I would like now to comment briefly on the current situation in New Zealand. I should note that the general observations I made at our last meeting still apply and I shall not repeat them here.

At our last meeting I mentioned the estimates for New Zealand's production and export availability for 1975. Since that time the production estimate has been revised upwards from 460,000 tons to 499,000 tons, reflecting the higher average carcass weight of animals at the time of slaughter as well as a higher number of animals sent for slaughter. The 1976 production estimate has been revised downwards from 477,000 tons to 460,000 tons.

The 1975 estimate for average carcass weight at time of slaughter for all cattle and calves shows a return to 1973 levels following a drop of about 7 per cent during 1974.

The estimate for total cattle population for 1976 shows a slight reduction from this year's provisional figure of 9.685 million, which compares with earlier estimates of 9.82 million. The 1976 estimate is now 9.68 million compared with the earlier forecast of 10.05 million.
Availability for export which in June was estimated at 205,000 tons has been raised upwards slightly to 210,000 tons.

Domestic consumption is estimated to increase slightly, although the per capita consumption at 58.6 kgs remains the same as for 1974 and is lower than the 1973 figure of 60.2 kgs, reflecting both continued consumer resistance, despite some reduction in domestic prices, and the generally depressed economic situation.

Prices have remained firm during the 1975 season but remain significantly below last season's average. The consequences for producer confidence and the continued viability of beef-growing give cause for concern particularly in view of the importance of the industry to New Zealand's balance-of-payments situation and general economic well-being.

I will now review briefly the current market situation where I note that access conditions do show some change from when we last met with the Japanese authorities announcing quotas, which we hope will be the forerunner to many more, and the United States market appearing to give some hope for an increase in demand, while the reallocation of shortfalls under the voluntary restraint programme will be of assistance. It is also encouraging to note that the resolution of the problems affecting the movement of beef from Canada to the United States is being moved forward.

Unfortunately, we cannot express similar sentiments with regard to the EEC market, which, despite recent modifications to the EXIM scheme remains virtually closed.

The future is still not rosy, but we are encouraged by the signs which indicate that some easing of our problems may eventuate and we will look forward to future meetings of this Group providing justification for these hopes.