

IMPORTED FRUITS SECTION

BANANAS

During the year under review importations of bananas have been governed by the availability of shipping space for the transport of the fruit from the sources of production to New Zealand, and, as intimated in the last report, it is not possible to import increased quantities until another vessel is made available to this trade. An improvement will take place when the new steamer ordered by the Union Steam Ship Co., Ltd., for the island run is completed and placed in commission. In the meantime use is being made, in addition to the usual carrying vessels, of casual overseas steamers that call at island ports.

As bananas arrive at Auckland, it is necessary to find internal transport from that port to consumers throughout the country, and particularly in respect of supplies to the South Island the fruit is prone to deteriorate in condition on account of the extra handlings and delay in reaching its ultimate destination. It is trusted this great difficulty will be overcome by arranging for the new steamer when it enters the fruit trade to land its fruit in the South Island. This will not only obviate the present wastage, but will also mean a considerable saving in internal transport charges.

Importations from the various producing areas during the year as compared with last year are as follows:—

Source of Supply.	Year ended 30th September, 1946.		Year ended 30th September, 1947.	
	Cases.	Per-centage.	Cases.	Per-centage.
Fiji	95,532	31·7	107,303	42·3
Tonga	75,590	25·1	49,830	19·6
Samoa	119,614	39·7	96,977	38·1
Niue	10,244	3·4	..	..
Rarotonga ..	403	0·1	..	..
	301,383	..	254,110	..

ORANGES

Importations of oranges have improved considerably from all sources of supply and the total is greater than for any year since 1941.

All possible supplies were picked up from the Cook Islands, and in this connection a phosphate-vessel from Makatea to Lyttelton was diverted to Rarotonga to load a quantity of oranges that otherwise would have wasted. It is anticipated that larger quantities will be available for shipment from the Cook Group during the coming season, but more shipping space must be obtained before New Zealand will benefit from this increased production.

Much larger quantities have arrived from Australia due to better crops and more shipping space, but the difficulty of obtaining a sufficiency of steamers in which to transport the fruits continues to govern importations from the Commonwealth. Apart from the scarcity of shipping, the space obtained is by vessels which are totally unsuited for the carriage of fruit and often results in losses that would be avoided if suitable ships sailing to settled time schedules were catering for this trade. An improvement should be effected when the recognized passenger liners resume running across the Tasman, providing a frequent and fast service that should not only land fruit in a better condition than present vessels, but will also provide more of a continuity of supply.