

## DIVISION OF HORTICULTURE.

### REPORT OF W. K. DALLAS, DIRECTOR.

#### THE FRUITGROWING INDUSTRY.

The 1939-40 season's apple and pear crop has been a somewhat variable one. In the Nelson, Canterbury, and Otago districts good average crops are being harvested, while in the other commercial fruitgrowing areas the apple crop is below average and pears light. Fair average crops of stone-fruits have been secured, and small fruits gave satisfactory returns.

There was, however, a reduction in the area planted in strawberries in the Auckland district, due to adverse weather conditions at planting-time.

In the Hawke's Bay and Gisborne districts heavy gales reduced the fruit crop to a considerable extent, especially apples and pears; and in the Etrick district, Central Otago, orchards suffered considerably as the result of a heavy frost.

A further increase is noticeable in the area planted in tomatoes, the crops being well up to the average.

The season's lemon crop is anticipated to be somewhat below the average. Owing to the inclement weather which prevailed during the winter months, the trees and crop received a severe check. A number of frosts and hailstorms experienced during the period also caused considerable damage to the fruit. Poorman oranges have produced fair crops.

The Government control of the marketing of lemons through the Internal Marketing Department came into operation on the 1st May, 1939. The scheme is proceeding satisfactorily, and further improvements are being effected in the curing and handling of the fruit.

The control of orchard diseases and pests has been reasonably well maintained and no serious outbreaks have occurred during the year. Brown-rot, however, continues to take considerable toll of stone-fruits, the production of which is rendered somewhat difficult by the presence of this fungous disease.

Fireblight has appeared in only a few isolated instances during the period under review and has been readily kept in check.

The reworking of unprofitable varieties of apples to better sorts has been carried on more extensively, and varieties not recommended for export are gradually being eliminated.

Several factors, including the incidence of war, have made it increasingly difficult for orchardists to secure the necessary experienced casual labour for fruit harvesting, more particularly in regard to packers and efficient shed hands, the employment of indifferent and inexperienced workers adding considerably to labour-costs.

A new avenue for the disposal of surplus stone-fruit has been made available in the Central Otago district by the establishment of a stone-fruit-drying factory. Although only still in the experimental stage, the results so far obtained have been such that every inducement has been given to the company concerned to pursue its operations further.

With a view to keeping the field officers in closer touch with the many problems affecting the work of the Division, a conference of Orchard Instructors was again held at Auckland in August last, and a refresher course also arranged in conjunction with the officers attached to the Plant Disease Division of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research.

#### EXPORT OF FRUIT.

The unfavourable climatic conditions which prevailed during the 1939 growing period—heavy gales in the Hawke's Bay district and drought conditions generally—considerably reduced the quantity of fruit (apples and pears) available for export during the 1939 season.

The total quantity exported amounted to 1,051,261 cases (951,744 cases apples and 99,517 cases pears).

Of these, 602,253 cases apples and 73,215 cases pears were consigned to the United Kingdom, 203,973 cases apples and 992 cases pears to the Continent, 58,863 cases apples to North America, 63,600 cases apples and 25,310 cases pears to Sweden, 17,000 cases apples to South America, and 6,055 cases apples to the East.

The Government guarantee again applied to the 1939 shipments, the grower being guaranteed a c.i.f. return of 11s. (New Zealand currency) per case in respect of approved varieties of apples and pears graded and packed in accordance with the requirements of the fruit-export regulations for shipment to duly approved markets.

The inspection of fruit at the ports of shipment was carefully carried out by the Fruit Inspectors, and any lines not conforming with the export regulations were rejected. Considerable attention was also given to the loading and stowage on the overseas vessels, with the view of ensuring as far as possible the fruit arriving at its destination in the best possible condition.