

FOOD SUPPLY AND COST OF LIVING.

CONSIDERING the comparatively high rate of wages which prevails, food of all kinds is fairly cheap, and articles of diet which in other countries are almost within the category of luxuries, are largely used, even by the poorer classes. The average quantities of the principal articles of common diet annually consumed in the various Colonies of Australasia are given below :—

Average consumption of food in Australasia.

Consumption of Foods, &c., in Australasia.

Article.	New South Wales.	Victoria.	South Australia.	Queensland.	Tasmania.	New Zealand.	Australasia.
Wheat	390	377	390	365	402	454	395
Rice	12.5	15	4.5	24	9	8.5	13
Potatoes	215	282	195	250	389	412	279
Sugar	94	100	87	59	86	78	89
Tea	8.2	7.2	6.4	8.7	6.4	6.7	7.5
Coffee	13	17	21	14	8	10	14
Cheese	6	...	...	...	...	4.5	5.4
Butter	16	...	...	...	...	16	16
Salt	38	...	...	43	20	29	35
Meat—Beef	168	155	...	280	60	90	163
Mutton	81	98	...	90	150	110	101
Pork, &c.	12	12	...	...	...	...	12
Tobacco and Cigars.....	3.4	2.7	2.1	3.5	1.8	2.0	2.8

It will be seen that the consumption of wheat varies from 365 lb. in Queensland to 454 lb. in New Zealand, the average consumption being 395 lb. per head. Rice, which is almost entirely imported, varies greatly in the quantity used, only 4.5 lb. being the consumption of South Australia, as against 24 lb. in Queensland. The use of tea is universal in Australia, the consumption being largest in New South Wales and Queensland—with 131 oz. and 139 oz. respectively. The consumption of this beverage in

Large consumption of Tea.

England amounts to 73 oz. per head, in the United States to 21 oz., while on the continent of Europe the quantity does not exceed 1 oz. Sugar also enters largely into consumption, the average being 100 lb. per head in Victoria and 94 lbs. in New South Wales. Coffee is not such a favourite beverage in Australasia, the consumption being scarcely more than one-ninth that of tea. It is used most largely in South Australia, where the annual quantity amounts to 21 oz.

Consumption of Meat.

The consumption of meat has been determined with exactness for only three colonies, but these may be taken as fairly representing the whole group. The average quantity of beef consumed in the year amounts to 175 lb. per head, that of mutton to 89 lb., and of pork 12 lb.; in all, 276 lb. It would appear that each inhabitant of these colonies requires daily about three-quarters of a pound of meat, and that during the year two sheep are killed for each member of the community, and one bullock to every four persons. It is obvious, therefore, that much meat must be wasted.

Consumption of food in Australasia as compared with other countries

Judged by the standard of the food consumed, the population of Australasia must appear remarkably prosperous, compared with that of other countries. This will more clearly be seen from the following table, the particulars given in which, with the exception of those referring to Australasia, have been taken from Mulhall's History of Prices :—

Consumption of Foods.

Articles of Consumption.	Australasia.	Great Britain.	France.	Germany.	United States.
	lb.	lb.	lb.	lb.	lb.
Grain	395	330	455	166	305
Meat	276	105	74	69	120
Sugar	89	72	21	21	23
Salt.....	35	40	30	25	39
Butter	16	26	7	12	18
Potatoes.....	279	315	550	1,060	150
		oz.	oz.	oz.	oz.
Tea	120	73	1	1	21
Coffee.....	14	15	52	83	115

Taking only the principal articles of the foregoing list, namely, grain, meat, sugar, butter, and potatoes, and reducing them to a common basis of comparison, it will be found that the amount of thermo-dynamic power, capable of being generated by the food consumed is largely in favour of Australia. For purpose of comparison the figures of Dr. Edward Smith, F.R.S., in his well-known work on Foods, have been used, the heat developed being reduced to the equivalent weight lifted 1 foot high:—

Thermo-dynamic effect of Foods per day.

	Tons lifted 1 foot high.
Australasia	3,254
New South Wales	3,122
Great Britain	3,213
France	1,947
Germany	2,797
United States	1,931

The substances included in this table are largely supplemented both in America and Europe by other foods, but not more largely than in these colonies; and in the table just given will probably be found a just view of the comparative quantity and food-value of the articles of consumption in each of the countries mentioned. The comparison will appear much more in favour of Australasia when we take into consideration the average amount of work which each individual in the community is called upon to perform. In Australasia, too, the proportion of women and children engaged in laborious occupations is far less than in Europe or America, and the hours of labor of all persons are lighter, so that the amount of food energy required is not nearly so great.

The most remarkable feature of the diet of the Australasian people is the large quantity of meat they use. The consumption per inhabitant in Germany is 69 lb., in Australia it is four times that quantity, while in the United States, a meat exporting

Comparative
thermo-dynamic
effect of food.

