

HORTICULTURE DIVISION

REPORT OF W. K. DALLAS, DIRECTOR

CLIMATIC CONDITIONS

Weather conditions in general have been unfavourable to the fruitgrowing industry and horticultural crops in most districts of the Dominion.

Following on the drought in the Auckland Province there was a long period of mild and showery weather through the winter and spring. Consequently, the trees had a shortened rest period in the winter before the spring growth commenced, resulting in erratic blossoming. Vegetable and citrus crops were also affected by the drought.

Due to the meagre rainfall over the past two years, the subsoils of the Hawke's Bay commercial fruitgrowing area have not been sufficiently saturated to enable the trees to withstand a lengthy period of drought successfully. These conditions, together with the effects of severe late frosts, seriously decreased the fruit yield.

Wind-storms, drought, and frosts have taken toll of fruit crops in the Wairarapa district.

Substantial losses to fruit crops in Canterbury have been caused by cold, wet conditions in spring, followed by severe frosts. Bright sunshine and high temperatures during the summer benefited market-garden crops. Severe frosts in April, 1946, reduced the tomato crops by approximately half the anticipated yield.

In Otago heavy frosts during the spring substantially reduced the fruit crops over a large part of the district, but those crops not seriously damaged realized payable prices.

AREA AND NUMBER OF ORCHARDS

For the year under review the number of orchards registered is as follows :—

Taxable orchards (containing 120 and more trees)	2,126
Non-taxable orchards (less than 120 trees, but not including domestic orchards)	2,687
Total	4,813

This shows a decrease of 243 registrations from the preceding year.

The total acreage devoted to pip, stone, and citrus fruit trees is nearly 18,000 acres, the areas (approximate) utilized for commercial production of the principal kinds of fruit being as follows :—

	Acre.
Apples	10,000
Pears	1,100
Stone-fruit	4,800
Lemons	850
Other citrus	1,000
Other tree fruits	170
Total	17,920

The relative sizes of taxable orchards in the Dominion are :—

10 orchards over 50 acres.
53 „ 26–50 acres.
45 „ 21–25 acres.
112 „ 16–20 acres.
246 „ 11–15 acres.
542 „ 6–10 acres.
1,118 „ 1–5 acres.

2,126 orchards aggregating approximately 16,000 acres.