

Zealand for demobilization, a commencement was made with a special review of Category "A" men held in the farming industry on appeal. Category "A" men held in other industries had already been reviewed similarly. In this special review of men in the farming industry whose military service had been postponed, the aim was to release up to 20 per cent. in replacement of the men returning from the Middle East. The review proceeded, but before the Forces had absorbed all the men released by Appeal Boards, Germany had capitulated, and the intake of these farm workers into the Forces ceased.

176. Numbers of fit men in the farming industry withheld from military service by Armed Forces Appeal Boards as at varying dates were as follows:—

31st March, 1943	13,013 (Grade I).
31st March, 1944	13,660 (Grade I).
28th February, 1945	13,124 (Category "A").
15th August, 1945	*9,292 (Category "A"), representing 45 per cent. of all Category "A" men held in industry on appeal.

177. From the collapse of Germany onward a steadily increasing outflow of men from the Armed Forces to the farming industry has continued. In addition, during the same period, District Man-power Officers effected the voluntary placement of civilian workers in farm employment wherever possible. At 31st March, 1946, the notified vacancies for farm workers were as follows:—

Sheep-farms	92
Dairy farms	46
Other farms	135
Total	273

This represents a decrease of 567, or slightly more than 67 per cent. on the vacancies recorded as at March, 1945.

(iii) Sawmilling

178. In sawmilling, priority remained high right throughout the war years. This was due to the constant and increasing demands for timber to meet the building and construction programme referred to in paragraph 192 of this report. The remote and heavy nature of the work, the lack of accommodation and amenities, and rigorous working-conditions are responsible for a high normal wastage from the industry. These factors also greatly accentuated the Department's difficulties in providing labour, as, combined with the intake of fit men into the Forces, they limited the pool of labour from which men could be drawn for sawmills.

179. Prior to August, 1941, the Department had exercised some screening of mobilization lists to ensure that appeals to secure postponement of military service were lodged in respect of the most vital key men in the sawmilling industry. By that time 1,804 had left the industry to join the Forces and 87 were held in the industry on appeal. The loss to the industry, which had a pre-war content of under 7,000, had therefore been substantial, and it was apparent that production was declining. As a consequence three special committees were appointed (one in the North Island and two in the South Island) to investigate the circumstances of the industry from the point of view of man-power and production. The investigation revealed that the daily rate of cutting had fallen between 12 per cent. and 16 per cent. in a period of about fifteen months, representing annually a reduction of some 40,000,000 board feet. In the same period the labour force in mills had fallen from 6,720 to 5,830, a drop of 890, or 13 per cent. Allowing for the loss of 1,804 workers to the Forces, the net gain from other sources was 914.

* The figures to 31st March, 1944, comprise all Grade I men aged twenty to forty inclusive. The figures for 1945 comprise all Grade I men aged twenty-one to thirty-five inclusive with fewer than three children and who had had less than three years' overseas service—i.e., all men coming within the revised definition of Category "A."