

TABLE 13.

IMPORTS OF SAWN TIMBER AND OTHER FOREST PRODUCE.

(From information supplied by the Comptroller of Customs. All figures refer to the years ended 31st December, 1926-28.)

Item.	1926.		1927.		1928.	
	Quantity.	Value.	Quantity.	Value.	Quantity.	Value.
	Ft. b.m.	£	Ft. b.m.	£	Ft. b.m.	£
Australian hardwoods ..	23,365,000	365,730	26,398,000	418,830	23,706,000	356,330
Douglas fir ..	16,937,000	120,460	17,638,000	125,680	16,713,000	116,850
Cedar ..	8,905,000	106,480	2,390,000	24,270	2,066,000	20,690
Hemlock and spruce ..	7,271,000	76,960	5,586,000	67,890	7,694,000	83,400
Redwood ..	3,500,000*	48,450	7,583,000	85,580	7,478,000	87,350
Other ..	6,526,000	108,370	2,173,000	62,470	2,859,000	74,230
Totals ..	66,504,000	826,450	61,768,000	784,720	60,516,000	738,850
	Number.	£	Number.	£	Number.	£
Laths, rails, palings, &c. ..	14,280,000	26,690	10,156,000	15,420	7,368,000	11,230
	Tons.	£	Tons.	£	Tons.	£
Tanning-bark ..	2,250	23,240	865	12,350	1,442	23,650
Wood-pulp ..	2,710	35,880	3,156	38,470	2,382	28,910

* Redwood estimated for 1926.

During 1928, 60,516,000 ft. b.m., valued at £738,850, were imported, compared with 61,768,000 ft. b.m., valued at £784,720, in 1927, and 66,504,000 ft. b.m., valued at £826,450, in 1926.

Hardwoods, chiefly from Australia, and in the form of rough-sawn timber for bridge and constructional work, poles, and sleepers, maintained a steady trade and price. Oak and other minor hardwoods for the various wood-using industries were imported to the extent of approximately 3 million feet b.m. during the year. In all, hardwoods account for approximately 44 per cent. of our total timber imports.

Softwoods, in the form of Douglas fir for construction and interior finish, redwood and cedar for joinery and weatherboarding, and hemlock and spruce for dairy-produce containers and general boxing, were imported to the extent of 33,951,000 ft. b.m., valued at £308,290, compared with 33,197,000 ft. b.m., valued at £303,420, introduced during 1927. Douglas fir is imported mainly in large sizes in the rough-sawn merchantable grade, the baulks being resawn locally, mainly into inch boards. The low price of the latter, combined with their lightness and ease of handling, owing to being thoroughly seasoned, has been largely responsible for their preference to the lower grades of native species for centreing and falsework in the construction of large buildings. During the past two years approximately 10 million feet b.m. of redwood and cedar have been imported. The imports in 1926 of cedar and redwood were in the ratio of 3 to 1, whereas the position has now been reversed, redwood being imported in place of cedar. The efforts of the Redwood Export Bureau in reducing prices and in establishing an agency in Australia, has resulted in a firm trade being established in New Zealand for the species. At the ruling prices, heart matai, rimu, and totara cannot compete with redwood for weatherboarding. Hemlock and spruce, which are imported mainly as dressed timber, showed an increase of almost 3 million feet b.m., due mainly to the heavy increase in the import of fruit-cases. Butter-boxes, too, increased in importation to the extent of 200,000 ft. b.m., while imported cheese-crates decreased by a slightly larger quantity. It would appear that the latter are not so dependable as the white-pine and silver-beech crates.

The importation of tanning-bark and wood-pulp fluctuates considerably. Thus 1,442 tons of tanning-bark and 2,382 tons of wood-pulp were imported during the year, compared with 865 tons of tanning-bark and 3,156 tons of wood-pulp during 1927. The price of tanning-bark has increased from £10 6s. per ton in 1926 to £14 6s. per ton in 1927 and £16 8s. per ton in 1928, and it appears that these prices will force the use of local tanning-barks to a greater extent in the future. Wood-pulp maintained a steady price of approximately £12 per ton, as in the previous year.