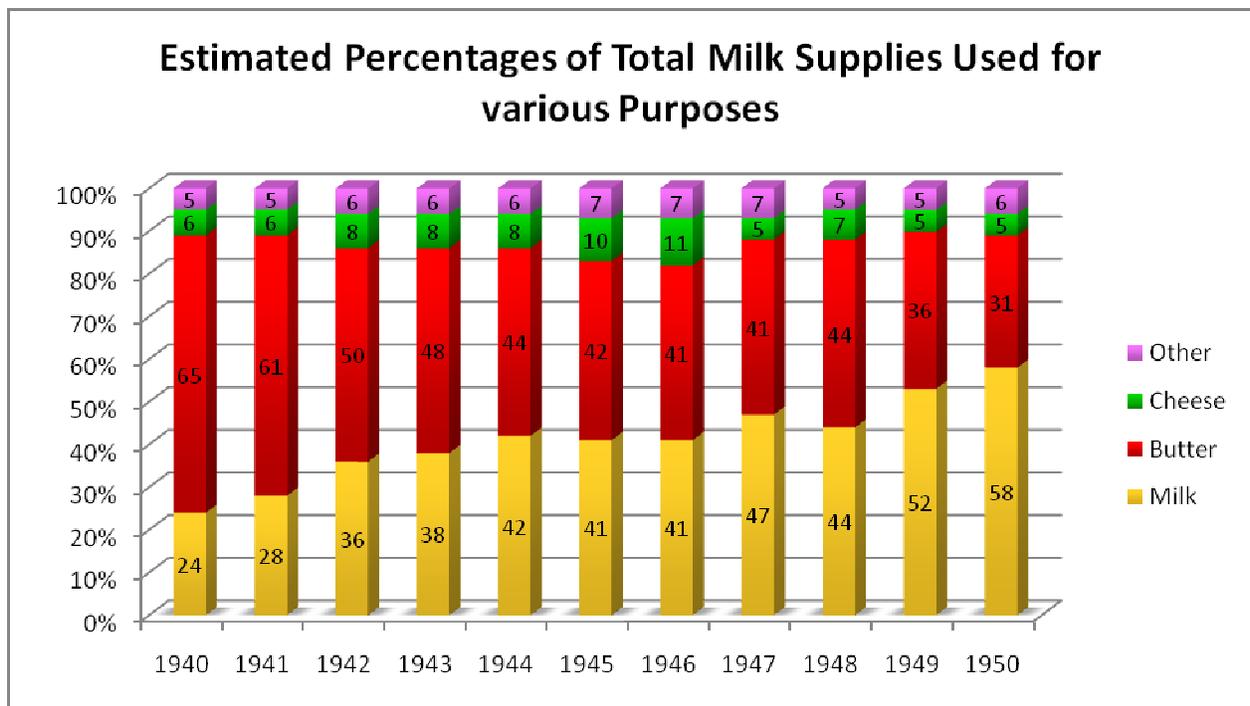
The shortages had two important effects on the dairy industry and the colony in general. Firstly, since Southern Rhodesia had pledged to provide butter to Britain during the war as part of the country's war effort to the Allied powers, the colonial administration found itself with a difficult choice to make: to renege on its initial pledge to send butter supplies to Britain as part of its contribution to the Allied war effort and placate the growing white population, or to prioritise imperial obligations and risk upsetting its local political constituency that continued shortages could potentially cause. The former option was taken. Exports to Britain and regional markets (which Southern Rhodesia had established as captive markets since the 1920s) stopped at the end of 1941. This decision should be viewed within the context of the decades-old dream to build a 'white man's country' in Southern Rhodesia through increasing the white population through white immigration.⁷⁰⁰ The situation in South Africa, where white consumers had become "increasingly agitated "by the country's continued sending of butter to Britain at a time when the "Union itself began to confront a shortage" may also have served as a valuable lesson to Southern Rhodesian authorities.⁷⁰¹

The second impact of shortages was the extent to which they altered the local disposal pattern of the dairy industry. Inadequate supplies of milk to urban and mining settlements essentially meant that considerable quantities of milk which would normally be converted into butter and cheese for export had to be diverted to the local fresh milk trade. This was necessitated by the fact that milk is more perishable than any other dairy product and the limited technology of the time made the importation of whole milk much more difficult than butter. Consequently, emphasis shifted from cream production towards milk production, with government incentives and bonuses being advanced for milk production.⁷⁰² As the graph below illustrates, the proportion of milk that was utilised for butter making fell steeply between 1940 and 1950 because more milk was utilised for the liquid milk trade.

⁷⁰⁰ This hope to ensure huge white settlement in Southern Rhodesia was expressed in as early as 1907, when it was expressed that the White Agricultural Policy will only succeed if many white settlers immigrated into the country, see chapter 3. For this dream to materialise, Southern Rhodesia had to prove to incoming settlers that it had the capacity to provide for whites socio-economic needs.

⁷⁰¹ Y. Albertyn, 'Upsetting the applecart: Government and food control in the Union of South Africa during World War II, c.1939-1948', Masters' Thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 2014, 48.

⁷⁰² *Annual Report of the Dairy Industry Control Board*, 1941.



Graph 4: Estimated percentages of total milk suppliers used for various purposes.⁷⁰³

The importation of dairy produce from overseas was made difficult by the escalation of war, which disrupted normal peace-time marine transportation and the paucity of refrigeration facilities on ships docking at South Africa's major seaports which complicated inter-continental trade during the war. Indeed, overseas trade stopped altogether between 1943 and 1944, while a negligible amount of foodstuffs occurred in 1945.⁷⁰⁴ The existence of similar shortages in South Africa, which had traditionally supplied Southern Rhodesia with first grade butter and cheese, meant that the country had to find ways of expanding local production. With the dairy deficit reaching an equivalent of 1.5million gallons of milk by 1941, butter, cheese, and milk rationing was introduced in the major urban centres under the Rationing Order of 1942.⁷⁰⁵

⁷⁰³ *Official Year Book of Southern Rhodesia*, 4, 1953, 412.

⁷⁰⁴ A.S. Mlambo, 'The Cold Storage Commission: A colonial parastatal, 1938 – 1963', *Zambezia*, 23, 1, (1996), 61.

⁷⁰⁵ NAZ S2578/R1 Memorandum by the Dairy Officer (Bulawayo), 14 May 1942.

War time shortages were not peculiar to the dairy industry, however. Similar shortages and rationing measures were witnessed in other food industries. A similar shortage, for instance, was witnessed in the beef industry, with the result that the government increased destocking measures in African areas with a view of coercing Africans to sell their livestock cheaply to government. The beef crisis also forced the government to invoke the War-time Emergency Powers of the Slaughter Cattle Prices Order of 1941 which allowed agents to buy cattle at low prices and selling them directly to licensed butchers or the Cold Storage Commission at the prescribed high prices.⁷⁰⁶ Similarly, the sale of maize was controlled during the war, especially after the drought of 1942, to the point that the government restricted the use of maize as a supplementary feed for livestock.⁷⁰⁷ The butter shortages were also a common feature in other Dominions, especially in Australia where “a reduction in butter production occurred in all states.”⁷⁰⁸ However, the major difference was that while in Australia shortages were caused by the removal of producers from the farms for the war front, in Southern Rhodesia it was mainly a result of an expanding domestic market and stagnating production that had begun prior to the war. As happened in other agricultural industries in Southern Rhodesia, a drive for increased dairy production was espoused from 1941 onwards.

The Drive for ‘guided expansion’

The emergent food shortages seemed poised to precipitate a socio-political crisis for the government. As already noted in the previous section, besides sending troops to the actual battlefield, the provision of adequate food for Italian prisoners of war and Royal Air Training staff and the Rhodesian Army was regarded as an important part of the war effort by the Southern Rhodesian government. Also, as a country that harboured a long standing dream of creating in Southern Rhodesia a ‘white man’s country’ through luring white immigrants, Southern Rhodesian authorities were eager to impress incoming immigrants and visitors with its ability to protect their material interests and offer a comfortable bourgeois life. Moreover, the persistent food shortages were bound to cause social upheaval among the white population

⁷⁰⁶ Also under these Emergency Powers, cattle were to be sold by live weight and grade. This would allow the government to acquire cattle much more easily as well as to control cattle supplies in the interests of the Imperial War effort. Samasuwo, ‘There is something about cattle’, 62-63.

⁷⁰⁷ *The Rhodesia Herald*, 1 August 1940.

⁷⁰⁸ Gilmore, ‘Kill, cure or strangle’, 179.

already in the country, which constituted a vital political constituency for Godfrey Huggins' government. As early as 1939, the Minister of Agriculture explained the plan to increase food production to the Legislative Assembly thus:

I wish to make it clear to all sections of the (agricultural) community that the colony must spare no effort to maintain her normal agricultural output of maize, tobacco, cattle, dairy products, pigs, and so forth. While I realise the intense desire on the part of farmers and tobacco producers to offer themselves for military service, I am convinced that they will be performing an equally, and perhaps more valuable national service by remaining on their farms and continuing with their normal programme of livestock and crop production.⁷⁰⁹

With regards to dairy farming, however, the initial government response was focussed on 'guided expansion' in order to achieve self-sufficiency.⁷¹⁰ The Dairy Division sought to maintain assiduously its aim of ensuring that production was done along the right lines, as illustrated by the passage of the Dairy Act discussed in chapter 5. Addressing farmers at a Farmers' Field Day at Matopos Experiment Station in 1940, Cory warned that although there was room for increased production in the dairy industry:

We do not, however, want indiscriminate production. The industry in the past has been characterised by a very high percentage of inferior products and this is a heritage from the past which we are gradually eradicating from the industry. A very high percentage of dairy products are of second or third grade quality. This entails a financial loss amounting annually to thousands of Pounds which has to be borne by the industry and ultimately by the producer himself.⁷¹¹

Cory's argument reveals the thinking behind the continuation of the push for improved production conditions on the farms, which began during the 1930s, as a remedy to the war-time crisis. This approach was supported by creamery representatives who argued that the mere introduction of bounties and subsidies to stimulate production was not in the long-term interests of the industry as it would not encourage efficiency. For example, the manager of the Bulawayo based Rhodesia Co-operative Limited contended, convincingly, that:

greater efficiency in our production of cream is the ultimate solution since one day we would have to enter the world market with our butter surplus and knowing

⁷⁰⁹ *Southern Rhodesia Legislative Assembly Debates*, 8 September 1939.

⁷¹⁰ As it was explained, guided expansion meant the expansion of the dairy industry along proper lines which would not compromise the quality of products. In this way, indiscriminate production was discouraged.

⁷¹¹ Quoted in *The Bulawayo Chronicle*, Monday 11 March 1940.

what the present ruling price for butter was, I am quite certain that local prices would come down with a bump.⁷¹²

This view provides the context for the heightening of the programme of granting loans to dairy farmers for the erection and purchasing of dairies and dairy utensils discussed in the previous chapter. Even more funds were set aside for white dairy farmers during the 1940s. In the last three months of 1942 alone, for instance, £1 700 was distributed to dairy farmers for the purposes of improving their production sites.⁷¹³ In the same vein, the DICB continued to deny numerous applications for the registration of their premises for cream and milk production on the basis of their unsuitable methods, in spite of the looming crisis.⁷¹⁴ As outlined in the previous chapter, a plethora of applications for an increased farm butter quota in 1940 were rejected on the basis of Cory's argument that although expansion of cream production was required indiscriminate production would reverse on-going efforts to wean dairy farming from overly depending on the beef industry.

The Matabeleland Farmers' Union leadership generally agreed that dairy producers, as did the rest of the farming community, needed to continue with the reform process that had been initiated in 1937 if they were to survive not only the war, but the future in general. Writing in *Vuka*, the president noted that:

We all know that our methods will not really bear scrutiny from the business point of view; that our production has been haphazard....but my point is that under the new scheme of things all this must be changed if our industry is to survive. And a start must be made now, because agricultural processes are slow, and years lapse before results begin to show.⁷¹⁵

Not all member associations of the Union agreed on the prioritisation of reform over price incentives, however. The Figtree Farmers' Association, for example, passed a resolution that "as it is now more or less an emergency, only the payment of cream bounties would achieve the

⁷¹² Quoted in *Vuka*, October 1940, 17.

⁷¹³ NAZ S955/233 Central Food Production Committee Reports, 1942-1949: Food Production Committee Progress Report for the year 1942.

⁷¹⁴ For example, see Hoare's case that was described in chapter 5. Despite the shortages, he was denied registration by the Chief Dairy Officer and the Medical Officer despite the Minister of Agriculture's advice that he should be allowed to sell milk and cream as a "war-time measure".

⁷¹⁵ Quoted in *Vuka*, October 1940, 33.

intended expansion of the industry.”⁷¹⁶ Indeed, the view that the major solution to any crisis lay in increasing producer prices and offering of incentives – flawed as it was – was the most dominant among farmers when they engaged the government.

