

LOCAL MARKETS FOR FRUIT AND VEGETABLES.

A systematic inspection of locally-grown fruit and vegetables offered for sale in the shops and auction-rooms has been carried out in the main centres. Reports to hand indicate that the bulk of the produce is of good quality and well packed. There is still a tendency, however, on the part of a number of growers to market small immature fruit, which, besides hardly paying marketing expenses, has the effect of lowering the prices of the higher grades.

Notwithstanding the warnings given during the past year or two by the publicity of Court proceedings, a number of cases of fraudulent packing or "topping," more particularly in regard to vegetables, came under notice during the year, necessitating prosecution of the offenders. The infliction of substantial fines seems to be the only deterrent in such cases.

FRUIT COOL STORAGE.

The many problems connected with the cool storage of fruit have received considerable attention during the year. This has been rendered possible by the appointment of a Cool Storage Officer (Mr. R. Sutherland), who took up his duties at the end of 1929. This officer's time has been fully taken up with investigation work, both in the various cool stores in the Dominion and on board ship.

The loading and stowage of fruit on overseas vessels has been looked into with a view of minimizing the rough handling that frequently takes place. In this connection experiments were carried out at Wellington in transporting fruit from the coastal boats and cool stores and despatching it into the holds by the loaded-tray system. This arrangement was found to give very good results, and is well worthy of general adoption.

The pre-cooling of fruit prior to placing on the overseas vessels and the early reduction of temperatures in the ship's holds are other important features that have been dealt with.

INSTRUCTIONAL AND EXPERIMENTAL WORK.

With a considerably curtailed expenditure, the work of inspection and instruction under field conditions was carried out as well as the altered circumstances would permit, and the usual demonstrations and lectures were attended to by the Instructors in their respective districts as far as was possible. Fruit-packing classes were again conducted in a number of the commercial fruitgrowing centres.

An experimental officer has been made available who will act as a connecting-link between the practical and scientific phases of fruit-culture, in pursuance of a research scheme which is being conducted by the Division in co-operation with the Mycologist and other scientific officers attached to the Plant Research Station, Palmerston North. The support of a number of district fruitgrowers' associations has also been secured through the New Zealand Fruitgrowers' Federation, Ltd., the latter being responsible for all spray-testing material required. The scheme has been actually put into operation, and a large programme of experimental work already commenced, including the control of brown rot, powdery mildew, the elimination of russetting, &c., while a number of new spraying ingredients are being tested and new formulæ tried out with a view to increasing general spraying efficiency. The programme also includes extensive cool-storage investigations, with a view to correlating evidence relative to the fungal rotting of fruit in storage. A number of orchard manurial tests which will run for several years have been established.

The majority of the tung-oil plants raised from imported seed are making fair progress in the different localities in which they have been planted. An acre of these plants has been set out at the Te Kauwhata Horticultural Station, and they are doing fairly well.

Tests with various fruit-tree stocks, including pip, stone, and citrus, are also receiving attention, and in this connection a consignment of root stocks recently came to hand from the East Malling Research Station, Kent, England.

VITICULTURE AND WINE-MAKING.

Cold weather experienced in the majority of the vine-growing districts interfered with the development of the wine-grape crop, and, as a result, the crop, besides being some two to three weeks later than usual in coming to maturity, was a light one. Considerable confidence is being evidenced in the growing of grapes for wine-making, and extensions are being made to existing privately owned vineyards. The light grape crop resulted in a reduced output of wine, the season's production amounting to 75,000 gallons of an estimated wholesale value of £28,125. Outdoor-grown table-grapes yielded a fair average crop of approximately 800 tons, representing a value of £44,800. The acreage planted in table-grapes is gradually increasing. Growers of grapes under glass experienced a somewhat disappointing season through lack of sufficient sunshine, the fruit being late in ripening and lacking in colour, and, as a result, the returns received were not up to the average. The value of hothouse-grown grapes for the season is estimated at £55,000.

CIDER-MAKING.

Owing to a short supply of surplus fruit, there was a considerable reduction in the quantity of cider produced during the year. The total made amounted to approximately 30,000 gallons, of an estimated value of £7,500.