

The Australian Government decided to relax the embargo against the admission of New Zealand potatoes as from the 20th March, and the prospects of export to Australia has resulted in very remunerative prices being quoted for forward delivery.

ONIONS.

The Onion Marketing Advisory Committee has continued to function most satisfactorily, this Committee replacing the former separate North Island and South Island Committees, and consisting of two growers' representatives from Pukekohe, two from Marshlands, one merchants' representative each from Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch, and two Government representatives. Several meetings have been held in Wellington, one meeting at Pukekohe, and one meeting at Marshlands. The 1937-38 onion crops were somewhat below average in yield, but the quality was extremely good, and by a carefully controlled marketing policy growers received most remunerative prices right throughout the season. It became necessary to import Victorian onions rather earlier than usual, and the first consignment, which arrived in Auckland on the 19th July, 1938, was placed on a market apparently bare of locally grown supplies. The first consignment to Wellington arrived on the 3rd August, and no onions were imported to the South Island until the 17th August, by which time the markets there were also clear of Canterbury onions. Imports were rationed and the ex-wharf price controlled by this Division, and it can be fairly claimed that the trade were very well satisfied with the procedure.

Importation of Canadian onions was carried out by the ordinary importers under a system of limited permits, the total allotment being restricted to 1,800 tons. A great deal of work was necessary to arrange an equitable allotment for merchants throughout the Dominion, but it was generally agreed that the importation had proved beneficial to the trade, since merchants were in most centres able to clear the whole of their imports without deterioration or loss. The 1938-39 onion crops appeared on the market about early January, and under pressure of the strong demand from Australia keen competition has existed for both prompt and forward supplies. As a result growers are again securing extremely high prices, which it is anticipated will be maintained throughout the season.

Considerable attention has been given to the control of disease in onions, particularly to diseases recorded in the Marshlands district—onion-smut and yellow-dwarf diseases. In co-operation with the Plant Diseases Division of the Plant Research Bureau, methods for the control of each of these have been demonstrated, and in the case of the latter a restriction has been placed on the growing of onion crops for seed in Marshlands district.

SUBTERRANEAN CLOVER.

Importation of subterranean-clover seed has continued under permits issued by the Customs Department on the recommendation of this Division and subject to the production of certificates of origin and of fumigation. Owing to unfavourable harvest conditions in South Australia high prices have been ruling for new season's seed, and the importation has therefore been much smaller than in the past two or three seasons. This is rather unfortunate, as it is felt that the extension of the growing of this clover would be of considerable value to the lighter lands practically throughout New Zealand.

GRASS AND CLOVER SEEDS.

The imposition of control of imports has made it necessary to survey accurately the production of various grass and clover-seed varieties in New Zealand in order that importation may be restricted only to such seed as cannot be procured from New Zealand growers. At present consideration is being given to the collection of better records of seed-production both in relation to export and import trade requirements.

MALTING BARLEY.

Several meetings of the Barley Advisory Committee have been held during the year, and satisfactory price arrangements for the various grades of malting barley were made with the principal producers of this grade. For 1938-39 harvest grain the scheduled prices were made applicable only to grain grown under contract, and the maltsters found no difficulty in arranging for their full requirements to be grown under this system. That barley is popular is demonstrated by the keen demand for contracts and by the returns obtained on much of the recognized barley-growing land. With the exception of Marlborough, where drought conditions set in in December, yields above the average have been secured, and the quality of the grain has, on the whole, been very satisfactory.

FEED BARLEY.

During 1938, control of imports of feed barley was maintained under a system of permits to importers, but for 1939 importation was placed under the control of the Director of Internal Marketing, who, acting upon the advice of this Division, purchased substantial quantities from South Australia for spread delivery during 1939 at a price which enables this grain to be sold to consumers at 3s. 8d. per bushel ex-wharf, this being lower than has prevailed for many years. No importation is being made to the South Island, in order to leave that market for the reject barley grown there.

MAIZE.

A measure of stability has been provided for maize-growers through the action of the Director of Internal Marketing in conjunction with officers of this Division. A minimum price of 5s. per bushel f.o.b. Gisborne has been maintained for the 1938 crop without the necessity actually for purchase of grain by the Government from growers. The crop was only sufficient to supply the market from July, 1938, until February, 1939, and towards the end of this period growers were able to obtain prices averaging 5s. 3d. per bushel. For the period March-July, 1939, importation has been arranged from Java of sufficient grain to satisfy the demand and at the same time to keep the market bare of supplies when new season's grain becomes available.