

HORTICULTURE DIVISION

REPORT OF W. K. DALLAS, DIRECTOR

CLIMATIC CONDITIONS

From a fruitgrowing point of view the weather during the past year has been distinctly unfavourable. A dry spell, amounting to drought conditions, from late in October to early March in practically all provinces except Canterbury and Otago affected both production and the size of the fruit. In the northern districts apples were damaged by sun-scald.

Several hailstorms were again experienced this year in Canterbury; an especially severe one which occurred in the Loburn district in December rendered the greater portion of the apple and pear crops useless for marketing. During February heavy rain fell in the Cashmere area close to Christchurch, causing severe damage to glasshouses. Tomato and other vegetable crops suffered severely.

In Nelson a hailstorm early in November caused appreciable damage to orchards in the Lower Moutere area, but with a full crop set it was possible to thin off the severely damaged fruit, leaving almost a full crop, but of lower grade.

In Otago a normal winter and an early dry spring was followed by cold, wet conditions till January. The autumn has been quite good. Frosts in the Central Otago district were not as severe as in the previous season. There has been a great increase in the number of frost-fighting appliances installed, growers realizing that this is the best insurance possible against the loss of their crops.

A late frost just following the fruit-setting caused serious loss of crops in the Marlborough district. Stone-fruits were almost a complete loss, while pip-fruits were reduced by 30 per cent.

AREA AND NUMBER OF ORCHARDS

For the year under review the number of orchards recorded in the official register was as follows :—

Taxable orchards (containing 120 and more trees)	2,151
Non-taxable orchards (less than 120 trees, but not including domestic orchards)	2,905
Total	5,056

This shows an increase of approximately 300 over the preceding year.

The total area devoted to pip, stone, and citrus fruit trees is approximately 18,200 acres, the areas (approximately) being utilized for commercial production of the principal kinds of fruit being as follows :—

	Acres.
Apples	10,000
Pears	1,000
Stone-fruit	5,000
Lemons	900
Other citrus	1,000
Other tree fruits	200
Total	18,100

The relative sizes of fruit orchards in New Zealand are :—

9 orchards over 50 acres	
57 .. 26-50 ..	
43 .. 21-25 ..	
107 .. 16-20 ..	
237 .. 11-15 ..	
562 .. 6-10 ..	
1,136 .. 1-5 ..	

2,151 orchards aggregating approximately 16,000 acres.