Calls for increased subsidies and incentives, however, began to bear the desired outcome as a result of the exacerbating crisis during the war. Indeed, given the emergency of the ever-growing deficit, the government was forced to adopt short-term contingency plans, which included the provision of incentives for production. The situation was made much more urgent by the drought of 1942, which affected virtually every agrarian sector, with the result that the state looked as far afield as Sierra Leone, Brazil and Argentina for food imports.⁷¹⁷ The situation for the livestock sector was worsened by the introduction of restrictions on the sale and utilisation of maize in 1942, which constituted a vital element for supplementary feeding. The ability of dairy cows to produce milk consistently throughout the year, especially during the winter season when natural pasture was scarce, was severely compromised. Speaking at a farmers meeting in Figtree, one farmer remarked that although creameries were paying “reasonable” prices:

It is nearly impossible for us to increase cream production this year because we are acutely short of maize feed. Never mind the water crisis affecting livestock, our failure to access maize and other supplementary feed (either) because of government controls or high prices (at which it is sold) means cream and milk supplies will be low again this year.⁷¹⁸

One effect of the shortages, particularly the 1942 drought, was the temporary but important reversal of some dairy regulations. In a reversal of the rigidity with which farm butter quotas had been introduced and closely monitored after the passage of the Dairy Act as recently as 1937, the DICB announced in 1942 that “(a)ll licensed farm butter makers may now make as much butter as they can, subject to whatever Government Rationing Order may be in force.”⁷¹⁹ This concession, which signalled an abandonment of the quota system for the entire duration of the war, was similar to measures taken in beef production where, owing to war-time shortages, the

⁷¹⁶ *Vuka*, October 1940, 17.

⁷¹⁷ Samasuwo, “‘There is something about cattle’ Towards an economic history of the beef industry in colonial Zimbabwe, 1939-1980’, 56.

⁷¹⁸ This farmer was quoted in *Vuka*, September 1942.

⁷¹⁹ NAZ S1215/1366/3 Minutes of the Dairy Industry Control Board, 13 November 1942.

market was “completely indiscriminating in terms in as far as quality of beef was concerned.”⁷²⁰ Hence, in this regard, the war should be viewed as having reversed – albeit temporarily – pre-war efforts towards establishing a high quality dairy industry as quality was sacrificed for quantity.

More *ad hoc* measures were taken to mitigate the effects of shortages at the height of the war. The Food Production Committee (FPC), which had been established in March 1942 for the sole purpose of ensuring food self-sufficiency during the war, began to offer producer incentives to increase food production across the entire agricultural spectrum. These incentives ranged from subsidies to fixed producer prices.⁷²¹ With regards to dairy farming, the government announced that the initial effort would be to increase prices paid to farmers for butterfat through state sponsored subsidies in April 1942. This included an annual bonus for cream, all of which would make overall producer prices “as high as any that is paid in any part of the world.”⁷²² Also, beginning February 1942, a war subsidy of one penny per pound through the creameries and factories was paid to farmers.⁷²³ Mindful of the need to placate the increasingly restive Southern Rhodesian white population, Huggins’ government was anxious to contain war-time inflation through food price hikes; hence the financial incentives extended to farmers did not affect the wholesale or retail prices of dairy products.

With virtually all the butter being consumed locally, Southern Rhodesian farmers were protected from the vagaries of the international markets. Although the DICB had increased winter prices for butterfat and milk, another round of increases was instituted in 1943.⁷²⁴ A Price Equalisation Scheme was announced with the object of “stabilising the wholesale and retail prices of butter, and to encourage winter production by a substantially increased price for butterfat produced during this period of the year.”⁷²⁵ This scheme had the effect of increasing producer prices to levels that were described by the DICB as “unparalleled throughout the world”, as the

⁷²⁰ Samasuwo, “‘There is something about cattle’ Towards an economic history of the beef industry in colonial Zimbabwe, 1939-1980”, 74.

⁷²¹ A. Masenda, ‘The Food Production Committee and state food policy in colonial Zimbabwe during the 1940s’, Masters’ Thesis, University of Zimbabwe, 1987, 14.

⁷²² See Editorial, *The Rhodesia Agricultural Journal*, 39, 2, (March – April 1942), 1 079.

⁷²³ See Editorial, *The Rhodesia Agricultural Journal*, 39, 2, (March – April 1942), 1 079.

⁷²⁴ The winter prices were increased in 1940 from 1s. 3d. to 1s. 5d. per lb. and winter prices were increased from 1s. 0d. to 1s.3d per lb. See Ngadze, ‘The development of commercial dairying’, 47.

⁷²⁵ *Annual Report of the Secretary for Agriculture and Lands*, 1943, 22.

government sought to keep producers on the farms in an attempt to attain self-sufficiency.⁷²⁶ On their part, farmers responded by increasing cream and milk production, with the result that a record 1500 000 lbs. of butter was produced in 1944 alone.⁷²⁷ This notwithstanding, the ever expanding population increase meant that the country continued to experience shortages throughout the war, and the period following the year. Speaking in 1944, Cory admitted that “if the domestic consumption continues to expand at this rate we shall be hard put to find sufficient butter for our own requirements.”⁷²⁸ Hence, notwithstanding the introduction of contingency plans to incentivise milk and cream output and the corresponding increase in production, shortages could not be averted throughout the war years.

Expanding demand and post-war interventions

The post-war period was characterised by an even faster rate of immigration, a factor which aggravated the extent of shortages. Although the Empire Air Training Scheme was discontinued with the cessation of hostilities in 1945, a significant number of the personnel returned to the country at the end of their tour of duty after being impressed by the state’s settler friendly policies.⁷²⁹ Moreover, white immigration was further heightened by the influx of whites who, lured by Southern Rhodesia’s attractive friendly white settlement plan, sought to flee the harsh post-war economic conditions in Britain and other parts of Western Europe.⁷³⁰ The expansion of the Southern Rhodesian economy, particularly the manufacturing and mining industries provided vast economic opportunities for prospective immigrants. For instance, as a result of post-war reconstruction in Europe, the demand for Southern Rhodesian asbestos and chrome doubled between 1946 and 1950, with the result that both the base minerals sector and railways witnessed tremendous growth during the time under review.⁷³¹

⁷²⁶ *Annual Report of the Dairy Industry Control Board, 1944.*

⁷²⁷ *Annual Report of the Dairy Industry Control Board, 1944.*

⁷²⁸ NAZ1215/1365/1 Milk Subsidy Scheme, 1947: Letter from Cory to the Secretary for Agriculture and Lands, 3May 1945.

⁷²⁹ A.S. Mlambo, ‘From Second World War to UDI, 1940–1965’, in B. Raftopoulos and A.S. Mlambo (eds), *Becoming Zimbabwe: A History from the Pre-Colonial Period to 2008* (Harare: Weaver Press, 2009), 80.

⁷³⁰ Mlambo, “From Second World War to UDI”, 45.

⁷³¹ I. Phimister, *An economic and social history of Zimbabwe, 1890-1948*, 222.

As had happened during the war, the post-war period was characterised by a tobacco boom. The shortage of the dollar in Britain forced the country to take a growing interest in sourcing its requirements from within the Sterling Area of the Empire. The corollary of this growing interest was the increase in tobacco producer prices and production within Southern Rhodesia. As a result of these opportunities, more immigrants moved to Southern Rhodesia where land was readily available for white immigrants. Further, the continued expansion of the mining and manufacturing sectors after the war offered more employment opportunities for immigrants in a country whose socio-economic policies gave whites an advantage over blacks.⁷³² Moreover, the flight of British capital from South Africa from 1948 as a result of British insecurities following Afrikaner Nationalist Party's ascension to power provided further opportunities for Southern Rhodesian economic prosperity.⁷³³ Thus, the white population in the country more than doubled within a decade, growing from 82 386 in 1946 to 177 124 in 1956. Over 17 000 immigrants were admitted into the country in 1948 alone.⁷³⁴ Contributing to the urban population expansion was the increasing presence of Africans in the major towns.⁷³⁵ With a significant number of them now employed in urban centres as a result of expanding industrialisation, and their spending abilities thus enhanced, African consumption of consumer goods became increasingly important in post war Southern Rhodesia.⁷³⁶ Thus, in spite of the steadily increasing local dairy output, demand continued to outstrip supply. As shown in the graph below, the butter shortfall actually increased, reaching a record high in 1950.

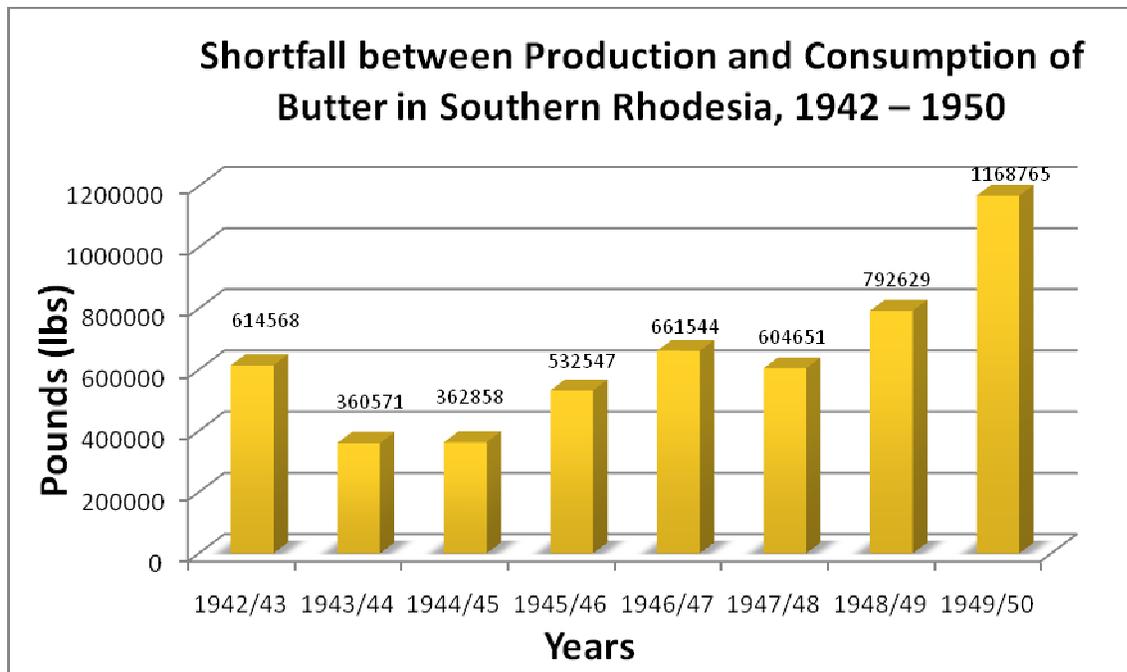
⁷³² Samasuwo, ““There is something about cattle”: Towards an economic history of the beef industry in colonial Zimbabwe, with special reference to the role of the state, 1939-1980”, 80.

⁷³³ G. Arrighi and J.S. Saul, *Essays on the political economy of Africa*, (New York: Heinemann, 1973), 351.

⁷³⁴ Shutz, ‘European population patterns’, 16. Also see Mlambo, ‘Building a white men’s country’, 9.

⁷³⁵ Burke, *Lifebuoy men, lux women*, 109.

⁷³⁶ Burke, *Lifebuoy men, lux women*, 105-117.



Graph 5: Shortfall between Production and Consumption of Butter in Southern Rhodesia, 1942-1950.⁷³⁷

The shortfall, it should be noted, was also a result of the increased focus on fresh milk noted earlier, which reduced the amount of milk converted into butter at the creameries. The crisis, meanwhile, meant that butter rationing became a permanent feature of the dairy industry throughout the 1940s and the early 1950s. Throughout 1947, for example, a single person was allowed only $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. per week.⁷³⁸ As South Africa was unable to provide supplies during the late 1940s due to shortages within its own borders, the country largely depended on Kenya for the few imports that were made during the 1940s.⁷³⁹

Although the importance of the maize growing and the cattle industry to the national political economy was somewhat diluted by the emergence of the 'leaf of gold' and the manufacturing industry,⁷⁴⁰ the drive for food production was intensified after the war. Indeed, the government realised that the success of post-war industrialisation inexorably depended on the production of

⁷³⁷ *Official Yearbook of Southern Rhodesia*, 4, 1952, 412.

⁷³⁸ NAZ S932/92 Food Production Scheme: Letter from the Secretary, Department of Commerce and Industries to the Secretary, Office of the High Commissioner for Southern Rhodesia, 24 October 1947.

⁷³⁹ NAZ S932/92 Food Production Scheme: Letter from N. Fillmore, Import Division, Denbighshire to A. Cox, Office of the High Commissioner for Southern Rhodesia, 21 April 1945.

⁷⁴⁰ Phimister, *An economic and social history of Zimbabwe*, 234.

sufficient food for the growing population which now included a permanently urbanised African population. To this end, the government re-organised the Agricultural Department into six separate specialist departments: Research and Specialist Services; Conservation and Extension Services (CONEX); Forestry; Lands; Veterinary Services and Irrigation.⁷⁴¹ It was the first two departments – under the directorship of J.K. Chorley and C.A. Murray respectively – that played a pivotal role in the efforts to expand and modernise dairy farming in Southern Rhodesia. The publication of two reports by Frank Engledow on research, teaching, advisory work and agricultural development in 1949 and 1950 respectively gave impetus to the food production policy. Both reports re-emphasized the importance of food self-sufficiency in the social and political development of the colony.⁷⁴²

The provision of loans to farmers for production that had begun in the early 1940s was extended to the post-war period by CONEX. Besides the continuation of the Price Equalisation Scheme in 1947 in which the government paid a subsidy of 2 ½ d per lb., irrespective of grade, to all milk and cream producers,⁷⁴³ various loans were extended to dairy producers from the late 1940 onwards. All dairymen who were registered members of the Intensive Conservation Areas (ICAs), which had been established in 1948 under CONEX, became eligible to receive special loans from the Land and Agricultural Bank for the purchase of farming equipment which could help increase farm productivity.⁷⁴⁴ This arrangement was thrashed out in negotiations between the Department of CONEX, the Dairy Division and the Land and Agricultural Bank.⁷⁴⁵ The Food Production Committees, which were reconstituted as Central Food Production Committees under CONEX, oversaw the loans while the Dairy Division approved and acted as guarantor for ‘bona

⁷⁴¹ Weinmann, *Agricultural Research and Development in Southern Rhodesia 1924-1950*, 5.

