

## HORTICULTURE DIVISION.

## REPORT OF J. A. CAMPBELL, DIRECTOR.

## THE FRUITGROWING INDUSTRY.

The past season's fruit crop, with the exception of apples, was a good average one. While a heavy crop of apples was produced in the Central Otago district, the returns in the other commercial fruitgrowing districts were considerably lighter than those of the previous year. As a result of the climatic conditions the apple crop matured some two weeks earlier than usual, and a considerable percentage consisted of oversize fruit which was unsuitable for export.

In common with the other primary industries of the Dominion, fruitgrowing is suffering from the effects of the world-wide depression. Notwithstanding the economic crisis, however, it is satisfactory to note that the bulk of the growers are showing an optimistic spirit, which is evidenced in the maintaining of their orchards in good condition and the carrying-out of improvements for the better conduct of their business.

Dry weather experienced resulted in a greater prevalence of insect pests such as red mite, codlin moth, &c., but was against the development of black-spot and other fungoid diseases. A careful watch has been kept on fireblight disease by the officers of the Division, and reports to hand indicate that there has been no further spread of the infection during the year. The cutting-out of fireblight cankers and eradication of hawthorn hedges in the infected areas is keeping the disease well within bounds.

There were no extensive plantings in pip or stone fruits during the year, any operations carried out in this respect being mainly replacements in 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.

Citrus culture is still receiving a good deal of attention, especially in the Bay of Plenty District, where an additional 120 acres of lemons have been planted during the last three years, and extra curing-shed accommodation has had to be provided to deal with the increasing supplies of fruit coming to hand. An improvement is noticeable in the grades and keeping-qualities of New-Zealand-grown lemons offered for sale on the local markets, but further efforts in this direction are still desirable. The total acreage in citrus fruits in the Dominion is approximately 1,600 acres, the bulk of which is located in the Auckland District.

Considerable quantities of passion-fruits are now being produced in the North Auckland district, but the matter of finding a profitable market for the surplus crop is one that is still exercising the minds of growers. A small company has commenced operations at Kerikeri, converting all the second-grade fruit into pulp and juice with the view of working up a trade in this product.

## EXPORT OF FRUIT.

As the result of a heavy crop of pip-fruits, the 1932 export season was a particularly busy one for both fruitgrowers and the inspecting officers attached to the Division at the different points of inspection, the total quantity shipped overseas reaching the record figure of close on 1,600,000 cases. Of this total, 1,268,656 cases apples and 92,513 cases pears were shipped to Great Britain; 166,921 cases apples and 1,967 cases pears to the Continent of Europe; 50,834 cases apples to South America; and 15,167 cases apples to Canada. Reports to hand indicate that while some varieties showed wastage to a more or less extent, the bulk of the consignments opened up in good condition. In view of the depressed state of the markets, the prices realized were generally speaking considered fairly satisfactory.

The bulk of the fruit was exported under the Government guarantee of 11s. per case for Extra Fancy and Fancy grades and 7s. for Good grade. The guarantee was also conditional on each exporter contributing 1½d. per case on all fruit exported under the guarantee—the fund thus created to be utilized to offset claims arising from market and transportation losses. In the event of the fund not being sufficient to meet such claims, the Government undertook to bear the balance of any expense that might be involved. The total levy collected on the 1932 season's shipments did not cover all claims made on the guarantee, and the amount of £3,000 was met by the Government. [NOTE.—£1,112 of this amount has since been recovered as a result of successful claims on account of storage defects.]

The following figures show the total number of cases of apples and pears exported from the Dominion during the last five years: 1928, 1,026,986 cases; 1929, 992,151 cases; 1930, 1,330,891 cases; 1931, 1,349,895 cases; 1932, 1,596,058 cases.

A small consignment of Poorman orange was shipped from Auckland in August last for the purpose of testing the London market for this class of fruit. Advice to hand indicates that the shipment arrived in good condition, but further details are not yet available at date of writing.

A further experimental shipment of thirty-six packages of passion-fruit was forwarded to London on 1st March last.

During the year (1932–33) 100 crates of plums from Hawke's Bay and 42 crates of peaches from Central Otago were forwarded to London for the purpose of testing their carrying qualities and the possibilities of opening up an export trade in these fruits. The reports on the result of these shipments will be awaited with interest.

Owing to the present season's apple crop being a light one, and a large proportion of the fruit oversize for overseas markets, it is anticipated there will be a considerable reduction in the quantity available for export during the 1933 export season.