

REGISTRATION OF FERTILIZERS.

Registration.—During the year 90 primary vendors and 650 secondary vendors were registered under the Fertilizers Act.

Inspection and Visits.—The Inspector of Fertilizers paid periodic visits to superphosphate-manufacturing plants, freezing-works, and manure-mixing stores, where official and unofficial samples of fertilizers were taken for analysis and the invoice certificates examined. Calls were made on manure vendors to discuss fertilizer matters, and meetings were held with vendors in a number of centres to discuss questions relating to fertilizer mixtures and their possible improvement.

Information on Fertilizers.—Considerable correspondence was received from vendors and users of fertilizers and from State officials on various aspects of fertilizer used, and the statistical position of fertilizer-consumption in New Zealand over a period of years was prepared for advisory purposes. Consultation was held with some fertilizer-manufacturers in connection with the making of new types of fertilizers designed to suit special soil and farm management conditions in the Dominion.

Fertilizer Development.—In association with the Chemistry Section and other State Departments, the Inspector of Fertilizers carried out preliminary inquiries and made arrangements with superphosphate-manufacturers to carry out experimental mixings of certain natural rock material found in New Zealand which, when incorporated with superphosphate, may assist in minimizing phosphate fixation on certain soil types. Close contact was maintained with fertilizer developments overseas, to the end that any improvements there will be tried out for the benefit of the New Zealand farming community.

Revision of Fertilizer Act.—Further progress was made along the lines of effecting improvements in the present Fertilizer Act, as outlined in last year's report. It is hoped that a new act will be passed this year. It is interesting to record that the Dominion led the Empire in regard to fertilizer-control legislation with the Manure Adulteration Act of 1892, which was the first of its kind in the British Empire. Whilst the Act gives protection to farmer users of fertilizers, and last year the value of the tonnage bought was £2,500,000, there are a few improvements in the direction of bettering the fertilizer mixtures in standardization of mixtures, and in ensuring that statements made to the public on fertilizers conform more strictly to known facts of their use, which it is considered can be brought about by an amendment to the present Fertilizer Act.

EXHIBITS AT SHOWS.

The policy of staging exhibits at agricultural and pastoral shows and the like was continued during the year. Requests for an exhibit are received from centres scattered throughout the Dominion, and in all cases where it can reasonably be done the requests are complied with. All exhibits are made as instructive as possible by incorporating the many phases of the Department's work as lend themselves to such procedure. The appreciative messages, both written and oral, received bear testimony of the universal approval merited by the Department's action in the matter of exhibiting at shows.

THE PHORMIUM INDUSTRY.

The production of phormium fibre and its by-products continues to decline, and in the year under review reached a very low level. The amount of hemp fibre produced was 25,297 bales, a decrease of 15,295 on the quantity produced the previous year. Likewise, the amounts of tow and stripper slips also showed decreases—the former by 5,264 bales and the latter by 225 bales.

Further leaf-deterioration has been in evidence, and although faulty milling has accounted for a certain quantity of the high percentage of low-grade material produced, the general quality of the green leaf prevents the production of really high-quality fibre.

It is clear that the growing of phormium on suitable lands, selection of plants, and general supervision is the only hope of maintaining a supply for local consumption.

During the year a stripper, incorporating some of the principles of both the "Cormorant" and "Greig" strippers, has been constructed and installed in a mill at Foxton, and although in operation is not yet doing a thorough job, but when defects are overcome this machine will greatly reduce production costs, especially raw material for sacking-cloth.

DEPARTMENTAL PHOTOGRAPHY.

The photographic section of the Division is supplying a really excellent service, which is being availed of not only by the various sections of the Department, but also by the several research institutions, particularly those located at Palmerston North. The very high standard of work being put out is a valuable aid to the Department's *Journal* and to the exhibits being staged at shows.

STAFF.

The staff under my control has been very fully occupied during the year, which has been a particularly arduous one. Every member of the staff has worked excellently, and I wish to place on record my appreciation of their loyal and whole-hearted support.