

Whilst the quantity of copra exported last year was somewhat less than the quantity produced during the year 1922, still it is pleasing to note that the quality has very considerably improved. The coming into operation of the Copra Ordinance of 1923 has resulted in a gradual improvement in quality. This improvement will undoubtedly become more evident in the near future, and cannot fail to react in a beneficial manner upon the price obtained in the world's markets.

The decline in quantity is attributable to the exceptional gales experienced in March, 1923, and to the unfavourable weather conditions prevailing during that period of the year, which delayed the maturing of the nuts.

The following table shows the quantity and value of the copra exported during the past three years :—

				Tons.	Value.
1921	..	..	..	7,428	£190,520
1922	..	..	..	16,956	£319,333
1923	..	..	..	13,484	£269,995

Licenses to purchase Copra.—During the year 156 licenses were issued under the provisions of the Copra Ordinance, 1923; of this number 150 were issued to persons to purchase dried copra and six for the purchase of freshly cut undried copra. Latterly the number of applications for licenses to purchase freshly cut undried copra has increased, and it has been found necessary to divide the Territory into a number of districts. One license will be issued for each area, and the holder thereof will be required to erect and keep in regular use an efficient hot-air drier. To prevent the erection of an excessive number of driers in one district it has been found expedient, from previous experience, to give to the licensee the exclusive right to purchase undried copra within the area specified. The producer will, of course, be at liberty to dispose of his copra in any area he chooses, or to dry the copra himself should he so desire, thus affording ample safeguard against any exploitation on the part of the license-holder. It is hoped that the erection of these hot-air driers will further improve the quality of Samoan copra as well as aid in increasing production.

CACAO.

First-class Samoan cacao will always command an assured market, it having been found most valuable for blending purposes for manufacture of the best class of confectionery. Every effort, therefore, is being made to bring our cacao up to a high standard of quality, and with this object in view a modified system of grading has been instituted under the provisions of the Cacao Beans Export Ordinance, 1923, which came into force in November last. Under this Ordinance all cacao-beans prior to exportation have to be examined by a special committee appointed for the purpose. In the case of any parcel of beans which conforms to the standard required by the committee for good-quality cacao the bill of lading relating to such parcel is stamped with the words "Standard Quality Cacao." The committee has power to mark as "Inferior" all cacao which in its opinion would militate against the interests of producers, and also to prohibit exportation of any parcel of beans which in its opinion is unfit for export. Cacao which cannot be classed as "Standard Quality" or "Inferior" is allowed to be shipped on its merits and bears no distinguishing mark as to quality.

Up to the 31st March, 1924, 3,861 bags of cacao have been examined by the committee, and classified as follows :—

					Bags.	Tons.	cwt.	qr.	lb.
Standard quality	..	..	..	..	1,403	91	7	0	2
Below standard quality	..	..	..	..	733	46	18	3	25
Native cacao	..	..	..	..	101	6	10	2	11
Inferior cacao	..	..	..	..	1,581	102	10	2	12
Condemned	..	..	..	..	43	(Weight unknown)			
Totals	..	..	..	..	3,861	247	7	0	22

As time goes on this system of inspection will give confidence to outside buyers in regard to the quality of the Samoan produce and will be reflected on the prices obtained.

The prospects for 1924 as regards output are encouraging, the crops generally being above the average. With normal weather conditions prevailing the export figure for the coming year should treble that of 1923.

COTTON.

This product has been the principal subject of discussion by the Native Lands Development Committee, a body recently set up to consider ways and means for promoting greater activity among the Natives in developing their lands.

Many years ago cotton was successfully grown in Samoa, and, although the quality was undoubtedly equal to that produced elsewhere at the time, the competition from other countries where cheaper labour was available, coupled with the low prices, forced the abandonment of this cultivation. The cost of labour should not be a factor in the present movement, however, which is for cultivation of cotton by the Natives themselves.

Several varieties of cotton-seed have been planted for observation purposes, and a further supply is in order. When this comes to hand it will be distributed to selected villages for trial.

BEETLE-DESTRUCTION.

Speaking generally, the beetle situation is entirely satisfactory, there being whole districts where very little trace of this pest can now be seen. Close control over beetle-searching is maintained by the Department's Inspectors.