⁷⁴² *Report on Teaching, Research and Advisory Work* by F. Engledow to the Minister of Agriculture and Lands presented to the Legislative Assembly, 1949), and *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Agricultural Development of Southern Rhodesia*, (chairman, F. Engledow), 1950. The two committees were instituted for the purpose of advising on methods of increasing the country’s agricultural capacity and food production in particular at a time when the socio-economic landscape was rapidly changing amid the rapid industrialisation in Southern Rhodesia and the resultant increase in urban population.

⁷⁴³ Ngadze, ‘The development of commercial dairying’, 51.

⁷⁴⁴ NAZ S957/2 Food Production sub-Committees: Memorandum from D. Parry-Evans, Secretary, Food Production Committee to all Intensive Conservation Committees chairmen, 17 July 1951.

⁷⁴⁵ For more on the working relationship between the CONEX and agricultural division see Maravanyika, ‘Soil Conservation and the White Agrarian Environment in Colonial Zimbabwe’, 208-239.

vide' dairy farmers. At least 600 producers had benefitted by 1952.⁷⁴⁶ Thus, the provision of loans was an important part of helping farmers to increase their capacity to produce food both during and after the war.

The cream of the cows? The Drive for dairy herds

While the previous section has illustrated that initial efforts at avoiding 'indiscriminate production' were side-lined as the crisis of shortages unfolded, the government did not lose sight of the long term goal of achieving "guided expansion". In tandem with the recommendations of the 1935 Committee of Enquiry and the ideals of the 1937 Dairy Act, the 1940s were characterised by intensified efforts to create a larger and more specialised industry. Although the policy to assist white farmers to acquire pedigree stock had begun with the advent of the White Agricultural Policy in 1908, it reached unprecedented proportions from the 1940s onwards, backed by a more concerted research programme on livestock management systems. Hence, the advent of the war should not be viewed as having marked the beginning of better herds programme; rather, the socio-economic circumstances of the war made the drive more urgent.

Whereas the presence of surplus dairy products in the country for much of the 1920s to the 1930s had managed to mask the dearth of genuine dairy cows in the country, the outbreak of war and the ensuing shortages brought with it a realisation by the Dairy Division that more needed to be done to improve the quality of dairy cows in the country.⁷⁴⁷ This would be achieved through helping farmers to purchase genuine dairy cows as well as improving cattle management systems. The idea was to achieve self-sufficiency through the use of higher yielding cows (and not entirely through the payment of higher producer prices).⁷⁴⁸ From the outset, the state responded to the expanding local market and the ensuing shortages by seeking to improve the quality of dairy cows among the farmers. While noting the need to respond to a looming crisis with regards to dairy supplies, Cory argued that:

⁷⁴⁶ NAZ S957/2 Food Production sub-Committees: Letter from E.D. Palmer, Chairman, Central Food Production Committee to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Lands, 28 January 1953.

⁷⁴⁷ NAZ S482/20/42 Central Food Production, 1940-1943: Memorandum by the Chairman of the Central Food Production, 11 April 1940.

⁷⁴⁸ *The Bulawayo Chronicle*, Monday 11 March, 1940.

There is room for increased production in the dairy industry. However, far too high a percentage of our dairy products have been derived from cows of ranching or beef strain. With this type of cow as the basis of the industry there has never been stability in the industry. Production is too varied...we want production from recognised dairy or dual purpose herds.⁷⁴⁹

While the scarcity of genuine dairy cows was certainly not a new phenomenon, Cory's statement served as a pointer to government approach to war-time and post-war expansion in the dairy industry. He viewed the dairy deficit in 1942 to be a direct result of the dearth of dairy cows, saying the deficit represented "the output of, say, 4 000 good dairy cows" which needed to be bred or imported into the country.⁷⁵⁰

Initially, farmers and farmers' organisations were not entirely convinced that the solution to the shortages lay in the acquisition of better dairy cattle. As they had always done, their primary concern lay on immediate incentives such as prices and other bonuses that could be extended to producers. For instance, when responding to a comment by a member of the DICB about the shortage of dairy cows, the Chairperson of the Figtree Farmers' Association expressed his belief that "the dairy cattle are (already) in the colony for this extra production", and further contended that his organisation was of the view that the butter shortage would be better solved through increasing producer prices and other bonuses.⁷⁵¹ Although increasing producer prices was one sure way of expanding production, it may also be argued that the farmer's fixation with prices was myopic, particularly considering that major dairying countries had developed through reducing costs of production and use of the most economical dairy cows. For example, the Dutch government pushed for the expansion of the dairy industry through what Bert Theunissen termed the 'Holstenisation' of the dairy industry.⁷⁵² This entailed the creation of the modern Friesian breed – an improved cross-bred between the American Holstein and the traditional Dutch

⁷⁴⁹ Quoted in *The Bulawayo Chronicle*, Monday 11 March, 1940.

⁷⁵⁰ NAZ S2565/3 Dairy Correspondence: Letter from the Chief Dairy Officer to the Secretary for Agriculture, 14 March 1942.

⁷⁵¹ Minutes of a meeting of the Figtree Farmers' Association quoted in *Vuka*, October 1940.

⁷⁵² B. Theunissen, 'Breeding for nobility or for production? Cultures of dairy cattle breeding in the Netherlands, 1945-1995' *Isis*, 103, 2, (June 2012), 279.

Friesland breed – which not only yielded higher and better milk, but was also more resistant to bovine tuberculosis.⁷⁵³

In line with the stated drive for better herds, the government established a Livestock Improvement Committee in 1940 with the aim of improving livestock for beef, dairy, pig and sheep production. In turn, the Committee espoused a Livestock Improvement Scheme under which the Livestock Improvement Committee selected pure-bred bulls and female stock on behalf of farmers who would have been deemed eligible to receive grants and loans towards the purchase of good sires.⁷⁵⁴ Although conditions of this scheme were more or less similar to the schemes that had been in operation previously, the expenditure involved shows that the scheme was widely expanded during the 1940s. Whereas an average of £500 was spent on loans for the purchase of dairy cows annually between 1934 and 1939, up to £1 700 were set aside by the Food Production Committee for the purchase of dairy cows in 1942 alone.⁷⁵⁵



Figure 3: A 'holstenised' Friesian dairy cow. This breed was by far the most popular dairy breed in the country.⁷⁵⁶

⁷⁵³ See B. Theunissen, 'Breeding for nobility or for production? Cultures of dairy cattle breeding in the Netherlands, 1945-1995', 278-309, and B. Theunissen, 'Breeding without Mendelism: Theory and practice of dairy cattle breeding in the Netherlands, 1900-1950', *Journal of the History of Biology*, 41, 4, (2008), 637-676.

⁷⁵⁴ NAZ S1215/1324/1 Rhodesia Stockowners' Association: Circular by the Secretary, Jas H. Mitchell to all members, 20 August, 1941.

⁷⁵⁵ NAZ S955/233 Central Food Production Committee Report, 1942 – 1949: Progress Report 1942.

⁷⁵⁶ H. Stringleman and F. Scrimgeour, 'Dairying and dairy products – dairy cattle breeds', *The encyclopedia of New Zealand*, (November 2012), 6.

Moreover, to ensure that only specialist dairy producers received assistance, the conditions for the approval of loans for farmers were modified from 1941 onwards. Whereas virtually any stock owner could qualify for a cattle loan prior to the outbreak of war, the Dairy Division specified that assistance would be given to farmers with a proven track record of milk and cream production. In a circular to the Matabeleland Farmers' Union in 1943, the Secretary for Agriculture and Lands intimated that his department would be importing dairy heifers on behalf of "bona fide farmers in the Colony", and in co-operation with the Land and Agricultural Bank, the consignment of dairy heifers would be distributed to approved dairy farmers.⁷⁵⁷ Notably, the main object behind the careful selection of beneficiaries was part of the bigger battle to rid the industry of part-time producers. Recipient farmers were required to pay only £105 of the total cost of the cattle, with the rest paid by the Land and Agricultural Bank as a loan to be repaid over four years.⁷⁵⁸ This scheme, which had benefitted 320 dairy farmers by 1945, was lauded by the leadership of the Mashonaland Farmers' Union as "a sure foundation on which the future of dairy farming in this country can be secured."⁷⁵⁹ The rapid process of post war white settlement was facilitated by the Land and Agricultural Bank and the Land Settlement Board, which helped to advance more loans for the purchase of land, livestock and machinery. This was after the realisation that post-war developments would exert even more pressure to bear on the cattle industry. The gravity of the issue was expressed by Cory thus:

It is likely that there will be serious shortage of dairy bulls in this Colony after the war. Further, the rise in price of high grade bulls is forcing many of the smaller producers to make use of unregistered bulls. The Livestock Improvement Committee, in co-operation with the Dairy Division, is therefore very anxious to encourage a greater production of reliable grade bulls to meet these needs for the time being.⁷⁶⁰

The Food Production Loans Committee, which fell under the Central Food Production Committee was formed in 1951, thus gave out loans in conjunction with the Land and

⁷⁵⁷ *Vuka*, 40, February 1942.

⁷⁵⁸ *Vuka*, 40, February 1942.

⁷⁵⁹ NAZ S482/178/39 Farmers' complaints and suggestions: Memorandum by the Secretary of the Mashonaland Farmers Union, 12 March 1943.

⁷⁶⁰ NAZ 1215/1310/1 Grade Bulls Scheme, 1945: Memorandum by the Chief Dairy Officer, (date not given).

Agricultural Bank, to approved farmers for the purchase of Friesland bulls, cows and heifers.⁷⁶¹ Up to 690 loan applications were processed in 1951 alone, with the result that £613 000 was expended on the programme.⁷⁶² Dairy farmers who were granted these loans were ordered to carry out their farming operations under the supervision of the ICAs operating in their areas. In this way, the progress farmers made in increasing the scope of their dairy production could be assessed.⁷⁶³

Further, in June 1951 the government approved a total of £1 000 to be paid for all stud dairy stock imported from overseas. The result of this programme was the importation of more than 200 Friesland heifers into the country for distribution among farmers.⁷⁶⁴ This system was further strengthened by the introduction of yet another scheme the following year by the Cold Storage Commission in which local heifers that had been proven to have “impressive milking capabilities” were distributed for cross breeding with imported Friesland bulls.⁷⁶⁵ This, the Dairy Division thought, would help the imported stock to acquire the hardiness and resistance to the harsh local environmental conditions.⁷⁶⁶ By 1950, about 40.8% (or 469 000) of white owned cattle were classified as ‘Grade cattle’, that is cattle with at least three-quarters pure-bred blood in them. Although this was predominantly of beef breeds such as Afrikander, Hereford, Aberdeen Angus and Sussex, the Friesland was the second most popular breed in the country.⁷⁶⁷ Indeed, the impact of the schemes may be illustrated by the statistical increase in the number of cows that were successfully entered for the Milk Recording Scheme. As shown in chapter 4, this programme had been shunned by farmers during the 1920s and 1930s on account of the low productivity of the majority of their cows. The graph below shows that the number of cows entered for the scheme increased considerably between 1935 and 1950.

⁷⁶¹ Press statement by the Secretary for Agriculture and Lands, 13 April 1953.

⁷⁶² Weinmann, *Agricultural Research and Development in Southern Rhodesia*, 197.