Meat con-
sumption of
Australasia.

country, the consumption is considerably less than half that of Australasia. The following table shows the meat consumption per head for the principal countries of the world :—

Average Consumption of Meat.

	lb. per inhabitant.
Great Britain.....	105
France	74
Germany	69
Russia.....	48
Austria	64
Italy ...	23
Spain	49
Belgium and Holland	69
Scandinavia	67
United States	120
Australasia.....	276

It therefore becomes a question of importance as to whether so large a consumption of meat can be maintained. Under the most favourable conditions, that is, if there were no losses from failure of water or grass, the increase of both sheep and cattle would be about 23·5 per cent. The ordinary requirements of food supply, excluding exports, absorb 6·8 per cent. of the sheep, and 9·4 per cent. of cattle; and if to these figures be added 5 per cent. for deaths from ordinary causes, there would remain a possible net surplus of 11·7 and 9·1 per cent. respectively. Unfortunately, conditions are not always favorable, nor droughts infrequent, so that the actual increase of sheep is scarcely more than 30 per cent. of what is possible, and that of cattle scarcely more than 11 per cent. Although it is improbable that these Colonies could under any circumstances find sustenance for a continued increase of stock at the maximum given above, there is still an ample margin between the rates of increase which are possible and those now obtained, in saving a portion of which capital might be profitably invested.

If it were possible by water and food conservation to save one-fourth of the natural increase of the stock, the lavish use of meat which now obtains could be continued, while any increase above that named would be available for export. Unless, however, steps are taken to mitigate the effects of the frequent droughts which afflict the country, and to save part of the astonishing and unnecessary waste of animal life, the demand for beef will eventually exceed the supply. But even in such a contingency it will always be possible to again overtake the demand, if measures be taken to minimize the disastrous effects with which a failure of the season is now attended. With regard to sheep the case is different, the supply is never likely to be seriously trenched upon, and a very large surplus will always be available for meeting the requirements of markets outside Australia.

In the table at the commencement of this chapter the consumption of tobacco is shown as well as that of food. The use of tobacco appears to be more prevalent in Queensland and New South Wales than in any of the other Colonies, while the smallest consumption is in Tasmania. Compared with other parts of the world the average consumption of Australasia will not appear excessive. The following figures are from the "Dictionary of Statistics":—

Annual consumption of Tobacco per inhabitant.

	oz.		oz.
United Kingdom	23	Spain and Portugal	32
France	29	Switzerland	82
Germany	72	United States	59
Russia.....	24	India	30
Austria	80	Japan	39
Italy	22	Brazil	70
Holland and Belgium ...	84		
Turkey ...	70	Australasia.	45

Consumption of Alcohol.

Taking Australasia as a whole it compares very favourably with most of the European countries in regard to the quantity of intoxicants annually consumed by each inhabitant, as the following statement shows. The figures would look even more favourable to Australasia were the fact of the large preponderance of males over females in these colonies made a feature in the comparison :—

Consumption of Alcohol in various countries—in Proof Gallons.

Country.	Consumption.	Country.	Consumption.
	gallons		gallons.
United Kingdom	3·57	Portugal.....	3·00
France	5·10	Holland	4·00
Germany	3·08	Belgium	4·00
Russia	2·02	Denmark	5·00
Austria	2·80	Scandinavia	4·36
Italy	3·40	United States	2·65
Spain.....	2·85	Australasia	2·82

Consumption of Alcohol in each Colony.

The following figures show the consumption for all the colonies during the year 1889 :—

Consumption of Intoxicants in the Australasian Colonies.

Colony.	Spirits.		Wine.		Beer, &c.		Equivalent in Alcohol (proof) per inhabitant.
	Total.	Per inhabitant.	Total.	Per inhabitant.	Total.	Per inhabitant.	
New South Wales	1,159,380	1·05	916,630	0·82	12,029,000	10·89	2·71
Victoria	1,104,074	1·00	1,216,024	1·11	21,261,964	19·25	3·82
Queensland	462,944	1·16	225,807	0·57	3,911,531	9·85	2·60
South Australia	185,172	0·57	307,600	0·96	4,261,711	13·26	2·58
Western Australia	53,059	1·23	146,335	3·41	562,226	13·10	3·95
Tasmania	81,609	0·55	39,607	0·27	1,449,234	9·74	1·88
New Zealand.....	370,383	0·60	107,818	0·17	4,676,553	7·62	1·64
Total and Means	3,416,621	0·91	2,959,821	0·79	48,152,219	12·90	2·82

The largest consumption of spirits per inhabitant is in Western Australia, Queensland being second. With regard to the consumption of wine, Western Australia is a long way ahead, Victoria being second. Beer is most largely consumed in Victoria, her proportion being $19\frac{1}{4}$ gallons per head of the population; South Australia being second, with $13\frac{1}{4}$ gallons, the quantity for Western Australia being only a trifle less. The average consumption of alcohol for Australasia amounts to 2.82 gallons of proof spirit per inhabitant; ranging from 3.95 gallons in Western Australia to 1.64 gallons in New Zealand. New South Wales, with 2.71 gallons per head, is a trifle below the average; Victoria, with 3.82 gallons, shows a slight falling-off from the previous average of that colony; Tasmania, with 1.88 gallons, is a very little above the average of New Zealand.

