



ISLAND PURE
22 July 1997

Mrs PENFOLD: I want to commend the innovative outlook that is nurtured in farming communities, in particular, those on Kangaroo Island and Eyre Peninsula. I cite yet another example from my electorate of Flinders on how innovation is applied in a practical way to enable a farming family to survive and to help to start a new industry for this State. The innovation in this instance is South Australia's first sheep milking, dairy and cheese factory, Island Pure. It was designed by the proprietors, Doug and Ros Johnson and Dr Susan Berlin, to follow closely the code of practice for dairy set out by the South Australian Dairy Authority. The products are pasteurised and tested regularly by Department of Agriculture health inspectors. The Island Pure milking flock is run on pasture in the fertile clean environment of Cygnet River, Kangaroo Island. The sheep are milked twice daily, seven days a week, with each sheep yielding about 1 litre of milk per day. The average lactation is 100 days. The dairy is designed to milk 48 sheep at a time but is presently equipped to milk about 24.

The vacuum pump, milking cups and calibrated pyrex milking bowls, imported from Germany, enable accurate recording of individual sheep production at every milking. Large flocks, a favourable environment, good husbandry skills and a mechanised dairy point the enterprise to becoming a very efficient sheep milking producer. Island Pure is intended as a pilot plant. If the undertaking lives up to its early promise, it could be the nucleus of a viable sheep milking and processing industry for the whole of South Australia. Kangaroo Island, with its reliable rainfall and temperate climate, permits the breeding of sheep throughout the year.

Because there were no recognised breeds of dairy sheep in Australia, as opposed to overseas countries where sheep have been selected for milking for centuries, the Island Pure proprietors developed their own dairy breed by experimenting with a breeding program based on production records. The original 850 sheep were individually selected from about 3 500 ewes. These sheep were then crossed with several different European breeds so that the progeny could be evaluated for milk production. As the results became known, the higher milk producers formed the nucleus of the dairy flock, while those ewes judged unsatisfactory were removed and used to raise prime lambs for the meat trade.

Ewe lambs from the selected sheep are now coming into production. It is hoped that the easing of quarantine restrictions for sheep reproductive material will accelerate the process of developing a dairy breed of sheep for Kangaroo Island. Sheep milking production is traditional in countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea. It is now limited due to seasonal conditions, the difficulty of producing higher quality sheep milk, and the sometimes primitive conditions under which milk is harvested, often by hand, from flocks shepherded in the mountains in the milking season. Sheep milk production in these countries is declining as young people are no longer content to follow the traditional lifestyles of their forebears.

Island Pure proprietors believe that this places Kangaroo Island and South Australia in a good position to access markets. Initially, these markets are to be found in South Australia where our many citizens of European descent provide immediate market acceptance of this fresh, pure product. Sheep milk is known throughout the world for its low allergenic potential and, unlike goat's milk, has no unpleasant odours or taints. Island Pure produces natural sheep milk yoghurt made from 100 per cent pure sheep's milk with no preservatives, additives or thickeners. It is highly nutritious as it contains protein, calcium, iron and B group vitamins. For those preferring a sweeter taste, Kangaroo Island honey is now added to form Island Pure honey yoghurt.

Sheep milk cheeses, made by cheesemaker Dr Susan Berlin, Bachelor of Veterinary Science, are making their mark in leading hotels and restaurants because of their consistent high quality. These are marketed as gourmet feta, kefalotiri, haloumi, manchego and ricotta cheese. Most imported feta contains blends of sheep's milk, goat's milk and/or cow's milk but Island Pure gourmet feta is made from 100 per cent sheep's milk. The ricotta cheese is low fat-high protein, but because it contains no salt or preservatives must be used within 14 days of manufacture.

This agricultural project started in late 1991 but now Island Pure has opened its doors to tourism. From September to May they conduct daily tours and tastings, thus adding another dimension to this burgeoning industry and another tourism attraction to the already unique tourism products found on Kangaroo Island. Primary industry has its difficulties, but the people involved are particularly resilient—

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Bass): Order! The honourable member's