

LOCAL MARKETS.

The Inspectors report that the bulk of New-Zealand-grown fruit and vegetables coming on to the local markets is of good quality and free from disease. At the commencement of the season apples and pears were inclined to be immature, having apparently been picked too soon in order to catch an early market.

The requirements of the regulations relating to the sale of New-Zealand-grown fruit for local consumption are now being more satisfactorily complied with by growers generally, although in some instances an improvement is desirable in the matter of packing and branding of cases. A voluntary local Control Board was established in the Nelson District for handling the 1924 fruit crop. Some 120,000 cases of fruit were dealt with. Although the scheme could not be considered a complete success, it certainly demonstrated that a great deal of fruit could be sold direct to the retailer at fixed prices for standard grades, and also that grades could be kept more uniform and attain the elimination of low-grade fruit from the local markets.

FRUIT COOL STORAGE.

The capacity of the recognized cool stores has been fully taxed during the season, and the bulk of the fruit has kept in good condition. Further extensive experiments for the control of flesh-collapse in apples have been conducted by Mr. R. Waters, of the Biological Laboratory, in co-operation with an officer of this Division. It is satisfactory to note that the results obtained are very encouraging, the trouble being less prominent than formerly. Further experiments which are being carried out this season will include pears.

PROPOSED SCHOOL OF HORTICULTURE.

This is a matter which has been strongly advocated by Fruitgrowers' and Nurserymen's Associations and others for some considerable time past. Such an institution could do a great deal of good and necessary work. The New Zealand Institute of Horticulture (Inc.), established in 1923, is making satisfactory progress under the management of its secretary (Mr. G. A. Green).

IMPORTED FRUIT, PLANTS, ETC.

There has been a considerable increase in the quantity of fruit and plants imported through the main ports of entry as compared with the previous year, the bulk of the lines arriving in good condition. A few lines of oranges and mandarins from Australia arrived in an overripe condition. Fruit-fly infection was responsible for the destruction of one or two consignments of island oranges. The necessary fumigation had to be carried out in connection with a number of lines found on examination to be infected with live scale, mealy bug, &c. The new up-to-date fumigating-building at Auckland was completed during the year. This was badly needed, as the old building, which had been in use for a large number of years, had become quite unsuitable for the efficient carrying-out of fumigation work.

HOP-CULTURE.

Reports to hand from the Nelson and Motueka districts indicate that the hop crop will be well above the average, some record crops having been harvested. The question as to what prices will be realized will largely depend on the quantities of hops at present on hand on the Home market. According to the Customs figures 4,469 cwt. of hops, valued at £31,112, were exported from the Dominion during the year.

The quantities and values of hops exported during the last five years are as follows: 1921, 1,765 cwt., £19,201; 1922, 2,056 cwt., £18,054; 1923, £2,243 cwt., £21,153; 1924, 3,883 cwt., £27,615; 1925, 4,469 cwt., £31,112.

TOBACCO-CULTURE.

The growing of tobacco is still receiving considerable attention, some 300 acres being now under cultivation. The question of systematic or organized tobacco-culture in New Zealand is worthy of being thoroughly gone into, both from a production and a marketing point of view.

VITICULTURE AND WINEMAKING.

There is a gradual increase in the area grown in grapes, both for wine purposes and for dessert. The past season has been a satisfactory one, and the returns both for outdoor and under glass were in excess of those of the previous year. Owing to the larger quantity of dessert grapes produced outside, prices were a little easier, but still quite remunerative to the grower. The yield from wine grapes is estimated at 85,000 gallons of wine, valued at approximately £34,000. A satisfactory demand still exists for New-Zealand-made wines, and winemakers generally are doing good business. Some splendid crops have been obtained from vines grown under glass, the returns from glasshouses being estimated at £32,000.

CIDER.

The manufacture of cider is steadily extending, especially in the Nelson District, where a large quantity of low-grade apples which would otherwise be unsaleable is utilized in the manufacture of this beverage. The quantity of cider during the year is estimated at 45,000 gallons, valued at £11,250.