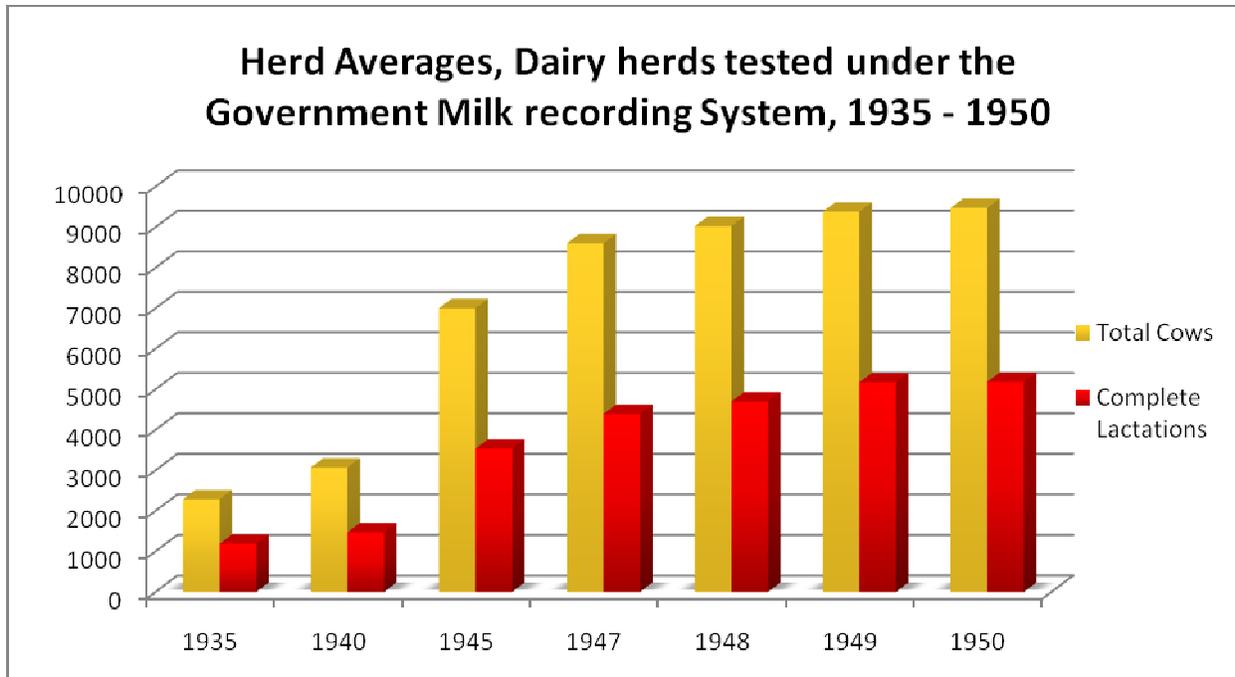
⁷⁶³ NAZ S957/2 Food Production sub-Committees: Letter from D. Parry-Evans, Secretary, Food Production Committee to all chairmen of ICA Committees, 17 July 1951.

⁷⁶⁴ Ngadze, ‘The development of commercial dairying in Southern Rhodesia’, 54.

⁷⁶⁵ *Annual Report of the Dairy Industry Control Board*, 1951.

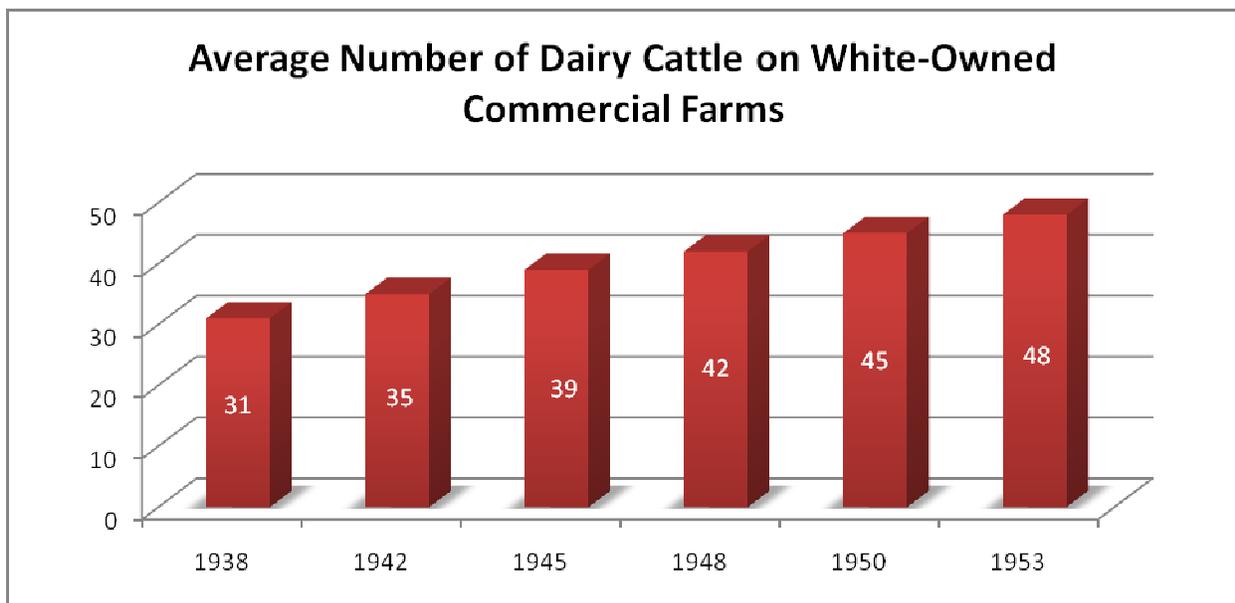
⁷⁶⁶ Although Friesland breeds were considered to be the most suitable European dairy breed for Southern Rhodesian conditions, most of them, as did many beef breeds, often struggled to adapt to local conditions with the result that they lost their vitality and productivity, hence cross breeding with local breeds would give them an extra suitability for the local environment without necessarily affecting their milk productivity. See chapters 2 and 3.

⁷⁶⁷ *Official yearbook of Southern Rhodesia*, 1946.



Graph 6: Herd Averages for Dairy herds tested under the Government Milk Recording Scheme, 1935-1950.⁷⁶⁸

Significantly, the total number of dairy cows held on commercial farms increased steadily from 1938 onwards. This is reflected in the following graph.



Graph 7: Average number of dairy cows on white-owned commercial farms.⁷⁶⁹

⁷⁶⁸ *Southern Rhodesia Official Yearbook*, 4, 1952, 411.

In addition to importing live cattle from external sources, Artificial Insemination (AI) was widely used in an attempt to improve locally available breeds.⁷⁷⁰ Indeed, instead of importing bulls, the Livestock Improvement Committee sanctioned the importation of frozen semen from Friesland bulls which would be used in improving the milking capabilities of local breeds in the ownership of white farmers. Reporting in 1943, the Central Food Production Committee stated that besides importing cows for dairy farmers, “upwards of 150 cows have been inseminated with imported semen from South Africa in the past 18 months.”⁷⁷¹ AI was instrumental in assisting farmers to cross-breed more productive cattle with local livestock without the need to purchase live cows and bulls.

The science of dairy farming

Besides merely seeking to increase the number of dairy cows, one of the issues that received the earnest attention of officials of the Dairy Division and farmer organisations was the improvement livestock management systems on the farms, particularly the feeding aspect. This would in turn increase productivity per cow and reduce the cost of production. Samasuwo has stated that more focus was put on pasture research at the country’s research stations from the late 1940s, when post-war industrialisation and demand was expanding.⁷⁷² The refocus on the work at the Grassland Experimental Station at Marandellas, however, actually commenced as early as 1939 when the Pasture Research Committee began a series of experiments at the station, when it became apparent that a paradigm shift was essential if the Southern Rhodesian cattle industry were to adequately address the challenges that came with the war.⁷⁷³

With regards to dairy cattle, the experiments began with two trials in 1940 of Friesland cows. Besides the fact that the acreage of pasturage in the country had shown little increase during the previous few years, the results showed that the poorer granite soil at the station (which generally

⁷⁶⁹ *Agriculture Marketing Authority of Rhodesia, Report of the Dairy Industry*, September 1976.

⁷⁷⁰ Artificial Insemination is the veterinary procedure of injecting semen into the uterus of cows with the aim of influencing the genetic make up of their progenies. Although this had been happening in Southern Rhodesia prior to the WWII, the better herds drive necessarily meant that that the programme was intensified.

⁷⁷¹ NAZ S955/233 Central Food Production Committee Report, 1942 – 1949: Progress Report, 1942.

⁷⁷² Samasuwo, “‘There is something about cattle’ Towards an economic history of the beef industry in colonial Zimbabwe, 1939-1980’, 95.

⁷⁷³ NAZ S1215/1304/3 Grassland Experiment Station: Memorandum by A.E. Romyn, Chief Animal Husbandry Officer, titled ‘Economic Aspects of Established Pastures in Southern Rhodesia, (date not given).

resembled most of the areas on which cattle were kept in the country) could not sustain dairy cattle without the need for supplementary feeding.⁷⁷⁴ E. Romyn, the chairman of the Pasture Research Committee, reported in 1942 thus:

It can be stated, however, that established pastures on the poor soils at Marandellas have not so far proved an economic success. The carrying capacity of these established pastures is greater than the natural veld but the increased yield in either beef or milk has not covered the extra cost of establishing and maintaining them. The fundamental cause of the failure has been the low fertility of the soils on which the attempt has been made to establish the high yielding grasses.⁷⁷⁵

With the improved availability of funds during the 1940s, the white farming community became increasingly aware of the need to acquire proper dairy herds and to maintain them. Indeed, white farming magazines began to prominently feature livestock management and feeding methods from the 1940s onwards. An editorial in the *Rhodesia Agricultural Journal* titled 'Dairying and the War Effort' in 1942, for instance, stated that:

Increased production can be brought about in several ways but chiefly by improving the feeding methods and by feeding the cows to full milking capacity. Dairy men should grow as much feed as they can, particularly legumes which are almost irreplaceable for feeding milking cows...Dairy farmers now have a chance, while helping themselves, to make an important material contribution to the Colony's war effort.⁷⁷⁶

Similarly, *Vuka* ran a determined campaign in 1940 to warn farmers of the importance of maintaining dairy heifers at optimum productive levels.⁷⁷⁷ Using the same magazine, the chairman of the Matabeleland Farmers' Union advised farmers to desist from clamouring for higher prices, but, instead, to take advantage of the assistance rendered by officials of the Agricultural Department on pasture management. He observed that:

⁷⁷⁴ NAZ S1215/1304/3 Grassland Experiment Station: Memorandum by A.E. Romyn, Chief Animal Husbandry Officer, titled 'Economic Aspects of Established Pastures in Southern Rhodesia, (date not given).

⁷⁷⁵ NAZ S1215/1304/3 Grassland Experiment Station: Letter from Romyn to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Lands, 31 December 1942.

⁷⁷⁶ Editorial, *The Rhodesia Agricultural Journal*, 39, 2, (March-April 1942).

⁷⁷⁷ Virtually every edition of the monthly magazine contained an article on livestock management with a view to encourage farmers to adopt supplementary feeding. For example, the July 1940 edition ran an article titled 'Save a Shilling and ruin a dairy cow? Look after your heifers – it will pay you.'

We have a golden opportunity now, while prices of our products are remunerative, to put our house in order. We should endeavour to consolidate our financial position (through) the improvement of our breeding stock, rather than to dissipate them on non-essentials. We are facing a rigorous and testing time, and there will be no place for the ignorant or the indolent, but on the contrary, the highest possible degree of efficiency will be imperative, so that modest returns will be offset by low production costs, while our quality will command the best of whatever prices are ruling.⁷⁷⁸

Two significant issues emerge from the above statement. Firstly, there is an explicit concession that, far from becoming a stumbling block, the war actually provided Southern Rhodesian farmers with an opportunity to improve their production methods to match international standards at a time when they were cushioned from competition from the major producers of the world. Secondly, implicit in the statement is a realisation by the farmers' body that profitable dairy farming not only depended on the prevailing producer prices, but largely on the achievement of high levels of efficiency which would in turn lower production costs.

The post-war period phase was characterised by the devotion of more attention and funds towards research. For instance, in 1950 and 1951 £341 394 was set aside for livestock research and extension services and £134 834 was reserved for veterinary services.⁷⁷⁹ Work at the Grassland Station in Marandellas was continued, and the Matopos Research Station concentrated on animal husbandry research. The Grassland Station began to test the effect of maize, wheat and silage crops, leguminous hay or fodder crops such as beans and soya beans on the productivity of both African and white-owned cattle.⁷⁸⁰ In general, the results of the research showed that, besides the lack of adequate pastures in most parts of the country, veldt pastures in the high rainfall areas in the north eastern areas lacked several minerals which in turn affected the milk productivity of dairy cows.⁷⁸¹

⁷⁷⁸ Quoted in *Vuka*, October 1940.

⁷⁷⁹ Samasuwo, "There is something about cattle" Towards an economic history of the beef industry in colonial Zimbabwe, 1939-1980', 95.

⁷⁸⁰ N. Murombedzi, 'Pasture research at the Grasslands Research Station and veldt management and their contribution to the cattle industry of Southern Rhodesia', Honours Dissertation, University of Zimbabwe, 1988, 10.

⁷⁸¹ Murombedzi, 'Pasture research at the Grasslands Research Station', 10.

In addition to the role of farmer magazines in information dissemination discussed earlier, farmers' organisations held an increasing number of meetings and workshops with farmers with a view to encourage the adoption of supplementary feeding, especially during winter seasons.⁷⁸² Although shortages were more acute during the winter seasons throughout the 1940s and 1950s, the use of supplementary feeding became "widespread" so much that the chairman of the Milk Producers' Sub-Committee of the Matabeleland Farmers' Union, E. Bickle, estimated that at least 75% of dairy producers in Matabeleland had begun to use supplementary feeding either through the growing of maize or purchase by 1948.⁷⁸³ Worth noting, however, is the fact that the increase in the use of supplementary feeding was not only due to increased awareness among farmers, but also due to the existence of price incentives for producers and increased state financial support which helped to recapitalise dairying operations. As the next section shows, a major incentive was offered for producers who acquired improved herds and adopted better production methods.

