

FERTILIZERS

Rationing.—The rationing of phosphatic fertilizers was continued during the year with certain modifications. For top-dressing, the allocation was increased from 42 per cent. of the quantities used in the average of the two base years ended 31st May, 1941, to 50·4 per cent. This meant a 25 per cent. increase over the quantities allocated the previous year. The only further alteration was an increase for vineyards and orchards from 1½ cwt. to 3 cwt. per acre. Additional quantities were granted as a result of appeals, and the concessions to returned servicemen continued. Supplies of organic fertilizer were still controlled, and emphasis was placed on priority for market-gardening, nursery, vineyard, and orchard purposes, and for the production of vegetable seed.

Importations.—For the fertilizer year, July, 1946, to June, 1947, the imports of phosphate rock were scheduled to be 370,000 tons, while allowance was made for the importation of small quantities of basic slag and ground North African phosphate. Supplies from Nauru and Ocean Islands recommenced on a limited scale. Limited quantities of nitrogenous and potassic fertilizers were also imported.

Transport of Lime and Fertilizers.—The delivery of maximum quantities of lime and fertilizer to farmers is being retarded on account of the limited number of railway trucks available for this purpose, but the output of lime from the various works in the Dominion is almost twice the pre-war quantity, while the fertilizer output is almost equal to pre-war years. To assist the transport of fertilizers, arrangements were made to subsidize road transport up to one hundred miles from works when railway trucks were in short supply. The Railways Department took over the co-ordinating of these two methods of transport.

NASSELLA TUSsock

During the year legislation was passed giving the necessary powers to local bodies to take action to prevent the spread of and bring under control *nassella tussock* in the northern part of the South Island. Two special Boards were formed for this purpose in North Canterbury and Marlborough respectively, and some preliminary work has been carried out to define areas where intensive eradication measures will be conducted.

PHORMIUM TENAX

During the past year the industry has been passing through a very trying time and production has fallen very considerably. The main reasons for this are an acute shortage of labour for cutting green leaf and the millers not being able to pay wages equal to competitive industries. Since the American rope contracts ceased, millers have not had very much faith in the industry, with the result that the flax-growing areas have been allowed to go back and maintenance has been more or less neglected. The low price of fibre and the increasing costs of production, together with the labour shortage, have accounted for this.

In November, 1946, the Government announced that the recommendations of the Flax Plan Industrial Committee be approved, whereby finance would be made available to millers to develop and rehabilitate the industry. In addition, a guarantee was given that all fibre produced would be purchased by the Government and a guaranteed price would operate when decided upon.