

A continuation of the distribution of apples in schools was part of the marketing policy, although distribution was effected only over a four-weekly period. The supply to Armed Forces was on a very much reduced scale, and no fruit was required by American Forces. An outstanding feature of the marketing programme has been the disposal of 228,000 cases of Cox Orange, as against 90,000 cases sold locally the previous year. It was hoped to export a portion of this variety in order to ease local market conditions, but the whole crop had to be sold on the domestic markets. This is a tender variety and one which does not cool store well, and, moreover, many of them this year were of weak texture. In spite of these difficulties, the complete crop was sold at an average price very little below that of last year.

Domestic sales are still made on the stabilized-price procedure adopted in 1943, under which both wholesale and retail prices are fixed monthly. The fixation of prices operates from the middle of one month to the middle of the next, and within these monthly periods maximum prices are set for selected varieties and size groups. The maximum wholesale price in any period of the year is 13s. 6d. per case and the maximum retail price 6d. per pound. Stabilization of pear prices was adopted voluntarily by the Division, and the maximum retail price for pears at any time is 9d. per pound.

STORAGE

More storage space was available this year than for several years. Not all varieties of fruit are suitable for cool storage, and it is usual to plot out a programme of long storage at the beginning of the season and to place selected sizes of suitable varieties into store as they are received from growers. Any surplus storage is then used for temporary storage of less suitable varieties or sizes, but the whole object of a storage programme is to effect distribution of fruit which is received during a short harvesting period lasting from February until the end of May over as long a period as possible.

A bonus is paid to growers for the extra labour and work involved in supplying suitable fruit for long-storage purposes, the object being to induce growers to make special pickings which will meet the market requirements in the later months of the year. The cool-storage programme is ordinarily assisted by an orchard-storage programme where growers are compensated for holding fruit on their properties, and during the period under review a small orchard-storage programme was continued in the districts of Canterbury and Otago, where the climate is eminently suitable for this to be undertaken with success.

TRANSPORT

One of the most disturbing features of present-day conditions is the difficulty of securing adequate and suitable transport, and this has undoubtedly been the worst year since 1940 in this respect. The position in Nelson at one stage was particularly acute, and at no stage during the season was this district in a safe position. Despite strenuous efforts, it was difficult to arrange adequate shipping facilities from Nelson. Fruit was therefore despatched in larger quantities than usual to southern markets, and a new departure saw this fruit being consigned from Blenheim instead of from Inangahua.

UNECONOMIC ORCHARDS

A fund was established in 1944 for the purpose of assisting uneconomic orchards on to an economic basis. The purpose of the fund was later extended to give assistance to sufferers from hail damage or other natural disasters. Payments from the fund approved to date total nearly £22,000.

POST-WAR MARKETING

A committee was established by the Minister of Marketing to report on the possibilities of post-war marketing of apples and pears. The report has been submitted to the Minister and its publication authorized. The personnel of the committee