

BARLEY.

Early in the season it was apparent that there would be during the year a fairly acute shortage of cereals for stock-feeding for the manufacture of pig-meal and other feeding products, and advantage was taken of the low prices ruling in Australia to purchase large quantities of barley for shipment throughout the year. The demand was so strong that further supplementary purchases were required for shipment during the later months of the year and also for shipment of 24,000 sacks to meet requirements in the South Island, where an unusual shortage of feed had been caused by the dry season. Altogether 285,000 sacks of barley were imported from Australia, consisting of 260,000 sacks of Chevalier and 25,000 sacks of Cape variety. A considerable proportion of the latter was used for seed purposes, both in the South and North Islands.

Owing to the exceptionally favourable prices at which the Division was able to purchase the bulk of our requirements in Australia, these shipments were marketed at a very low figure and proved a great benefit to poultry-farmers and pig-raisers.

This year Australian prices, due to a short crop, are considerably higher, which will necessarily be reflected in New Zealand prices. Smaller quantities will be imported this year on account of better supplies of locally-grown cereals, and copra for pig-feeding, which is now available from the Pacific islands.

MAIZE.

The local maize crop was again insufficient to meet requirements, and a total of 2,340 tons was imported from South Africa, Java, and Australia during the first half of 1940 to meet requirements until the new crop became available during July and August last. This 1940 crop also turned out to be short of our needs for the present season and required to be supplemented by 1,000 tons of South African, which landed in Auckland and Wellington during May.

For the coming year, owing largely to the efforts of the Waiariki District Maori Land Board, who have planted a substantial new area of approximately 3,000 acres with maize in the Bay of Plenty District, and to an exceptionally good yield in all growing areas, there will be ample maize available and no importations will be necessary.

In order that the increased crop, which may result in a surplus in excess of consumption, should be marketed by growers as evenly as possible over the whole year, an increase has been arranged for this season on the sliding scale of prices for the later months of the consumptive year. This scale, which last year ranged from 5s. 6d. in July to 6s. in December (by which month the bulk of the crop has usually been disposed of by growers), has been increased to 6s. 1d. for January and February and 6s. 2d. for March and April deliveries as a recompense to growers for holding a portion of their crop for sale during these months. This arrangement, it is expected, will assist in the marketing of supplies over the twelve-monthly period in accordance with consumers' requirements.

ONIONS.

The crop in New Zealand last year proved an ample one and was harvested in exceptionally good condition, and for the first time on record was sufficient to meet all requirements throughout the year, no importations being necessary. With the experience of growers in the past few years of growing better-keeping varieties, it is hoped that this year's crop, which is a good one, will also keep till the new season's onions are available at the end of the year and that importations will again be unnecessary.

COPRA.

With the demand last year for increased pig-production and prospects of a general shortage of cheap pig-foods during 1941, the Government, for distribution through the Division, arranged to purchase 4,000 tons of copra. Experiments have already been conducted which indicate that copra is proving a valuable pig-food, especially so at the low prices now ruling. A large portion of this 4,000 tons (some 2,500 tons) has already been landed and widely distributed throughout the North Island and has given general satisfaction to the farming community.

Repeat orders are now being received, and there is every indication that copra will become established as a popular feed with pig-farmers, provided that future supplies can be obtained at prices competitive with those ruling for other feeds. Importations in the meantime are influenced by the uncertainty of the export pork position.

HOPS.

The Hop Marketing Committee continues to function satisfactorily and has proved an undoubted benefit to the industry. The crop this year has turned out to be an exceptionally good one and has been harvested in good condition, ample labour being available for harvesting as a result of the activities of the Labour Department. The final outturn is not yet available, but there will probably be five hundred to six hundred bales available for export, all of which is readily saleable at satisfactory prices to Australia and South Africa, though considerable difficulty is being experienced in securing freight for the latter country. A small shipment of ten bales has already been shipped to India, and it is hoped may prove the forerunner of further shipments there. There is also a keen demand for shipment to Great Britain and Ireland, with no space available for hops.

The first term of office of the producer representatives on the Hop Marketing Committee expired in August, 1940, and a poll taken in accordance with the regulations resulted in the return of all the members originally elected, indicating the satisfaction of the hopgrowers with the work of the Committee.