

By mid-December the shortage was relieved, and in January some congestion of supplies occurred at both Wellington and Auckland, which the Internal Marketing Division was called upon to dissipate. To assist in regulating supplies and in controlling distribution to avoid such congestion, a Potato Marketing Advisory Committee was appointed. Merchants, growers, Department of Agriculture, and the Food Controller were represented, and the Acting Director of Internal Marketing was Chairman. This Committee, which commenced operations in February, 1943, promises to be of considerable value. To reduce wastage of supplies grown in areas where keeping-quality was poor, power was taken in March and April to enable potatoes from such areas to be marketed promptly and those from more reliable main crop areas to be held over. By these measures periods of both shortage and surplus were satisfactorily covered and the interests of all concerned were protected.

For 1943-44 a much greater area must be planted in potatoes if we are to meet all civil and military needs. Accordingly, arrangements have been completed with the New Zealand Grain, Seed, and Produce Merchants' Federation for their members, together with those of the New Zealand Fruit and Produce Merchants and Auctioneers' Federation, to contract with potato-growers on behalf of the Internal Marketing Division for the crops to be grown on specified areas. The price is to be the maximum fixed by the Price Tribunal, provided it does not average lower than last year's price.

ONIONS

Last year's crop (approximately 8,498 tons from 825 acres) again proved sufficient for all civilian and almost all military requirements. Only a very small quantity was imported by the Internal Marketing Division at the end of the season for Army needs. However, a much larger acreage will be required during the coming year. Therefore, arrangements similar to those for potatoes have been made with the members of the New Zealand Grain, Seed, and Produce Merchants' Federation to contract with growers on behalf of the Division for monthly deliveries at fixed prices. Though considerable difficulties still militate against substantial increase, it is hoped that these measures will induce growers to expand production.

BARLEY

Importations during the year have amounted to 100,000 sacks, all landed at North Island ports and used for pig and poultry feed. Approximately 25 per cent. was specially clipped for poultry use, a valuable addition to available feed-supplies which it is hoped to continue importing. Australia's 1941-42 crop proved a very good one, enabling the Division to purchase at satisfactory figures and so sell to farmers considerably below 1941 prices. These annual importations into the North Island have kept regular supplies available for pig-farmers at all main distributing centres at prices much cheaper than similar local feed could be produced. For various reasons local production of cereals suitable for pig-feeding has fallen in the past few years. Pig-farmers have had to depend upon the imported barley sold by the Internal Marketing Division as their main source of feed during autumn and winter when regular supplies from dairy factories are not available.

MAIZE

During the early part of the year the Division arranged with growers to take over and market last year's remaining surplus. The new season's crop was not to be marketed until the first day of 1943. Growers meanwhile were to receive the usual monthly increments to compensate them for holding. By this means the two years' crops were evenly spread over the whole period and the 1941 surplus readily absorbed without hardship to any party. The Division held several conferences with growers and merchants, whose good will helped them materially. Through labour and fertilizer shortage and competition of other crops the coming season's output looks unlikely to be adequate.

HOPS

The Hop Marketing Committee, which controls the marketing of New-Zealand-grown hops, has continued to work during the year to the satisfaction of both growers and buyers, and all four members who stood for re-election were returned in August. The crop harvested in 1942 was poor for climatic reasons, amounting to some 2,750 bales only, compared with 3,500 bales in 1941. Practically the whole was absorbed in New Zealand, mainly by brewers, leaving only a few bales available for export. The price to local breweries remains unaltered.

RASPBERRIES

The Committee set up last year to control the marketing of all Nelson raspberries sold for manufacture has worked smoothly and effectively. Numerous increased costs led growers to approach the Price Tribunal, which granted an increase of 1d. per pound. This has encouraged growers to plant a further 30 acres, though production from it will not become fully effective until 1946. Unfavourable climatic conditions depressed this year's yield to about 198 tons, slightly less than that of last year.

FERTILIZERS

The Division has continued to import and distribute sulphate of potash and muriate of potash, landing some 1,425 tons of the latter from Palestine during the year. All potash manures have become very difficult to obtain, and the Division is fortunate in so far having secured sufficient for essential requirements. During the year it took over importing and distributing sulphate of ammonia, which was becoming practically impossible to obtain through normal channels. After difficulty, 1,200 tons were imported from America, almost the whole of which has gone to essential vegetable and fruit production.