It is popularly supposed that Australian wines and beers are not heavily charged with spirit as compared with the imported articles; this belief is erroneous. Several descriptions of Australian wines have a natural strength of 30 per cent. of proof spirit, while from analyses recently made it would appear that the strength of these wines offered for sale varies from 24 to 37 per cent. of spirit. On the same authority it was stated that imported beers ranged from 13.88 to 15.42 per cent. in the case of English, and from 9.58 to 11.76 per cent. of proof spirit in Lager, while the local manufacture varied according to the make from 11.21 to 15.12, the average being 13.75 per cent. It is generally understood, however, that since the imposition of excise duties on colonial beer in 1887, the strength of the article has been somewhat reduced, and does not average more than 13 per cent. of proof spirit.

Sufficient data are not available to enable a calculation to be made of the cost of living in all the Colonies, but with the materials to hand an estimate can be arrived at for New South Wales. The conditions of life and style of living are much the same in the Colony named as in the other Colonies of the group, and the following figures may be taken as fairly indicative of the state of things obtaining in Australasia generally.

Strength of
Australian
Wines and Beers

Cost of living in
the Australasian
Colonies.

Cost of living in
New South
Wales.

It appears that out of £63,000,000, the total income of persons living or holding property in New South Wales, about £52,000,000 were absorbed in meeting the actual expenses of living, leaving a balance of £11,000,000, which represents the increment of wealth and the income drawn from the Colony by persons whose property is in New South Wales, but who reside abroad.

The revenue derived from New South Wales by persons residing abroad, may be set down at $3\frac{1}{2}$ millions, so that the increment of wealth was $7\frac{1}{2}$ millions. This increment may be divided into realized—that is to say the money income which is saved—and the unrealized income, the chief portion of which arises out of the natural increase in the number of the flocks and herds of the country. To these some would add as a third source of income the increment to land values which arises without the expenditure of labor, owing to the mere expansion of population. No account of this has been taken in the figures just given, for though such income is very considerable, it does not arise from production, and is of necessity counterbalanced by the lessened income of those who use the land.

Grouped under comprehensive heads the expenditure of the people of New South Wales may be set down as follows:—

Expenditure of the People in New South Wales.

	£
Food and non-alcoholic beverages.....	17,130,000
Fermented and spirituous liquors.....	4,830,000
Tobacco.....	1,020,000
Clothing and drapery.....	7,990,000
Furniture.....	1,810,000
Rent or value of buildings used as dwellings.....	6,410,000
Locomotion.....	1,790,000
Fuel and light.....	1,670,000
Personal attendance and service.....	2,440,000
Medical attendance, medicine, and nursing.....	1,230,000
Religion, charities, education (not including State expenditure)	740,000
Art and amusement.....	830,000
Books, newspapers, &c.....	850,000
State services, postage, telegrams, succession dues.....	690,000
Household expenses not included elsewhere.....	1,700,000
Miscellaneous expenses.....	870,000

Total Expenditure..... £52,000,000

The expenditure thus amounted to £47 3s. 0d. per annum, or 2s. 7d. per day for each individual, which may be thus distributed :—

Daily Individual Expenditure.

	Pence per day.	Proportion of Expenditure per cent.
Food	10·2	32·9
Clothing	4·8	15·4
Stimulants	3·5	11·3
Rent	3·8	12·3
Sundries	8·7	28·1
Total Expenditure.....	31·0	100·0

According to Mulhall the expenditure per head in the leading countries of Europe and in the United States is :—

Daily Expenditure per head in various countries.

Countries.	Expenditure per head.
	pence.
United Kingdom.....	20·8
France	15·4
Germany	12·8
Russia	6·6
Austria	10·1
Italy	7·6
Spain	8·4
Belgium and Holland.....	13·8
Scandinavia	11·1
United States	15·6
New South Wales	31·0

The table just given affords but a partial view of the question of the cost of living; for if the total earnings of the countries above enumerated be considered as an element of comparison, it will be found that few countries approach Australasia in the small proportion of income absorbed in providing food for the people. The following table, given on the same authority as the preceding, shows that, while the actual cost of food and drink is £19 18s. in

COST OF FOOD AND BEVERAGE.

the Colony of New South Wales, as against £13 9s. in Great Britain and £6 3s. in Russia, the earnings required to pay for this food are not larger proportionately than in the United States or Great Britain, the countries which show most favourably in the table. The number of working days in the year is assumed to be 300, allowing for thirteen days' sickness and fifty-two Sundays :—

Comparative Cost of Food and Beverage.

Country.	Average cost per inhabitant yearly.	Ratio of Food to earnings per cent.	Days of Work equal to Food.
	£ s. d.		
United Kingdom	13 9 0	37·8	113
France	10 8 0	40·6	122
Germany	9 5 0	51·8	155
Russia	6 3 0	60·2	180
Austria.....	8 8 0	53·1	159
Italy	6 6 0	53·3	160
Spain	7 11 0	56·4	169
Belgium and Holland	10 14 0	45·5	136
Denmark	11 8 0	50·6	152
Scandinavia	8 6 0	50·0	150
United States.....	10 9 0	37·0	111
Australasia (New South Wales)	19 18 0	37·0	111