The Dairy Bonus Scheme

The Dairy Division introduced the Dairy Bonus Scheme in 1944. Under this scheme, which was directly administered by the Chief Dairy Officer, special bonuses were paid on first and second grade butterfat supplied to a creamery and on milk converted into cheddar, gouda or Roquefort cheese. In the case of Gouda and Roquefort cheese, which did not need to be graded, the Chief Dairy Officer would determine whether the quality of the cheese manufactured during the calendar year merited the bonus. Bonuses of 4d and 2d were paid per lb. for first and second grade butterfat respectively, while 1d per gallon was paid for milk converted into first grade cheddar, Gouda and Roquefort cheese.⁷⁸⁴ Farm butter makers were excluded particularly because they "were not considered assets to the industry."⁷⁸⁵

⁷⁸² A look at the *Vuka* magazine and the *Rhodesia Agricultural Journal* editions of the 1940s to early 1950s shows that a series of meetings were held between officials of the Dairy Division and farmers' organisations, where the benefits of adoption of contemporary breeding and feeding systems were discussed.

⁷⁸³ *Vuka*, 24 May 1948.

⁷⁸⁴ J. Cory, 'The dairy industry', *The Rhodesia Agricultural Journal*, 44, 4 (July-August, 1947), 279.

⁷⁸⁵ NAZ S1215/1081/1 Rhodesia National Farmers' Union: Minutes of the seventh meeting of the Council, 20-21 April 1944, Salisbury.

While these incentives, particularly the figures involved, appeared attractive, the conditions which prospective beneficiaries had to meet were quite stringent. To qualify for these bonuses, a producer had to comply with the following prerequisites:

- i. That his herd has been milk recorded under the Southern Rhodesia Milk Recording Scheme.
- ii. That 25% of the cows recorded during the year have each produced a minimum of 125 lb. of butterfat in 300 days or less. This standard operated for the first year, and in the second year would be raised to 150 lb. of butterfat, and in the third and fourth years to 175 lb. and in the fifth and subsequent years to 200 lb. of butterfat.
- iii. That his dairy premises were registered under the Dairy Act.
- iv. That his methods of feeding and management have been approved – the main factors here to be the condition of the young stock and the use of an approved bull.⁷⁸⁶

The above conditions illustrate that improving the quality of dairy cattle and the conditions of production in general was an important aspect of the Dairy Division's efforts to encourage farmers to increase the quantities of milk and cream output during the 1940s. While acknowledging that dairy cows were scarce, the first two conditions were definitely aimed at encouraging farmers to acquire more efficient dairy cows, while the last one would act as an inducement for farmers to improve their livestock feeding systems. Similarly, the third condition was a direct attempt to push farmers to improve their production methods, which would, in turn, result in them being registered under the Dairy Act.⁷⁸⁷ Thus, to the extent that the Dairy Bonus Scheme sought to extend incentives to farmers to increase cream and milk production while at the same time encouraging the adoption of more efficient dairy cows and more sanitary production methods, the Dairy Bonus Scheme should be viewed as a double barrelled reaction to war-time and post-war crisis which sought to improve both the quantity and quality of dairy products.

⁷⁸⁶ Cory, 'The dairy industry', 279. Also quoted in Ngadze, 'The development of commercial dairy farming', 49.

⁷⁸⁷ See Chapter 5 of this thesis.

The scheme, however, was reviled by some farmers, who felt – as they enduringly did – that expansion could only be achieved through general price increases. All but one of the branches of the Rhodesia National Farmers' Union (RNFU) argued that the price paid for cream was uneconomic; urging the DICB to “raise the prices to an economic level, without conditions” before adding that the government was placing farmers in a difficult position through the bonus schemes.⁷⁸⁸ It added that the council's opinion was that:

The (g)overnment would have been better advised to recognise that the cream producers, in common with those engaged in other branches of the farming industry had been under the burden of inadequate prices for considerable time and grant them the bonuses in the way of increased prices without obligations for two years so that they could be able to afford the improvements visualised in the scheme.⁷⁸⁹

The Midlands branch went so far as to prescribe the actual price they desired, stating that the disaster of shortages could only be averted by:

The fixation of butterfat prices at 2/2d per lb. for the coming winter and 1/10 per lb. for the following summer, entirely irrespective of the bonuses and levies which are not favoured. Only after the placing of the industry on a sound economic basis as set out is the Branch prepared to consider the Dairy Bonus Scheme submitted by the Minister.⁷⁹⁰

These arguments, however, did not consider that white farmers had, as already discussed in chapter 4 and 5, received significant state financial and technical assistance as well as support to cushion them from the vagaries of international prices. As Cory explained:

The price of cream had been advanced quite considerably but (the producers) had not been able to increase their output. The reason for this is that their whole basis was wrong and they were not working along the right lines.⁷⁹¹

⁷⁸⁸ This particular resolution was made by the Victoria Branch in 1944. This resolution, however, was adopted by the full RNFU meeting and forwarded as a true representation of the entire Union. See NAZ S1215/1081/1 Rhodesia National Farmers' Union: Minutes of the seventh meeting of the Council, 20-21 April 1944, Salisbury.

⁷⁸⁹ NAZ S1215/1081/1 Rhodesia National Farmers' Union: Minutes of the seventh meeting of the Council, 20-21 April 1944, Salisbury.

⁷⁹⁰ NAZ S1215/1081/1 Rhodesia National Farmers' Union: Minutes of the seventh meeting of the Council, 20-21 April 1944, Salisbury.

⁷⁹¹ NAZ 1215/1363/221 Chief Dairy Officer – butter: Letter from the Chief Dairy Officer to the Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Lands, 20 May 1944.

It should be noted that although nearly all branches of the RNFU detested the conditions set out in the Dairy Bonus Scheme on the basis of perceived low real prices, the Bulawayo Branch expressed reservations for entirely different reasons. Largely because the region was dominated by beef cattle ranching, the branch was only concerned about the conditions regarding the exclusive use of dairy cows for one to qualify. It reported:

The meeting approves of the Dairy Bonus Scheme provided mixed farming is provided for, considering that the scheme as put forward applies only to a small percentage, who have, or can obtain genuine dairy cows and who are in a position to adopt dairy farming. The genuine mixed farmer with dual purpose cattle obtain the bonus, under a separate scheme, and should qualify by feeding his herd and young stock adequately; but should not be required to hand-rear, or record.⁷⁹²

Considering that the Matabeleland region was generally regarded as the prime cattle region, and also that the region possessed the highest number of dual purpose cattle breeds – such as South Devons and Shorthorns⁷⁹³ – the Bulawayo producers’ argument does, at face value, seem quite plausible. Their position, however, was rendered untenable by the fact that approved dual purpose cattle were eligible for the scheme, with only beef stock ineligible for both the Dairy Bonus Scheme and the Milk Recording Scheme. Possibly, they were angling to have their beef cattle accommodated into the scheme. Indeed, the chairman of the Bulawayo Cream Producers’ Committee’s claim that “too much stress is (being) placed on dairy regulations (yet) most men I know could produce first grade (butter) without keeping to the regulations” is a telling pointer to the attitudes accompanying the farmers’ resistance to the control mechanisms governing the industry.⁷⁹⁴

⁷⁹² NAZ S1215/1081/1 Rhodesia National Farmers’ Union: Minutes of the seventh meeting of the Council, 20-21 April 1944, Salisbury.

⁷⁹³ Also known as the ‘Orange Elephants’, the South Devons were initially bred in England for both beef and milk production during the mid-19th century. However, they have recently been more popular for their beefing qualities. Originating in North East England during the late 18th century, the Shorthorn breed was developed for both beef and dairy production; however, there were certain bloodlines within the breed which emphasized one quality over the other. Due to its arid climate and generally flat topography, Matabeleland was regarded as the most suitable for cattle ranching; hence farmers were eager to engage in both beef and dairy production.

⁷⁹⁴ NAZ S1215/1081/1 Matabeleland Farmers’ Union: Notes on a general debate on agricultural co-operation, 2 May 1944.

Once the scheme commenced in 1945, however, an increasing number of farmers began to meet the conditions set out as a result of the propaganda on farm management and the availability of financial assistance to improve their methods. By 1950, an appreciable increase in the number of farmers had become eligible to claim the bonus. Whereas only 18% of all registered cream producers could qualify for the bonus at its inception in 1944, 58% were deemed eligible by 1950.⁷⁹⁵ Also, as illustrated earlier, the number of cows that entered the Milk Recording Scheme showed a significant upward trend. Commenting on the state of the industry in the wake of the Dairy Bonus Scheme, and indeed other reforms which had begun in 1938, the Minister of Agriculture, C.L. Robertson, reported with satisfaction:

The (dairy) industry is now in the process of discarding the old primitive unhygienic practices of the past for the more up-to-date and efficient methods of the present. The majority of our farmers are now in possession of better milking cows, and better methods of feeding are now widespread...⁷⁹⁶

Although significant improvements in production methods and the quality of herds had been made by the late 1940s, the Minister's statement, however, embellished the exact state of affairs in the industry. As late as the 1960s, the DMB was still complaining about the poor levels of cow productivity and low farm efficiency in comparison with major dairying countries in the world.⁷⁹⁷

Sour Milk? The Milk Subsidy Committee and farmer contestations

One of the most contested post-war interventions was the introduction of the Milk Subsidy Scheme in 1947. The devastating drought that ravaged the southern parts of the country in that year meant that dairy production in Matabeleland was at risk of falling further short of requirements. Aware that they had to buy considerable quantities of feed, and the generally high inflationary pressures throughout the country, dairymen and two processing concerns in Matabeleland pushed for a drought relief scheme specifically for their region. The Matabeleland Farmers' Union warned that due to the acute and complex position, "whole milk supplies will

⁷⁹⁵ *Annual Report of the Dairy Industry Control Board*, 1951.

⁷⁹⁶ *Annual Report of the Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Lands*, 1946.

⁷⁹⁷ See Hove, 'Creating Order and Stability?', 73-75. Also see NAZ FG4 *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Dairy Industry*, 1961, 14.

fail and the butterfat (producers) will go out of production, unless they are assisted".⁷⁹⁸ As there were no fixed producer prices, the Milk Co-op added that it was handling low quantities of milk and cream as a result of low production levels, a factor which, it argued, was adversely affecting its own operational viability. It added:

The present price of milk – or rather the price paid to the producer – is far too low and unless this could be appreciably increased production would be very materially curtailed. Handling costs at the Milk Co-op are apparently very high – higher in fact than they have ever been – and the payout to the producers is only about 1/5 d per gallon which is at least 4d per gallon less than the current payout for any of the other similar undertakings in the Colony.⁷⁹⁹

The Dairy Division approved the implementation of the Milk Subsidy Scheme from April 1947 until the end of that year. Under this arrangement, a guaranteed price of 2/- per gallon was paid to suppliers of whole milk who could prove that they were receiving less for it in and around Bulawayo. Effectively, this meant that no subsidy was paid to producers already receiving 2/- per gallon or more.⁸⁰⁰ With these conditions, the majority of suppliers who were eligible were those supplying produce to the Milk Co-op and the Bulawayo Creamery, since other undertakings paid higher prices.⁸⁰¹ Surprisingly, the authorities did not seek to investigate the circumstances that led to only a few concerns paying less than 2d per gallon for milk when others could pay more.

Inevitably, the payment of the subsidy to some producers was reviled by farmers who had been deemed ineligible for the scheme. They argued that, to the extent that all farmers in Matabeleland (and beyond) were facing similar economic challenges, the scheme was discriminatory against farmers who did not send supplies to the two concerns. In any case, they argued, the milk deficiency was a national problem, which warranted a national approach. The sentiments expressed by J. Jameson, a Bulawayo-based farmer, reveal the fury among excluded farmers:

⁷⁹⁸ NAZ S1215/1365/1 Milk Subsidy Scheme claims: Memorandum by the Matabeleland Agricultural Union, 28 April 1947.

⁷⁹⁹ NAZ S1215/1365/1 Milk Subsidy Scheme claims: Letter from the Director, Milk Co-op (name not given) to Cory, Chief Dairy Officer, 10 March 1947.

⁸⁰⁰ NAZ S1215/1365/1 Milk Subsidy Scheme claims: Letter from the Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Lands the Chief Dairy Officer, 12 April 1947.

⁸⁰¹ As the Milk Co-op argued, its handling costs were much higher than other undertakings. This was because it only received the least gallonage of milk. The average price they paid for milk was 1/5d per gallon.

