

Tables attached to this report show the grade quantities for apples and pears received from each district, and the quantity of each variety marketed locally and overseas.

In addition to the fruit received by the Division, it is estimated that about 400,000 cases were disposed of by growers' sales to factories or consumers, and to retailers through grower-agents appointed by the Division.

ASSEMBLY.

To maintain standardization of pack and quality, central-point inspection was adopted. Under this system care is required by the grower if he is to avoid the heavy expense which would be incurred through having his fruit rejected at a point distant from his orchard.

In most instances the central assembly depots were located in proximity to orchard areas. In the few instances where this was not the case the Division agreed to pay all transport beyond the point which could be recognized as the normal central point of the orchard district. Assembly depots were established at Whangarei, Auckland, Te Kauwhata, Hamilton, Gisborne, Hastings, Greytown, Nelson, Mapua, Motueka, Blenheim, Christchurch, Timaru, Oamaru, Dunedin, and Alexandra.

One important change introduced by the Government purchase scheme was that it was no longer necessary for the grower to spread his supplies and so avoid as far as he could the glutted markets of March, April, and May. Under this new purchase scheme the grower delivered his fruit to the assembly depot as soon as he conveniently could, because as soon as his fruit was received by the Division he received payment. The resultant heavy rush of fruit during the main harvesting period—mid-March to early May—was difficult to deal with, because the facilities and accommodation available in the main were restricted to those previously in use for export trade only.

This handicap of insufficient accommodation was further emphasized by the Division's desire to effect orderly marketing, which necessitated special marking and sorting of fruit for immediate marketing, delayed marketing, or for cool storage. Success in orderly marketing in the first instance is dependent upon correct classification and grouping of varieties, grades, and sizes at assembly depots, and the proper and prompt dispatch therefrom. Only by attention to these matters at assembly depots can fruit be marketed in proper sequence, distributed according to the requirements of each market, and stored successfully for delivery later in the year. Until such time as adequate facilities and accommodation are available at each assembly depot it will be difficult to give effect to a complete system of orderly marketing.

STORAGE.

The main bulk of the apple and pear crop was harvested within a period of not more than eight weeks, and as it would not be possible for the New Zealand public to consume immediately the 2,000,000 bushels harvested within this period it became necessary to find suitable storage space in which to hold the surplus and thereby assure the public of fruit-supplies throughout the year. Here was a problem difficult to solve, because even under normal conditions there was an insufficiency of cool-store space for fruit, but under the present abnormal conditions portion of that space would be required for primary products of greater national importance than fruit. This problem was partly solved by the unexpected advent of export shipping space. This unexpected outlet gave a most welcome relief. Other primary products were equally favoured with export shipping space, and because of this the amount of cool-storage space made available for fruit was just over 700,000 case space. Naturally, export fruit received first preference, but unfortunately much of the export fruit was still in store when late varieties for the local markets were being harvested. Although this caused a delay of about five or six weeks in getting some of the local fruit into cool store, and although this delay naturally shortened the storage life of this fruit, nevertheless the procuring of export and cool-storage space saved the general position and enabled the Division to keep the local market supplied with fruit until the 1941 crop was available.

The present shortage of suitable cool-store space for fruit is not due entirely to the present abnormal conditions; it was existent in pre-war days, and has been referred to in previous investigations of the fruit industry. Prior to the war, arrangements had been made for Dr. A. J. M. Smith, of the Low Temperature Research Station of Cambridge, to make a survey of New Zealand's fruit-stores. This survey was made in 1939, and the following extracts from his report are of particular interest:—

"The present cool-storage accommodation for fruit is insufficient to secure a reasonably uniform distribution of supplies over the whole year. For such a purpose additional refrigerated space equivalent to at least 200,000 cases of apples and pears would be required.

"In a brief survey it has not been possible to assess accurately the condition of every store and plant, but broadly it can be said that not more than 20 per cent. of the existing storage space is fully satisfactory, and not more than 50 per cent. is even moderately satisfactory, by modern standards of design and performance.

"A considerable proportion of the existing space is more than twenty years old. Wood has been largely used in construction, and dry rot is sometimes present. Insulation is usually of pumice, which, at the best, has a low insulating value, and which deteriorates in use through settling and crumbling.

"In view of these conditions, it would seem to be unwise to provide the new storage space which is required by adding to the existing stores. It is not implied that the use of existing stores will immediately be discontinued, although some of them will certainly need overhaul and modernization at an early date if they are to remain in effective operation. In providing additional refrigerated space, the most satisfactory, and ultimately the most economical, policy would seem to be the erection of a few and fairly large stores, strategically placed to serve the needs of both home and export markets, equipped to modern standards of performance, and so designed that enlargement will be possible subsequently, at such time as the existing stores become definitely unusable, or uneconomic to operate, or unsafe for the fruit."