

The average economic orchard unit is about 12 acres, but the size of such a unit depends mainly on the fertility of the soil in which the trees are established, efficient management, and the orchard practices adopted.

The most urgent problem confronting the industry is the continued shortage of fruit-trees required to replace unprofitable and declining trees in existing orchards and to establish new orchards. Until this tree shortage is overtaken, greater production, which is necessary to meet the increasing local consumption and to maintain the export trade, cannot be expected.

PRODUCTION

The quantity of fruit produced in the Dominion during the 1946-47 season was :—

	Bushels.
Apples	1,933,221
Pears	286,846
Stone-fruit	395,895
Lemons	106,385
New Zealand grapefruit	69,675
Sweet oranges	16,280
Other citrus	610

Apples and Pears.—The quantity of apples produced was below Dominion average, but the pear crop was about 30,000 cases more than the previous year's crop.

The total production of apples and pears for the 1946-47 season was distributed as follows :—

	Apples.	Pears.	Total.
	Bushels.	Bushels.	Bushels.
Distributed to consumers by Internal Marketing Division	1,332,729	207,261	1,539,990
Forwarded direct to factories by Internal Marketing Division	10,411	..	10,411
Sold privately by growers	351,543	70,153	421,696
Sold to canning-factories	111,591	8,773	120,364
Sold for dehydration, pulping, cider, &c.	126,947	659	127,606
Totals	1,933,221	286,846	2,220,067

The latest apple and pear crop estimates for the 1947-48 season indicates a total of about 2,842,000 bushel cases of apples and about 352,000 of pears. The substantial increase from the previous season has been caused mainly by the generally favourable weather conditions during the summer.

Export of Apples and Pears.—A feature of the marketing of fruit in the past year was the resumption of the export of apples and pears to Britain on a scale well up to pre-war quantities. Up to 31st March, 1948, 138,467 cases of apples of the 1947-48 crop have been exported to Britain, and it is expected that more than 1,000,000 cases of fruit will be exported before the close of the season. During the next few years it is anticipated that Britain will provide an assured market at reasonable prices for all the fruit that can be sent away from New Zealand.

In addition to the quantity of fruit to be exported, there are about 1,500,000 bushel cases of apples and pears to be consumed on the local market as the result of the larger crops harvested.