

associated with the question of housing accommodation for workers engaged in the industry. The increasing utilization of farm machinery such as light tractors is materially assisting growers to overcome the problem of shortage of labour.

(b) SEASON 1948-49

The past season was not the most favourable for the growth of the tobacco crop. Rainfall for the spring months was below the average, and although this enabled the preparation of the land to be carried out early it resulted in the soil being rather dry at planting-time, with little or no reserve of moisture to carry the crop through the growing-season. A showery November made for good planting conditions, but this was followed by a dry spell, the month of December being the driest for many years. Summer rainfall was fair, but, considering the dry condition of the land, was insufficient. This was confirmed by the excellent growth of the irrigated crops in the district. Temperatures during the season were not extreme, but some cool nights were recorded. A severe hailstorm on the 26th January struck the Riwaka Valley and the area adjacent to the foothills, causing some crops to be completely ruined and others damaged to a greater or lesser degree. Frosts late in March caused some loss of leaf in the district. There was more wind than usual, particularly in the early summer.

The crop promised to be an unusually heavy one, but the hailstorm in January and the frosts in March caused a considerable loss in weight of leaf. The quality of the leaf this season was variable. The dry, early summer weather tended to bring the crop to maturity, and much of the leaf harvested at this stage, although bright, was small. Subsequent rains caused the tobacco to make fresh growth and to green up again, with accompanying difficulties in harvesting and curing. In addition there was a considerable amount of hail-damaged leaf. Taking all these factors into account, the leaf offered during the past season was probably the most varied for several seasons.

(c) PRICES OF LEAF

The basic average prices for the 1949 harvest were 2s. 5½d. per pound for flue-cured, and 2s. 2½d. per pound for air-dried leaf. These prices were given effect to by the issue of Price Order No. 996 (Rawleaf Tobacco) by the Price Tribunal and were the same as those which operated during the preceding year. The minimum price below which leaf cannot be sold as fixed by the Board of Trade (Raw Tobacco Price) Regulations remains unaltered at 1s. 2d. per pound.

(d) MINIMUM PERCENTAGE OF DOMESTIC LEAF

For the twelve months ended 31st July, 1949, manufacturers voluntarily offered to use a minimum of 32½ per cent. of domestic leaf over all their manufacture, this being an increase of 2½ per cent. over the figure for the corresponding period of the previous year. The figure remains at 32½ per cent. for the year ending 31st July, 1950.

(e) TOBACCO RESEARCH

The amount contributed by the Board towards the cost of maintaining the Tobacco Research Station for the year ended 31st July, 1949, was £1,923 11s. 6d. This brings the total contributions of the Board to that date to £10,977.

(f) CROP INSURANCE

The 1948-49 crop suffered considerable damage from hail in January, 1949, and later on in March of that year from recurring frosts. The claims submitted for compensation were: hail damage, 415,381 lb.; frost damage, 201,486 lb.

The recuperating qualities of the tobacco-plant were again demonstrated, and in some instances growers who had submitted claims for hail damage actually achieved their contract quantity and were therefore not eligible for compensation.