

HORTICULTURE DIVISION.

REPORT OF J. A. CAMPBELL, DIRECTOR.

THE FRUITGROWING INDUSTRY.

From a horticultural standpoint the season under review has, generally speaking, been a satisfactory one. The crop of apples and pears was above the average, notwithstanding that the previous year's crop was a heavy one. One of the main reasons for this, apart from the favourable weather conditions again experienced during the growing and harvesting period, is no doubt the fact that the greater majority of fruitgrowers are manuring their orchards more liberally than formerly, and are also paying more attention to orchard-cultivation.

In most localities lack of sufficient sunshine retarded the ripening of the tomato crop, the fruit in consequence being smaller than usual, which affected the returns received by growers.

A pest identified as *Phthorimaea melanoplintha* (closely resembling the potato-moth) attacked the tomato crops in the Lower Hutt, Manawatu, Wanganui, and Napier districts, doing serious damage in some cases before it was discovered. The life-history of this moth is being worked out with the view of arriving at the best means of control.

The culture of citrus fruits is still receiving a good deal of attention in the northern districts adapted to the growing of this class of fruit. With more orchards coming into bearing it has become necessary to enlarge a number of curing sheds in order to satisfactorily deal with the extra amount of fruit being handled. Some of the citrus groves in the Auckland District suffered somewhat from the effects of severe frosts in the early spring, a large quantity of fruit being rendered unfit for sale. The bulk of the affected trees, however, made a rapid recovery, and are carrying a good second crop.

Orchard plantings during the year were only on a small scale, and consisted mainly of replacements to existing orchards where the trees had become unprofitable. The total area in commercial orchards for the whole of the Dominion stands at approximately 27,000 acres.

The gradual adoption of up-to-date methods of spraying, &c., which has taken place during recent years has enabled orchard pests and diseases to be more readily kept under control, and a dirty commercial orchard is now rarely met with. Fungoid diseases were less prevalent during the past season, the weather conditions experienced being unfavourable to their development.

Fireblight disease has been kept well under control in the fireblight areas in the North Island, and has caused very little damage to orchards during the year. The disease, however, has now made its appearance in the South Island, having been discovered in an orchard in Christchurch towards the end of the year, and also at Kaikoura. The infection is at present confined to a small area, and steps have been taken to quarantine the infected districts.

The matter of establishing a central Fruit Research Station was finalized during the year, a commercial orchard of some 20 acres of established fruit-trees with adjacent undeveloped land being purchased at Redwood's Valley. Experimental spraying and the laying-down of manurial plots has already been undertaken in connection with the scheme of investigation work which is being carried out by the Department in co-operation with the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research and the Cawthron Institute.

In November last Mr. R. G. Hatton, Director of the East Malling Research Station, arrived in New Zealand, and was given every assistance in visiting as many of the commercial fruit areas as was possible in the limited time at his disposal. Mr. Hatton was very favourably impressed with the development made in this country, and his visit should prove of lasting importance and value to the fruit-growing industry here.

Another visitor of interest was Senor Gonzalez, representing the Commerce Department of the Chilean Government, who was desirous of obtaining an insight into the fruitgrowing and marketing methods adopted in the Dominion. He was provided with all information available on these subjects, and shown round a number of the main fruitgrowing districts by officers of the Division.

Investigations were made during the year by separate parliamentary Committees into the methods of marketing fruit and vegetables in the Dominion, and also regarding the tobacco-growing industry in New Zealand. Evidence in connection with these was given by officers of the Department.

EXPORT OF FRUIT.

As the result of an abundant harvest the 1930 fruit-export season was a particularly busy one for both fruitgrowers and the inspecting officers attached to the Division, the total quantity exported reaching the record figure of 1,330,891 cases. Of this total 1,093,153 cases apples and 55,972 cases pears were shipped to Great Britain and the Continent; 160,541 cases apples and 3,223 cases pears to South America; and 17,787 cases apples and 215 cases pears to Canada. The bulk of the fruit was exported under the Government guarantee of a gross market price of 11s. per case of "Extra Fancy" and "Fancy" grades, and 7s. for "Good" grade.

Heavy Australian shipments to Great Britain had a somewhat adverse effect on New Zealand fruit prices, but the returns as a whole were fairly satisfactory.

Fruit exports from the Dominion during the last five years are as follows: 1926, 730,308 cases; 1927, 544,233 cases; 1928, 1,026,986 cases; 1929, 992,151 cases; 1930, 1,330,891 cases.

Another good season having been experienced, it is anticipated that the 1931 exports will equal those of the previous year.