



In 1917 the Government in office began the Moa Seed Farm for repatriated soldiers; later it was worked under Government subsidy by five men; and in 1929 about 35 acres of the original, larger holding were taken over commercially, by one of the two present partners. The work, nearly all of which is by hand, is hard and exacting, the hours long.

Mother, or stud, seed plants have to be continually inspected, any not up to standard (the rogues) ruthlessly removed to keep the strain pure; and, in addition, there are unending field trials to improve quality. No root crops are allowed to go to seed until the second year; the first season they are examined carefully, those not perfect in colour, shape, and type removed, the remainder planted again the next season. (Those which do seed the first year are called bolters. It seems that a seed farm, with its studs, rogues, and bolters, has some affinity with horse-raising.)

Rotation of crops from year to year is important not only so that the good taken from the soil by different crops will be renewed, but also to prevent the rearing of self-sown plants among those grown from selected seed. Because of cross-pollination (by wind and insects), which would ruin the purity of individual strains, only one variety of each vegetable

is grown—if more were to be handled a much larger area of ground than 35 acres would have to be available to enable the different types to be too far apart for the pollen to be carried.

As well as the usual popular sweet-pea types, many winter varieties are grown, most of the seed of which is exported to Australia, where the varieties favoured in New Zealand do not flourish because of the different climate. Sweet-pea seeds are sold usually in packets of ten for 6d. and there are between five thousand and nine thousand seeds to a pound. Great care must be taken to make sure the more than one hundred and fifty varieties do not become mixed or mistaken—even to the two partners they are as alike as peas in a pod. Bags, named and numbered, are used to keep the many varieties, which ripen at different times, separate.

Surprisingly, in a district which depends for its growth on irrigation as much as it does on its rainfall, no artificial watering is done at the Moa Seed Farm. In its place is regular and constant hand and tractor hoeing, which, the partners say, is much more effective.

Seed-harvesting is done mostly by hand-threshing, although there are usually two or three hand-pickings first to gather the earlier ripening seed. For hand threshing the plants are thrown on to horse-and-tractor-drawn sledges and vigorously hit with flails. Seed which collects in the bottom of the sledges is later sieved to remove leaves and other matter; and later a blower separates the unformed and kernel-less seeds which are lighter and blow away, leaving the seed pure and clean.

Both flowers and seeds are constantly being improved by seed-growers all over the world. One recent improvement,

