

Seasonal conditions, which interfered seriously with cultural work in the spring and made mid-season harvesting almost impossible, turned what once promised to be a record season with certain crops into one with below-average production. Wheat, oat, barley, and potato yields in particular would possibly have constituted a record had harvesting conditions been normal. Much lodging occurred with grain crops, and, while many of these could have been headed had weather conditions permitted, continued rains led to sprouting in the heads. Where crops were stooked, this same sprouting occurred in the sheaf. Moisture content of many lines was high at threshing, while considerable losses occurred as a result of flooding in Canterbury.

Potato crops promised well, but conditions in the field have led to disastrous results, and although a record acreage is shown the resulting crop has been most disappointing. Onion crops yielded well, but here again conditions made drying of the crop difficult, and many "wet necks" are making storage difficult.

The delay in the harvest of crops generally has meant that much ground that would normally have been prepared for autumn sowing of grain has had to stand over for spring sowing of alternative crops, and this, added to other troubles such as shortage of man-power and equipment, will have a detrimental effect on the 1945-46 harvest figures.

Grass and clover seed harvesting was also carried out under difficult conditions, with heavy individual losses.

SERVICES' VEGETABLE PRODUCTION

The growing of vegetables by the Department to ensure a continuous supply of fresh vegetables to the Armed Forces without such supply interfering with civilian requirements was undertaken in 1942.

An initial area of 1,800 acres envisaged supply only to New Zealand Forces, but with the entry of the United States of America into the war and the arrival in this country and in the Pacific area of United States Forces, the area leased for vegetable production was stepped up to 5,200 acres, of which 4,172 acres were actually cropped. With the progress of the war, which saw United States Forces removed to a more advanced base and the better organization of the commercial growers, the need for Services' vegetable production areas decreased, and as the commercial growers stepped up their acreage so the Department reduced the number and acreage of its projects. In the spring of 1944 an area of 214 acres was released, while the autumn of 1945 saw 3,281 acres grassed out and handed back to the lessors, leaving an area of 1,686 acres still in vegetable production.

Production.—A range of 27 varieties of vegetables was produced, and production planned to even out supply during each month of the year. The total tonnage produced during the year ending 31st March, 1945, was 22,526 tons. A considerable proportion of this was handled by the Internal Marketing Division processing plant at Pukekohe, where cabbage and carrots were supplied for dehydration and peas and beans for quick-freeze. The change in location of huge troop numbers from within this country to the Pacific area meant sudden changes in production schedules, as only certain types of vegetables produced were suitable for export in fresh condition or processing. These sudden changes led to inevitable loss, but under war conditions such loss is to be preferred to acute shortages.

Supply.—Details of supply are as follows:—

								Tons.
Army	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1,511
Navy	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	256
Air Force	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1,234
Others, including United States Forces					..	..	..	19,526
Total	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	22,527

The supply to the Armed Services other than New Zealand Army, Navy, and Air Force in the country has been under the direction and control of the Internal Marketing Division, which, after satisfying the requirements of these Services, has placed the balance on the civilian markets. With the very favourable season experienced, total production from Services' vegetable production and commercial growers was exceptionally high, and as a result there were at times an over-supply of vegetables. Where possible, such surplus vegetables were made available free to various charitable institutions.

COUNCILS OF PRIMARY PRODUCTION

The District Councils of Primary Production have again been helpful in many directions, and their services have been of inestimable value in maintaining and, where possible, increasing production. The Councils have been called upon to make recommendations in connection with the release of farm labour to the Armed Forces, and also to assist in making the best use of the available farm labour. District Councils have, as in past years, estimated the number of Service personnel required for harvesting work.

Allocation of Supplies.—District Councils have continued to act as liaison officers for the distribution of fertilizer, tires, gum boots, &c., and the allocation of tractors. They have also reported on applications for accommodation under the Rural Housing Emergency Scheme, and have generally assisted the farmer over a difficult period.