CHAPTER V.—GENERAL.

Report of the Timber Trade for the Year ended 31st March, 1923.

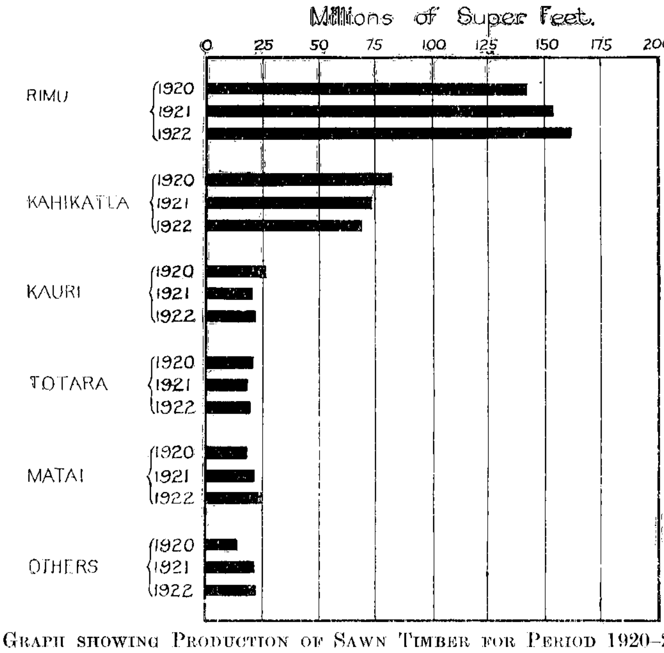
Production.

The following table shows the reported output in superficial feet of the various species of timber from New Zealand sawmills during the years ended 31st March, 1920, 1921, and 1922, and has been compiled from figures supplied by the Government Statistician.

Reported Production of Sawn Timber by Species.

Species.	1920.		1921.		1922.	
	Sup. ft.	Per Cent.	Sup. ft.	Per Cent.	Sup. ft.	Per Cent.
Kauri ..	26,094,822	8·67	20,393,788	6·63	21,435,728	6·81
Rimu ..	141,825,326	47·10	153,529,022	49·90	157,345,928	49·96
White-pine	81,369,931	27·03	73,168,750	23·78	68,486,633	21·74
Totara ..	20,507,162	6·81	17,984,189	5·85	19,570,561	6·21
Matai ..	17,761,542	5·90	21,329,043	6·93	24,830,368	7·88
Beech ..	3,435,356	1·14	6,348,594	2·06	4,863,184	1·55
Pinus radiata	5,867,951	1·95	9,711,918	3·16	10,815,485	3·43
Other ..	4,213,862	1·40	5,202,530	1·69	7,624,423	2·42
Totals ..	301,075,952	100·00	307,667,834	100·00	314,972,310	100·00

The estimated output for the year ended 31st March, 1923, is approximately 340,000,000 sup. ft.



Graph showing Production of Sawn Timber for Period 1920–22.

Of all industries engaged in the development and exploitation of natural resources, the timber industry is one of the few whose company shares as publicly quoted on the Stock Exchange have shown a constant appreciation since 1914. Production-costs and selling-prices increased enormously during the war period, but whereas the former have since fallen appreciably timber-prices are still high. These facts have combined to cause a large increase in the number of sawmill operators whose mills are now estimated to have a capacity of 660,000,000 sup. ft., per annum, or approximately twice the country's requirements. This situation invariably arises during periods of peak prices, and only with a return to normal values may the industry expect that stabilization so necessary for its welfare and continued prosperity. (In 1915–16 the sawmills of the United States of America were estimated to have a capacity of 120,000,000,000 sup. ft. or three times the country's normal demand of 40,000,000,000 sup. ft.)

The financial depression of 1921 continued during the early part of last year. The most serious disturbance of normal trading conditions occurred on the west coast of the South Island. Sawmillers who normally ship large supplies of rimu and white-pine to Australia from this district were unable to compete with Canadian, American, and Baltic timbers on this market. A gradual improvement in trade is noted since June, 1922: whereas only twenty-seven mills were reported operating in Westland at the 30th June, 1922, there were fifty-seven reported working on the 31st March, 1923, out of seventy-eight mills in existence in the province. Except for export mills and those supplying local rural demands, production is almost back to normal.

A graph has been prepared from data in "Statistics of New Zealand" for the years 1916 and 1919–22 to show the trend of regional output of sawn timber from logs. The statistics are compiled for provincial districts, which, however, practically correspond with the forest regions. Auckland and Rotorua Regions combined (*i.e.*, Auckland Province) still occupy the premier position, but their