

HORTICULTURE DIVISION.

REPORT OF THE DIVISIONAL DIRECTOR.

Wellington, 29th June, 1918.

The Secretary of Agriculture, Industries, and Commerce.

I SUBMIT herewith the annual report of this division for the year ended 31st March, 1918.

T. W. KIRK, Director.

INTRODUCTION.

The work coming within the scope of this division has been carried out during the year as well as possible under the adverse conditions caused by the war. The following are the principal activities dealt with by this branch of the Department:—

- (1.) Instruction in fruit and vegetable production; inspection of orchards, vineyards, gardens, and nurseries, and affording information as to the most up-to-date methods of controlling diseases and insect pests; also giving advice as to suitable varieties of fruit, vegetables, &c., to plant.
- (2.) Demonstrations and instruction in the grading and packing of fruit, and in pruning and spraying.
- (3.) Testing new brands of spraying-compounds for the purpose of ascertaining their efficacy under local conditions.
- (4.) Affording advice on the preserving of fruit and vegetables, both for commercial and domestic purposes; fruit cool storage.
- (5.) Advising on tree-planting; giving information as to the most suitable varieties of trees to plant, both for shelter and timber purposes in different localities.
- (6.) Control of the horticultural stations at Te Kauwhata, Tauranga, and Arataki.
- (7.) Registration of all orchards and nurseries in the Dominion.
- (8.) Orchard-tax: Issuing of tax-demand notices, &c.
- (9.) Inspection of all imported fruit, plants, vegetables, bulbs, &c., at the ports of Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin, and Bluff; also inspection and grading of all locally grown fruit, plants, vegetables, &c., intended for export.
- (10.) Viticulture and winemaking: Giving advice on the growing of grapes, both outdoor and under glass, the control of pests and diseases, and on the making of wines.
- (11.) Affording information on bee-keeping generally, and the production of honey for market.
- (12.) Inspection of apiaries, and instruction in up-to-date methods of controlling disease.
- (13.) Grading of honey for export; registration of honey-export brands.
- (14.) Registration of apiaries.

FRUITGROWING INDUSTRY.

The 1917-18 fruit season on the whole was a fairly satisfactory one. Good average crops of apples and pears were recorded, while stone-fruit crops were on the light side. The climatic conditions experienced during the growing season were very favourable to the development of fungoid diseases, and considerable quantities of stone-fruit particularly were lost in this way. The prices realized for good-quality fruit have been equal to those ruling in previous years, and satisfactory returns are being obtained for cool-stored fruit.

During the year a total of 1,535 acres were planted in commercial orchards in the various districts. This, although a decrease of 855 acres as compared with the previous year's figures, must be considered very satisfactory in view of the great shortage of labour, &c., brought about by the Great War. The total area now under fruit for the whole of the Dominion is estimated at 49,655 acres. The following figures show the area planted during the 1917 planting season in each orchard instructor's district: Whangarei, 110 acres; North Auckland, 190 acres; South Auckland, 35 acres; Poverty Bay, 18 acres; Waikato and Bay of Plenty, 72 acres; Hawke's Bay, 60 acres; Taranaki, 10 acres; Manawatu and Wairarapa, 30 acres; Wellington, 10 acres; Nelson, 400 acres; Marlborough, 100 acres; North Canterbury, 70 acres; South Canterbury, 230 acres; Otago, 200 acres: total, 1,535 acres.

Numerous requests for advice and information on the various phases connected with fruitgrowing have been received from persons—returned soldiers and others—who are desirous of taking up this pursuit as a means of livelihood.

The orchard instructors during the year have been actively engaged in the work of orchard-inspection and the enforcement of the Orchard and Garden Diseases Act; giving advice and instruction, particularly to young orchardists, on the planting, pruning, and spraying of fruit-trees; giving instruction on the proper methods of grading and packing fruit; holding public pruning demonstrations throughout the respective districts; reading papers before fruitgrowers' associations, and giving public addresses on the care of fruit-trees and other matters relative to fruit-culture; inspection of locally grown fruit in fruit-shops and auction-marts; and inspection of nurseries.