I fail to see the point in introducing a scheme to help farmers during the present drought, when in actual fact the scheme is only beneficial to a certain section of the farming community, some of whom regard dairy activities as a side line. I would further point out that the price of cattle has increased to all farmers. If I am not assisted under this scheme there is no object in trying to maintain a high standard of dairy farming. I certainly would not continue [M]ilk [R]ecording...a dual purpose herd would curtail my labours considerably.⁸⁰²

Another Bulawayo farmer, Parsons, whose attempts to benefit from the scheme had been unsuccessful added:

I am feeling the effect of the drought as much as any farmer in the area. I buy all my cattle feed and in addition now have to buy water. I also have no grazing. I am unable to see why I am not entitled to a subsidy seeing its object is to 'maintain supplies' which can only be achieved subsidising every producer, whereas it appears to me that only suppliers of the Rhodesia Co-op Milk Company and Bulawayo Creamery benefit. If I am to send my milk to one of these institutions your Committee would be prepared to subsidise on all the milk produced. So I can only arrive at the conclusion that it is not the farmer who is being subsidised.⁸⁰³

Dairy farmers from districts outside Matabeleland also felt short-changed by a scheme that only served a few farmers in one province. One farmer, T.W. Duff, from Marandellas in eastern Mashonaland contended that although the effects of the drought were mainly felt in Matabeleland, farmers in Mashonaland also needed a subsidy to purchase supplementary feed and to cover transport costs. He asserted that the scheme

as it currently operates serves to divide and discourage dairy farmers. We are producing butterfat and cream under the most difficult circumstances in other provinces and yet a select few are receiving preferential treatment in one district of the country.⁸⁰⁴

That only two processing concerns had played a key role in pushing for the scheme, and that the Dairy Division did not examine their operations added credence to excluded farmers' contention that, far from helping farmers to maintain supplies in the wake of the drought, the scheme ended up subsidising 'inefficient' concerns. The concerns' owners' claim that the increased handling

⁸⁰² NAZ S1215/1365/1 Milk Subsidy Scheme claims: Letter from J. Jameson, Criterion Farm, Bulawayo, to the Chief Dairy Officer, 19 June 1947.

⁸⁰³ NAZ S1215/1365/1 Milk Subsidy Scheme claims: Letter from Mrs M. Parsons (farm not mentioned) to the Chief Dairy Officer, 19 June 1947.

⁸⁰⁴ NAZ S1215/1365/1 Milk Subsidy Scheme claims: Letter from T.W. Duff, Musi Farm, Marandellas, to Cory, 14 June 1947.

costs was a result of a reduction in the amount of milk received and not a phenomenon peculiar to the two concerns only. Hence, instead of cushioning farmers from the effects of drought, the Milk Subsidy Scheme as it functioned in 1947 served more to subsidise processing concerns than producers. Hence, it may be argued that the 1947 drought relief scheme did not achieve its intended objectives.

Developments in the African cattle sector

While efforts were made to improve the efficiency and productivity at white-owned dairy farms through improving the quality of herds and feeding systems, the African sector, which was systematically and purposefully underdeveloped, was further weakened by the introduction of destocking measures as part of the war-time beef exigencies. Unable to source sufficient beef supplies to feed the expanding white population, the government introduced measures aimed at coercing African farmers to sell their livestock cheaply on the colonial beef market. As early as 1940, the Chief Native Commissioner instructed all Native Commissioners to organise cattle sales more regularly in both Reserves and the Native Purchase Areas and to intensify the scope of propaganda work aimed at encouraging Africans to dispose of their cattle.⁸⁰⁵ What really drove the Native Affairs Department was the inability of the white ranching sector to satisfy the beef demand at a time when there seemed to them to be “excessive herds of cattle in the African Reserves.”⁸⁰⁶ Similar measures were instituted in colonial Botswana, where dairying began to decline from the 1950s onwards as a result of war-time and post war demands. The leading cause for cattle losses in that colony was the re-introduction of beef exports to South Africa from the 1950s onwards.⁸⁰⁷

⁸⁰⁵ Samasuwo, ““There is something about cattle””, 63.

⁸⁰⁶ NAZ S2384 Cattle marketing: Development of organised marketing of cattle, 1942.

⁸⁰⁷ Mafela, ‘Colonial initiatives and African response’, 86-88. Prior to this development, South African had limited the amount of beef it imported from Botswana. The lifting of the blockade moved the colonial government to find ways to coerce Africans to avail more livestock.

African stock owners proved unwilling to sell their stock, however. This was due to blatant exploitation by cattle speculators and dealers who paid very low prices for African-owned cattle.⁸⁰⁸ This resistance led to the imposition of more coercive measures. The state enforced mandatory de-stocking measures in African areas which began with the recommendation by the Natural Resources Commission in 1941.⁸⁰⁹ Although the Commission's recommendation for de-stocking was cast as a panacea to the ecological deterioration in the Reserves, the immediate implementation of such measures at a time of acute beef shortages should not be attributed to mere historical coincidence. Explaining the link, the Commission of Enquiry into the Marketing of Cattle for Slaughter and Distribution and Sale of Beef in Southern Rhodesia in 1942 revealed the connection:

It is deplorable that a colony which prides itself on its cattle industry should thus, have failed hitherto so lamentably in the Empire's hour of need...instead (of Africans selling their cattle) witness is borne to the fact that thousands of native cattle are likely to perish this season through poverty...Meantime, it is strongly urged that regulations dealing with Native cattle framed by the Natural Resources Board should be brought into force without any further delay.⁸¹⁰

Thus the passage of the Natural Resources Act in 1941 heightened the systematic state-sponsored reduction of livestock in reserves, purportedly because of the perceived environmental damage through overgrazing.⁸¹¹ While the scientific environmental effect of overgrazing may be proven, the report of the commission quoted above also succinctly demonstrates the state's desire to ensure that Africans disposed of their livestock in the wake of war-time beef shortages. In any case, the state's analysis of the environmental crisis in the reserves as being solely a result of African aversion to environmental considerations, and not the shortage of land caused by land alienation policies was long on prejudice and short on justice.

⁸⁰⁸ Samasuwo, "There is something about cattle" Towards an economic history of the beef industry in colonial Zimbabwe, 1939-1980', 64.

⁸⁰⁹ The Natural Resources Commission recommended that a compulsory de-stocking programme be undertaken based on the scientifically determined carrying capacity of each African area. This was adopted and promulgated under the Natural Resources Act of 1941. *Report of the Commission into the Preservation of the Natural Resources of the Colony, 1939*, 18.

⁸¹⁰ *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the Marketing of Cattle for Slaughter and Distribution and Sale of Beef in Southern Rhodesia, 1942*, 14.

⁸¹¹ For a more intensive discussion of the Southern Rhodesian de-stocking policies during the period under review, see T.T. Jamu, 'The growth and control of the African herds, 1910-1955', Masters' Thesis, University of Zimbabwe, 1987, and W. Mwatwara, 'A history of state veterinary services and African livestock regimes in colonial Zimbabwe' PhD Thesis, University of Stellenbosch, 2014, 192-210.

Compulsory de-stocking policy led to a massive reduction of the African herd. While there is little reliable information on the number of stock in African ownership during and shortly after the war, the impact of the programme may be understood when considering that the number of African cattle sold to the Cold Storage Commission increased from 27 000 in 1939 to over 100 000 in 1945.⁸¹² This de-stocking programme, indeed, served as a harbinger of a more ruthless African cattle policy which was adopted under the Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951, which sought “to limit the number of stock in any area to its carrying capacity, and, as far as practicable, to relate stock holding to arable land holding as a means of improving farming practice”.⁸¹³ Although the measures were somewhat useful in easing the war-time and post-war beef crisis, they, from a dairying viewpoint, further reduced African ability to produce and market dairy produce on the formal market. State pre-occupation with easing beef shortages at a time when dairy products were also in short supply should be viewed within the context of the relatively more central role of beef in the Southern Rhodesian diet when compared to butter.

It is important to note that de-stocking measures were carried out at the same time as African cattle ‘improvement’ programmes. Although efforts to help Africans to acquire cross-breeds had begun as early as 1912, when the African Cattle Clause – which aimed at ‘improving’ African indigenous cattle through crossing them with exotic breeds in order to create fewer but bigger cattle – was introduced, this policy had not been pursued with much keenness. This was because of state and settler fears that the success of such a programme would help Africans to successfully compete with settlers on the dairy and especially beef markets.⁸¹⁴ The 1940s, however, witnessed the return of the policy, but this time now focusing on creating a truly ‘native beast’ through the emphasis of the bigger ‘Sanga’ cattle which had pre-existed the arrival of Europeans into the territory.⁸¹⁵ This came about because of the understanding that pure exotic

⁸¹² *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Economic Position of the Agricultural Industry of Southern Rhodesia, 1934*, 16.

⁸¹³ I. Phimister, ‘Rethinking the Reserves: Southern Rhodesia’s Land Husbandry Act Reviewed’ *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 19, 2 (1993), 226. Also see V. Machingaidze, ‘Agrarian Change from above: The Southern Rhodesia Native Land Husbandry Act and African Response’, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 24, 3, (1991), 557-588.

⁸¹⁴ Mwatwara, ‘A history of state veterinary services and African livestock regimes in colonial Zimbabwe, c1890-1980’, 138.

⁸¹⁵ NAZ S2998/3 Native Reserves: De-stocking, 1943.

breeds and cross-breeds died due either to disease or improper feeding.⁸¹⁶ The ‘Sanga’ cow, thus, was one of the most common indigenous breeds in Zimbabwe at independence.⁸¹⁷ From a dairying perspective, however, this policy did not have any meaningful impact. This was largely because the Sanga breed was encouraged among Africans largely for its size – which would affect its beefing qualities – and not its milking abilities. In any case, the regulations that had been passed in 1938, and undercapitalisation made it difficult for Africans in possession of these cattle to participate on the formal market.

The colonial state also made token efforts to improve pasture management from the late 1940s onwards. A series of grazing surveys were made conducted in a number of reserves in Matabeleland, Midlands and parts of Mashonaland after which rotational grazing was introduced in the surveyed areas. By 1951, and in line with the recommendations of the Native Production and Trade Commission of Enquiry, the Inyathi Reserve in Matabeleland, the Charter district in the Midlands and Victoria, Zimuto and Gutu Reserves had been paddock fenced with a view to implement rotational grazing.⁸¹⁸ Further, the Director of Native Agriculture reported that the Chilimanzi Reserve, which did not have adequate grass cover, was fenced in 1948, with the result that the land had not only been protected from erosion, but also could sustain more livestock.⁸¹⁹

The impact of pasture improvements on African milk production, however, was inhibited by one important factor: the improvements came on the backdrop of significantly huge cattle losses in the Reserves as a result of the on-going de-stocking campaign; hence the ultimate impact of pasture improvement was on the maintenance of smaller herds whose breeding had been focussed on the size of the cow. Indeed, despite these interventions, the Dairy Marketing Board (DMB), which had been established in October 1951, reported at the end of 1953 that only “three native producer are sending milk to creameries and milk depots in the Mashonaland districts, and perhaps a few more exist in Matabeleland.”⁸²⁰ Considering that limiting the number of cattle

⁸¹⁶ Interview with Difford Sibanda, Filabusi Business Centre, 12 June 2013.

⁸¹⁷ D.H. Holness, *The Mashona cattle of Zimbabwe*, (Harare: The Mashona cattle society, 1992), 3.

⁸¹⁸ *Annual Report of the Director of Native Agriculture*, 1951.

⁸¹⁹ *Annual Report of the Director of Native Agriculture*, 1950.

⁸²⁰ *Annual Report of the Dairy Marketing Board*, 1952/1953, 3.

Africans possessed in the African areas was a pivotal element of the colonial state's African livestock policy, and also that the dairy industry became more sophisticated over time – requiring more capital and technology – it is not surprising that, by 1980, commercial dairying was generally the preserve of white large scale producers. Indeed, the DMB reported in 1979 that only one black producer was registered in the Mashonaland province, and none in other districts.⁸²¹ For the post 1939 period, however, the further underdevelopment of African capacity to participate on the dairy market was less deliberate – it was a result of the prioritisation of easing beef shortages in war-time and post-war Southern Rhodesia over dairy products. The dearth in African commercial dairy farming in Southern Rhodesia by 1951, however, shows a major difference with colonial Kenya, a fellow settler state, where black small-holder production had begun to play a dominant role in commercial dairying by the 1960s.⁸²²

Towards a new marketing system: Increasing dairy output and the origins of the Dairy Marketing Board

Having outlined war-time and post-war developments, this chapter ends with a brief summary of the circumstances leading to the formation of the Dairy Marketing Board in 1952. As a result of state interventions to increase dairy output in the white dairy sector, the period between 1946 and 1951 witnessed a tremendous increase in milk output. Indeed, supplies of raw milk rose by over 3 million gallons from 7.2 million gallons of milk in 1946 to 10.1 million gallons in 1951.⁸²³ The expansion of dairy production inevitably warranted a corresponding expansion of the handling and distribution side of the dairy industry, particularly of whole milk which had become the major dairy product, as alluded to earlier in this chapter. The increase in milk supplies during and after the war meant that some creameries and dairies found themselves handling upwards of four times the quantities for which they had been originally designed.⁸²⁴ However, partly due to the smaller amounts of supplies they had become accustomed to handling, and largely owing to lack

⁸²¹ Quoted in G. Hove, 'Creating order and stability? The development of commercial dairying in Southern Rhodesia under the Dairy Marketing Board (D.M.B), 1952-1980', Masters' Thesis, University of Zimbabwe, 2010, 106.

⁸²² W.T. Conelly, 'Colonial era livestock development policy: introduction of improved dairy cattle in high-potential farming areas of Kenya', *World Development*, 26, (1998), 1736. Also see W. Thorpe, H.G. Muriuki, A. Omore, M.O. Owango and S. Staal, 'Dairy Development in Kenya: the past, the present and the future', paper presented at the *Annual Symposium of the Animal Production Society of Kenya, Nairobi*, (22-23 March, 2000), 3.

⁸²³ *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Dairy Industry, 1961*, 10.

