

Efforts have been made for some time past to improve the quality of Native copra, but these efforts have been only partially successful owing to the fact that the same price is paid by traders for inferior as for superior copra. This results in dissatisfaction with the copra laws, which appear to the Natives to be irritating, to sometimes involve them in heavy money fines, and yet to never bring them any material benefit for their extra efforts in producing high-grade copra.

For the above reasons the Natives have repeated their urgent requests to the Administration to assist them by shipping their copra to oversea markets. In response to these requests arrangements are being made by the Administration to make trial shipments this year, subject to the condition that only the best white and thoroughly dried copra shall be received. It is hoped that this will be the means of inducing the Natives to produce a copra of superior quality, for which they should receive a correspondingly better price.

The total amount of copra produced by the Natives last year was 9,459 tons, or 1,812 tons less than the previous year. This reduction is chiefly due to smaller crops resulting from damage to a few plantations by the gale early in the year, and also to the drop in price paid to the Natives for copra.

Cacao.—Very little cacao is produced by the Natives, but steps are being taken to encourage villages to make new plantations. Instructions are also given to Natives by the Inspectors in the pruning of cacao-trees and cultivation and production of cacao.

Bananas.—In view of the New Zealand Government having decided to build a ship for the New Zealand-Samoan fruit trade, and so afford the Natives an opportunity to help themselves by exporting bananas and other fruits, large areas have been planted in readiness to provide regular shipments, commencing, it was hoped, towards the end of this year. Latest advices indicate, however, that owing to delays in construction caused by the coal strike in Great Britain the new service cannot now be inaugurated before the beginning of 1928.

Cotton.—Although the quantity of cotton produced during the year was treble that for the preceding year, it is still only a small amount—viz., 3 tons. Most of it is grown by the Natives, who are very slowly realizing the benefits to be derived by cultivating an area within easy reach of their villages, where the women and children can be employed to cultivate and pick the cotton, and so supplement their revenue from other sources.

To assist the Natives to build up a cotton-growing industry the Administration is for the present paying growers 6d. per pound for unseeded cotton.

The progress that has been made during the past year in Native cultivations will be seen from the diagrams on page 7.

The survey of village lands is being gradually carried out, but it is a comparatively big task and will take years to complete. Meanwhile the Natives in a number of districts, realizing the benefits of increased production, are dividing up uncultivated land without waiting for survey, and are allocating sections of from 5 to 10 acres to each young man without land of his own.

(e) NATIVE PRISON TRAINING-FARM.

In April last the Native prison in Apia was closed, and the prisoners transferred to the Tuvao Prison Training-farm, situated inland about eighteen miles from Apia, where prisoners are now all employed in developing land and learning modern methods of agriculture, which should be of benefit to them when they return to their villages. The scheme is proving a great success, and in the very near future will be more than self-supporting.

(f) NATIVE LEGISLATION.

The Faipules assembled with the Administrator on two occasions during the year—viz., in May and December—and discussed matters for the welfare of the Natives of Samoa as a whole. The following were the principal matters discussed:—

First Meeting (May).

Encouragement to Samoans to open post-office savings accounts. The number of these accounts to-day is 799, as compared with 89 four years ago.

Government assistance for purchasing barbed wire to fence in Native lands for cattle.

Increased efforts to be made to induce Natives to improve and enlarge their plantations.

Matais (heads of families) to divide up their uncultivated lands in 5-acre blocks pending completion of surveys by the Government.

Wills: Samoans to be empowered to bequeath their cultivated areas of land to their next-of-kin, or near relatives, in lieu of the present system, which provides for the clan or whole of the members of the family selecting a successor to the deceased head of the family, who thereby acquires the control of all family land.

Titles, or the name given to the head of a family, which automatically carry the power and control of the family and its lands, to be inherited, or power given to holders to bequeath their titles. The Faipules, while proposing this change on behalf of Matais in their districts, felt that it would seriously disturb the existing social custom of Samoans, and should therefore be further discussed by them with their people. This matter was brought up again at the December Fono, but no agreement could be arrived at.

Requests to the Government to help them to get a better price for their copra.

Native regulations were approved for controlling boxing contests; settling religious disputes; conservation of water-supplies, &c.