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Egg Supply

Egg prices continued to average well above a year earlier in January even though egg production for November and December averaged above the same year-ago period. However, cold weather in January may temper increases over January 1969. Weather is one of the uncertainties encountered in estimating future production and prices. Adverse weather conditions which reduce egg supplies and disrupt movement to market can have a greater price strengthening effect when supplies are relatively short than when there is a surplus situation.

In December, production was nearly 3 percent more than a year earlier. This was due to both the rate of lay and number of layers on farms. The nation's laying flock was about 1.4 percent larger than a year earlier. Eggs per layer increased about the same amount. Part of the increase in the rate of lay can be attributed to increased proportion of pullets in the nation's laying flock as compared to a year earlier. Perhaps some of the increase in rate of lay may be due to force molting of hens. Peak production of layers following a molt would be higher than prior to the molt or if maintained in continuous production without a molt.

Even though production is above a year earlier, supply available to consumers may be less than a year earlier. The increase in the quantity of eggs used for hatching chicks for laying flock replacements and meat production in December accounted for about 0.8 percent of the nation's December egg production. If the hatch in January increases the same amount as the number of eggs in incubators increased the first of January, the increase in the combined hatch of meat and egg type chicks would use up about one percent of the nation's egg production.

This fall and winter some eggs have been diverted from the shell table egg market to the production of liquid and frozen eggs. Although the breaking market competes with

the consumer's market, frozen eggs are usually produced in the spring and the summer rather than in the fall and winter. But, as mentioned in previous issues of this letter, in sufficient frozen and dried egg were produced last spring and summer to meet market need for this fall and winter. Storage stocks of frozen eggs at the end of December 1969 were well below a year earlier. At that time they were only about half of the amount on hand at the end of December 1968, and less than the holdings of this kind of eggs at the end of April 1969. Currently it is necessary for breakers to compete with the carton egg market for supplies of eggs in order to produce the necessary quantities of frozen and dried eggs.

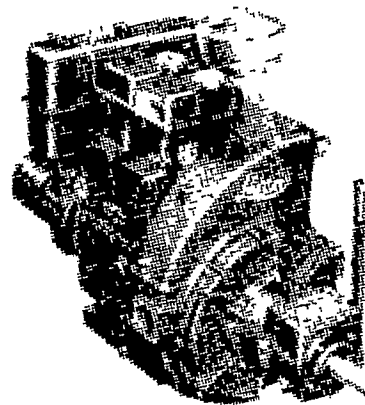
Delivery of eggs to breakers as reported in weekly commercial egg movement report by the market news service the week ending January 10 was 22 percent above the comparable week a year earlier. This rate of increase would account for one to two percent of the national monthly production.

Increases in breaker activity and chicks hatched for laying flock replacements have absorbed most if not all of the increase in production as compared to a year earlier and may continue to do so for the next 2 or 3 months.

High egg prices have brought about increased chick hatchings. If the current trend of hatch continues it could bring about lower prices the last half of the year than a year earlier. Remember, last year it was necessary to replace proportionately more hens than in the previous year. Presently there is a higher proportion of pullets in the nation's laying flock than at the same time last year. Thus, the same percentage increase in number of pullets housed this year as a year ago could result in a greater increase in production than in the last half of 1969.

The first labor legislation in America was passed in 1633, at which time the Massachusetts Bay Colony set a maximum wage for most skilled mechanics.

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