⁸²⁴ Ngadze, 'The development of commercial dairying', 55.

of capital for expanding their capacity, co-operative and private creameries were unable to handle bigger volumes of cream and milk. In fact, as the volume of supplies began to increase from the 1940s onwards, some of them began to adopt a 'closed shop' system in which new producers were not allowed to supply, while old producers operated on a quota system.⁸²⁵ Thus, shortages in urban areas, especially in Salisbury where creameries and dairies were reluctant to accept supplies from new members, were not solely a result of inadequate production, but actually reflection of an inadequate processing and distributing system.⁸²⁶

The Dairy Division commissioned two official enquiries – first in 1947 and then 1949 – to find ways in which the processing and distribution systems could be expanded. The 1947 Milk Subsidy Committee rejected the idea of vesting fresh milk distribution in municipal utilities. It believed that urban milk distribution should not be separated from, but should be integrated with, national milk processing and manufacturing in large multi-purpose plants.⁸²⁷ It recommended that a statutory milk commission (comprising representatives from farmers, creameries, consumers and government officials) be established which would initially concentrate on securing milk for the large cities where needs were most pressing. Thereafter, the government would compensate and take over existing milk handling enterprises with a view to expanding them and building new ones.⁸²⁸ In this way, a national milk lake would be created through nationalising all processing concerns. In line with developments in South Africa where the Dairy Control Board was already paying fixed producer prices, the Committee also advocated a long-term producer price policy with payment according to the quality of milk produced.⁸²⁹

The Parliamentary Select Committee of 1949 was tasked to investigate and report on possible measures to be taken to increase production and to improve the manufacture and marketing of all dairy products. It recommended the establishment of a Milk Marketing Committee to buy milk

⁸²⁵ R.G. Jones, 'The Dairy Scene in Southern Rhodesia', *The South African Journal of Dairy Science and Technology*, 4, 1, (1972), 12.

⁸²⁶ NAZ S1215/1366/5 Southern Rhodesia, Milk Subsidy Committee Report: Re-organisation of the Fresh Milk Trade, 1947, 46.

⁸²⁷ NAZ S1215/1366/5 Southern Rhodesia, Milk Subsidy Committee Report: Re-organisation of the Fresh Milk Trade, 1947, 46.

⁸²⁸ NAZ S1215/1366/5 Southern Rhodesia, Milk Subsidy Committee Report: Re-organisation of the Fresh Milk Trade, 1947, 46.

⁸²⁹ *Annual Report of the Dairy Industry Control Board*, 1948.

from producers for distribution, an increase in producer prices to be met by government subsidy, payment of premiums on the basis of the quality of produced and the continuation of the importations of dairy cattle and stock feed.⁸³⁰ By and large, the recommendations of the two enquiries were adopted, and a non-statutory Milk Marketing Committee was established during the same year. It was charged with buying milk direct from the producers and selling it to distributors. It should be noted, however, that at this stage private creameries and dairies were still in business, with the result that some producers continued to patronise them. In fact, the Milk Marketing Committee largely handled produce from new comers into the industry who struggled to break into the creameries.⁸³¹ Hence, even after the establishment of the Milk Marketing Commission, private enterprise continued to dominate the processing industry.

In a sweeping move across the entire agricultural industry, the government in 1951 passed the Agricultural Marketing Act, providing for the establishment of marketing schemes to regulate the marketing of agricultural products. This Act gave birth to the Agricultural Marketing Council (AMC) whose primary duty was to examine and report upon the marketing schemes and advising the Minister of Lands and Agriculture on issues to do with pricing, import and export of agricultural products.⁸³² Within this framework, the Dairy Marketing Scheme was created and introduced with effect from the first day of October, 1952. Under this scheme, the Dairy Marketing Board was formed, leading to the abolishment of the DICB.⁸³³ Thus, the views of the 1947 Milk Subsidy Committee, in favour of the progressive centralization in a public authority of the handling and processing of milk and milk products, finally carried the day in Southern Rhodesia by 1951.⁸³⁴ As part of the effort to stabilise the marketing and distribution of dairy products, the DMB took over most creameries, dairies and cheese factories that existed in the country. By 1959, all but one cheese factory at Chipinga in Manicaland had been taken over by the Board. Thus, the DMB became a vehicle through which the state could establish a virtual

⁸³⁰ NAZ S1215/1366/6 Southern Rhodesia, Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee on the Dairy Industry, 1949, 5.

⁸³¹ *Report of the Dairy Industry Control Board*, 1949.

⁸³² *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Dairy Industry*, 1961, 12.

⁸³³ *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Dairy Industry*, 1961, 12.

⁸³⁴ For more on the operations of the DMB and its monopolistic tendencies, see Hove, 'Creating Order and Stability?', 119-156.

monopoly in buying milk and butter from farmers, and in the processing and marketing of dairy products in Southern Rhodesia.

Conclusion

This chapter has assessed the impact of the Second World War and its immediate aftermath in the development of the dairy industry. It has demonstrated that although Southern Rhodesia had expressed a willingness to send supplies to Britain as part of its contribution to the Allied war effort, the rapid white population increase and accompanying expanding demand meant that the country had to focus on the emerging crisis first. Indeed, the population growth precipitated acute shortages of dairy products throughout the major urban settlements. The expanding domestic market radically altered the production patterns, as priority was given to the provision of the country's fresh milk demand. However, with war making trans-continental trade unlikely, and South Africa unable to export butter, the only solution lay in increasing local production. This chapter has argued that although a number of *ad hoc* measures were taken to increase production in the short-term, the government did not lose sight of the fundamentals that had precipitated the passage of the Dairy Act in 1937. The implementation of reforms, however, drew much resistance from white farmers who felt that price interventions were the only remedy to war-time and post-war crisis. Indeed, the demands of the war and its aftermath were a blessing in disguise insofar as the need to expand production led to the intensification of reforms in the production methods and livestock management systems, which helped to increase farm output by 1952.

This chapter has also argued that the war-time and post-war period was characterised by the further underdevelopment of the African livestock sector. While previous chapters have shown that the assault on African dairy farming was premised on the desire to limit competition and the prejudices about African cleanliness, this chapter has shown that African capacity during the period under review was a result of state attempts to force Africans to dispose of their cattle in order to ease acute beef shortages. Indeed, de-stocking measures that were embarked on from 1939 onwards may have contributed to increasing beef supplies, but this was achieved at the expense of African milk production. The cosmetic livestock 'improvement' programmes of the 1940s and 1950s did little to rescue African participation on the colonial dairy market, not least

because they focused on increasing the size of African-owned cattle, and not milking abilities. In any case, without adequate capital to construct the requisite dairy infrastructure and to purchase dairy cows, African commercial dairy farming would not help to satisfy the rapidly expanding urban demand for milk on the colonial market. This chapter has also outlined the factors leading to the formation of the Dairy Marketing Board in 1952, which took over the distribution of all dairy products. Thus, the main argument borne in this chapter is that white dairy farming was considerably boosted by the war and its demand, while African commercial dairy farming was dealt a near-fatal blow.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusions

This thesis has examined the social and economic factors that determined the development path of dairy farming in colonial Zimbabwe through the different stages of the colony's development from the 1890s to 1951. It has discussed the role of the state and farmers (white and black) in shaping the industry, within the context of evolving socio-economic developments in the country and also the vicissitudes of the international markets in which the country participated for much of the period under review. Although mainly focusing on the economic factors, this thesis has also delineated the social, environmental and political determinants that influenced the development of the dairy industry. It has demonstrated that dairy farming emerged from its initial position as a peripheral industry, during the first three decades of colonial occupation, until it gradually gained relevance by the early 1950s.

This study has sought to fill a narrow but deep historiographical lacuna in historical studies of Southern Rhodesia's cattle industry which, to date, have evinced much greater interest in the beef industry. In telling the 'dairy story', however, this thesis has been engaged in a much broader conversation with wider debates in colonial Zimbabwe's agrarian historiography in general. In demonstrating the progressive state-sponsored underdevelopment of African commercial dairy farming over time, it has shown that the old colonial narrative that depicted African underdevelopment as self-inflicted and presented the colonial state as benevolent is misplaced. However, it has further demonstrated that state policy did not affect Africans evenly, and neither were their responses uniform. Moreover, it has gone beyond the Africanist interpretations that have viewed the colonial state as a homogenous entity. It has cast more light on the growing body of work which disaggregate the state and its various interests in policy-making. Indeed, this study has shown that the different and often contradictory opinions and interests among state officials played an important role in policy-making and implementation.

In discussing the interaction between the colonial state and white farmers, this study has sought to add to the body of scholarly work that focuses on the development of agrarian policies in British colonies. Drawing from Gilmore's study of the role of the state in the development of an initially unviable dairy industry in Australia, this thesis has shown that farmers benefitted from state patronage. As demonstrated in chapter 3, dairy farming was identified by the state as an important industry in state plans to attract settlers to Southern Rhodesia. However, this thesis has also shown that the relationship between farmers and the colonial state was not seamless. White farmers often felt that the government was not doing enough to protect their interests, particularly through the provision of higher prices and other financial incentives. Thus, the history of settler dairy farming in Southern Rhodesia is a history of contestation and negotiation between the government and farmers. Throughout the period under review, this contestation shaped and reshaped dairy policy. It has drawn from similar colonial contexts in countries such as Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa where strong dairy industries were developed during the colonial period.

This thesis has also shown that the policy framework that was used in strengthening the dairy industry was inherently discriminatory against black producers. As chapter 3 and 4 demonstrated respectively, this discrimination was a result of state efforts to minimise African agrarian competition and the perceived unsuitability of indigenous people for dairy production because of long held prejudices about African cleanliness. Regarding the latter, the Dairy Division was at the centre of a debate within the settler community, including dairy farmers and consumers, and officials of the Dairy Division about African hygienic practices and their suitability for participation on the dairy market. As shown in chapters 4 and 5, the notion that African dairy producers were insanitary and slovenly played a significant role in settler demands for the elimination of African producers from commercial dairying. This was despite evidence showing that white farmers' methods of production were equally poor, a fact that contributed to the country's poor performance on the external markets.

This marginalisation notwithstanding, some Africans took advantage of gaps in the system to positively produce for the market. In spite of the cattle and land losses and the formulation of policies that had the effect of excluding them from the mainstream dairy industry, a few Africans

mobilised capital and competed with white farmers on the market. Further, the exclusion of the majority led to the emergence of an informal market in which Africans traded in milk products on mining and farming settlements, in contravention of the Dairy Act. Indeed, by the 1950s, the rural sector was characterised by small-holder peasant producers who sold surplus milk within the rural sector, and on emergent peri-urban settlements.

In explaining the complex evolution of the dairy industry in Southern Rhodesia, this thesis began by examining the interface between African milk regimes outside the colonial and largely capitalist dairy industry. As shown in chapter 2, milk had an important symbolic value in African social and political milieux. Nevertheless, as opponents of the 'cattle complex' theory have argued in respect of the value of cattle in African societies, the existence of milk customs and symbols did not preclude African cattle owners from utilising milk for economic purposes. In fact, African societies embraced the opportunities that came during the first two years of colonial occupation. However, unlike grain producers, milk producers did not flourish for long on the incipient colonial market. Besides issues pertaining to the high perishability of milk, the cattle losses that followed conquest and successive cattle diseases that affected the country between 1896 and the early 1920s, severely curtailed African capacity to produce milk. Consequently, whereas the settler population largely depended on local African grain during the first two decades of occupation, most of its dairy requirements were supplied from South Africa. Besides the settlers and British South Africa Company's (BSAC) fixation with finding gold deposits, efforts to establish a settler dairy industry were hampered by the same bovine diseases. Thus, neither the African nor the settler dairy sector was prosperous by the 1900s.

The espousal of the White Agricultural Policy (WAP) in 1908 marked an important benchmark in the development of settler capitalist agriculture. As it had become obvious that Southern Rhodesia was not a mineral Eldorado, the BSAC shifted its attention towards commercial agriculture in order to realise profits from land, which it assumed to be its biggest economic asset. This would be achieved through attracting white settlers into the country by offering land at concessional rates, and stimulating settler agriculture. Although the Company's official attempts to develop settler dairy farming started in 1910 with the arrival of a dairy expert from

England, prospective dairymen faced a battery of climatic, financial and environmental challenges that stood in the way of successful dairy farming in the fledgling colony.

As demonstrated in chapter 3, although Southern Rhodesia had been identified as suitable for a livestock economy, most regions of the country did not receive adequate annual rainfall for the maintenance of dairy cows in comparison with most dairying countries in the world. The BSAC administration thus provided financial and technical assistance to white farmers, particularly in acquiring dairy cattle. Dairying, however, was an industry requiring a large outlay of capital and technical expertise, while offering very little short-term return on investment. Consequently, most settler cattle-owners opted to invest in the less demanding and more rewarding beef industry. Although dairy output increased so much that a national surplus was emerging by the time the BSAC gave up administering the colony in 1923, much of the butter and cream was derived from dairy-ranching – ranchers simply milked their beef cattle when beef prices were low. Indeed, the fortunes of beef production largely determined the performance of dairy farming during the time of the BSAC.

The adoption of WAP in 1908 essentially meant that African agriculture had to be restricted to protect nascent white agriculture and create a labour reservoir in reserves. Although there was no official mention of the need to specifically eliminate Africans from the dairy industry, indigenous dairy production was significantly curtailed by land losses and displacements that followed the Private Locations Ordinance (PLO) and the introduction of increased rents on unalienated lands from 1908. As demonstrated in chapter 3, the movements of Africans onto less habitable environments in the reserves had a devastating effect on livestock and their owners' livelihoods. However, not all Africans were adversely affected by the creation of reserves and the PLO. Some wealthier Africans, including some originally from South Africa and Botswana who had taken advantage of a clause in the 1898 Southern Rhodesia Orders in Council, which allowed them to buy land, purchased dairy cows and built dairy infrastructure, and competed with settler dairymen on the dairy market.

The production of surplus butter from the 1920s onwards meant that Southern Rhodesia entered the regional and international markets prematurely. This development was not indicative of the growth of the industry; it was a consequence of the small domestic market for dairy products.

Thus, participation on the export market exposed the crude nature of the colony's production and processing systems, which manifested themselves in the production and marketing of low quality butter. The end of the BSAC administration, and the subsequent arrival of self rule, under Coghlan, gave the white farming community renewed hopes that much more investment would be made in settler agriculture. However, despite the new political developments at home, the country's agrarian performance continued to be profoundly influenced by the vicissitudes of the international markets. The country was exporting predominantly second and third grade butter at a loss and importing first grade butter, hence the state introduced the Dairy Produce Act in 1925 with the aim of improving the quality of butter produced in the country. Modelled along Australian legislation, the Act focused on improving the processing aspect of the industry. A raft of measures was taken to ensure certain minimum standards were followed in the manufacture of butter and cheese and creameries and cheese factories. Dairy officers were employed by the department to ensure that grading and manufacturing standards were followed. However, as demonstrated in chapter 4, the 1925 legislation did not address farm production problems that lay at the root of the industry such as the dominance of dilettantes, the scarcity of genuine dairy cows and general lack of capital. Hence, interventions at the manufacturing levels inevitably failed to improve the quality of butter.

While legislative intervention had largely ignored farm production processes, the mid-1920s were characterised by debates within the state and between the state and the white community about the suitability of Africans to participate in the dairy industry, as Chapter 4 showed. As part of the larger segregation debate that began during the 1920s, the position of African cream and milk producers came under increasing attack from the settler community, which viewed African producers as unsuitable for dairying, and thus responsible for producing low quality cream. Mobilising crude Darwinist arguments and racial prejudices that cast Africans as slovenly, sections of the white community called for the banishment of Africans from the dairy market. Until the mid-1930s, some farmers continued to lay the blame for the persistent production of low grade butter on African producers. These views, however, were confounded by dairy officers' findings from the late 1920s onwards. Evidence from dairy officers' reports proved that production methods and conditions were generally inadequate in both African and white sectors. The period covering the mid-1920s to the mid-1930s, therefore, represented a missed decade in

the development of dairy farming in Southern Rhodesia. By not regulating for the improvement of farming operations, the regulatory framework espoused by the government proved inadequate. Similarly, settler farmers' denial of the inadequacy of their operations and scapegoating African producers proved to be misplaced. Consequently, Southern Rhodesia continued to struggle on the international scene – exporting low grade butter at a loss while importing higher grades – throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

While Southern Rhodesian dairy farmers did not make profits from exporting during the 1920s, their position was aggravated by the outbreak of the Great Depression, whose effects on the farming community lasted until the late 1930s. The collapse of prices of agricultural products on the international markets had a telling effect on the dairy industry in Southern Rhodesia. As happened in other industries, the government established a statutory board – the Dairy Industry Control Board – to regulate the marketing of dairy products from 1931. While statutory boards in other industries (such maize and beef) used African producers to subsidise white producers on the export market through the levy system, the Dairy Industry Control Board signed a levy and bounty scheme with other countries in the region. With a small African dairy sector, the board joined the Central Industries Control Board, which included South Africa, Botswana, Swaziland and South West Africa (Namibia), which collected levies from the territories and paid bounties to help farmers with the 'burden' of exporting butter between 1929 and 1934. Although the board helped to stabilise producer prices, the interventions were, in the long term, inadequate as long as the quality of the article being marketed remained poor.

With both legislative interventions of 1925 and 1931 unable to improve the fortunes of the dairy industry, the government commissioned a Committee of Enquiry in 1935 to engage with (white) farmers, creameries and officials of the Dairy Division on possible remedies. The commission found that, despite the denial of a section of white farmers, the principal cause of the malaise in the industry lay in the methods of production on farms. It observed that the industry was dominated by dilettantes whose main interests lay in beef, and recommended the passage of a new regulatory framework that would force all farmers to adhere to stipulated standards of production. Since the majority of dairy-ranchers specialised in farm butter production, the commission also recommended that there should be regulation limiting the amount of farm butter

produced on the farms. These recommendations culminated in the passage of the Dairy Act in 1937, which brought farmers' activities under increased state control. The main import of this legislation was that all commercial dairy farms were to be registered by the Dairy Industry Control Board (DICB). Registration could only be granted if the farm premises complied with mandatory standard infrastructural and sanitary requirements such as the use of milking sheds and inspected utensils. In the same vein, farm butter making was discouraged by the introduction of a quota system.

The passage of the Dairy Act, however, was resisted, resented and ultimately contravened by some sections of both white and black farmers. Although its passage was followed by the availing of funds from the Dairy Division for the purchase of the requisite apparatus, white farmers felt that by coercing them to deliver their cream at creameries, the state was empowering creameries to short-change them through the payment of low prices. However, these complaints mainly came from producers who were reluctant to invest in dairy farming on a long-term basis, preferring to produce farm butter as a side-line to beef. Such producers found ways of delivering milk and cream from unregistered premises, or producing more farm butter than their allocated quota. This brought them into constant conflict with the Dairy Division.

With very little state financial support, the majority of African producers were unable to meet the demands of the new regulations. Yet, commercial milk and cream marketing did not stop: producers who found themselves unable to send cream to depots and creameries resorted to selling fresh and sour milk in mining and peri-urban centres where a ready market existed. This development precipitated debates between different government departments on the Dairy Act, as discussed in chapter 5. While the Department of Health and the Natives Affairs Department (NAD) agreed, albeit for different reasons, that the regulations should be eased to accommodate African producers on condition that they do not sell to whites, officials of the Dairy Division thought that the regulations should be upheld uniformly. While exceptions to the Dairy Act were made to allow African milk sales on mining compounds, general African ineligibility to comply with the Dairy Act merely served to encourage the existence of the 'informal' dairy market.

The reform process that had begun with the passage of the Dairy Act faced a severe test after the outbreak of World War II (WW II) in 1939. As demonstrated in chapter 6, the outbreak of the war precipitated a number of challenges for the dairy industry. Although Southern Rhodesia had expressed a willingness to send supplies to Britain as part of its contribution to the Allied war effort, a looming internal shortage meant that the Empire's needs were sacrificed as domestic matters took precedence. A sudden increase in the white population during the war, and during the few years following the cessation of hostilities, precipitated acute shortages of dairy products throughout the major urban settlements.

The expanding domestic market radically altered dairy production patterns as priority was given to the provision of the country's fresh milk demands. As food supply outstripped demand from the 1940s onwards, a food production drive was launched in 1942. Regarding dairy farming, however, government thinking was geared towards 'guided expansion' – indiscriminate production of huge quantities of milk and butter was discouraged, as the focus was on maintaining the reform programme that had begun in 1937. Hence, the Dairy Division encouraged farmers to increase production through improved farm efficiency, lowering production costs through purchasing genuine dairy cows, increased attention to cattle management systems and the adoption of more hygienic methods of production. Although farmers constantly called for higher producer prices, and other monetary incentives, the schemes that were introduced, such as the Dairy Bonus Scheme, were aimed at encouraging farmers to improve their herds and methods of production. The 1940s and early 1950s also witnessed the intensification of research into the science of dairy farming. Experiments on pasture research, the impact of different types of supplementary feeds were conducted, while loan facilities with easier terms of repayment were extended to approve farmers for the purchase of Friesland cows and bulls.

The exigencies of war necessitated the adoption of *ad hoc* measures to deal with short-term demands, however. Chapter 6 has shown that besides the payment of much higher producer prices, regulations governing farm butter production were temporarily suspended in order to increase butter supplies in the major urban centres. This notwithstanding, WW II and the changes that came with it proved to be a blessing in disguise for white dairy farmers, and the industry in

general, since it hastened the reform agenda that had begun in 1937. Indeed, by 1952, dairy output had increased so much that the distribution system was overwhelmed.

While white dairy farmers benefitted from the programmes that were instituted during the 1940s, dairy output from African cattle-owners decreased considerably. This was because of developments in the beef industry where war-time meat shortages caused colonial authorities to coerce Africans to dispose of their livestock. The passage of the Natural Resources Act in 1941 saw the introduction of a compulsory de-stocking policy in African reserves ostensibly to contain a developing ecological disaster in the reserves. However, as the Commission of Enquiry into the Marketing of Cattle for Slaughter and Distribution and Sale of Beef in Southern Rhodesia reported in 1942, the implementation of de-stocking measures was intended to increase beef supplies during and after the war. While this policy was important in easing war-time beef shortages, it served to reverse African dairying capacity.

The introduction of livestock ‘improvement’ programmes of the 1940s and 1950s in African areas did not improve Africans’ ability to produce milk. This programme focused on improving the size of beast (and thus improve its beef capacity), and not its milking capabilities. Since the aim of the state was to decrease the number of cattle and increase the size of individual cows, the ultimate impact of the ‘improvement’ programme was that it precipitated a decrease in the number of milked cows. Consequently, by 1952, when the Dairy Marketing Board was established to handle the marketing of dairy products, the Southern Rhodesian dairy industry was characterised by rapidly increasing dairy output from a growing number of white farmers, and falling output from a fast decreasing number of African commercial dairy farmers.

While this thesis has cast light on an agrarian sector that has previously been neglected by historians, there are four aspects of dairy farming that require further exploration. Firstly, as this thesis focuses on the pre-1952 period, prior to the establishment of the Dairy Marketing Board (DMB), a socio-economic history of dairy farming from 1952 onwards calls for further exploration. Although I have worked on the operations of the DMB in the marketing of milk between 1952 and 1980 in a separate study, there is a need for a more nuanced study on the broader social and economic issues that arose out the Federal period and the Unilateral

Declaration of Independence (UDI).⁸³⁵ Secondly, while this thesis has discussed issues of race and class in dairying, a gendered history of dairy farming is yet to be written. While the role of women in the history of dairy farming has received significant historical attention in England, particularly with Nicola Verdon's study, very little has been done their position in Zimbabwe's agriculture sector in general.⁸³⁶ Admittedly, this thesis found very little evidence of women involved in dairying but the gendered analysis of masculinity explored in Chapter 2 could be extended further. Moreover, oral history could uncover the role women in post-1951 history, particularly in post-colonial Zimbabwean dairy farming. Thirdly, for a labour-intensive industry like dairying, there is need for further research on the labour dynamics that played out in dairy farming. This is important because while white agriculture in colonial Zimbabwe largely depended on African labour, Africans were perceived to be organically unsuited to a hygiene-sensitive such as dairy farming. Fourthly, although the development of the small-holder (and predominantly black) dairy sector during the first two decades of independence has been subjected to scholarly attention from agricultural scientists, there is need for further research on the role of the post-2000 land reform programme in the dearth in milk production, and its success/failure in promotion of small-holder dairy farming.⁸³⁷

The role of professional historians in the making of public policy, as Gavin has observed, is a contested terrain.⁸³⁸ Yet, policy-makers who are not grounded in past experiences are more prone to repeat mistakes of the past. Even outside policy-making, as Rennie points out, "it is the past which forms the frames of reference by which [humans] perceive the issues that confront them."⁸³⁹ Thus, history-sensitive agricultural authorities are in relatively better stead to formulate and implement sound policies for present and future generations. This is particularly vital in Zimbabwe's case, where on-going efforts to resuscitate the dairy industry and the entire agricultural sector in general, in the aftermath of the land reform programme have yet to bear the

⁸³⁵ See G. Hove, 'Creating order and stability? The Dairy Marketing Board, milk (over)production and the politics of marketing in colonial Zimbabwe, 1952-1970s', *Historia* 58, 2, (November 2013), 119-156.

⁸³⁶ N. Verdon, 'Women and the dairy industry in England, c.1800-1939', paper presented at the *International Economic History Congress*, Helsinki, Finland, 21-25 August, 2006.

⁸³⁷ For studies on post-colonial small-holder dairy farming, see J. Garwi, 'The development and operation of Arda Rusitu small-scale dairy settlement scheme, 1985-1997: A case study of contract farming', Honours Dissertation, University of Zimbabwe, 2008, and E.G. Muponga and D.M. Dube, 'Small-holder dairy development programme in resettled and communal areas in Zimbabwe', paper presented at the *International Livestock Research Institute Conference*, Harare, 24 June, 1998.

⁸³⁸ F.J. Gavin, 'History and policy', *International Journal*, 63, 1 (2007), 162-177.

⁸³⁹ R. Rennie, 'History and policy-making', *International; Social Science Journal*, 50, 156 (1998), 289.

desired result. As this thesis has shown, effective policy-making and implementation is not solely dependent on a top-down approach of an over-bearing state, but a product of interaction and (active and silent) negotiations between the state, farmers and other stake-holders.

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