

CHRISTCHURCH

Produce Section.—This Branch continued during the past year the supervision of the contract system of *potato*-growing. In all, 939 contracts were completed through the merchants for a total area of 8,150 acres. The Branch took over 1,072 tons of potatoes which were surplus to requirements at the end of the 1945-46 season. Of this total, 274 tons were packed fresh in cases and shipped to Japan for British Commonwealth Occupation Forces; 105 tons sold to local merchants, whilst 693 tons were dehydrated and sold to Army Department for use overseas. Four hundred and twenty-three tons of *onions* were purchased direct from growers for dehydration, giving a return of 60,685 lb. of onion-flakes. Nine hundred and sixty tons of *carrots* were dehydrated, processing into 116,209 lb. of diced and strip carrots. These dehydrated *onions* and *carrots* are to be placed on the local market, where it is felt there is a steady demand for this type of product. In the last annual report mention was made of *grain-conditioning* which had been carried out. During the period under review 15,367 sacks of grain and seed have been reconditioned through the dehydration tunnels, as against 1,600 sacks last year. The value of these 15,367 sacks was estimated at £69,151. Had it not been for the conditioning carried out this grain and seed would have been a total loss. The *storage floor* was applied for storing 42,343 sacks of grain and seed.

Apples and Pears.—The receipts from the growers in the Canterbury area was the lowest ever received. The reason for this drop was the same as in the other branches—namely, (1) storm damage; (2) large increases in gate sales to consumers. Contrary to expectations, all *cool-storage* space contracted for apples and pears at Christchurch was utilized, 96,607 cases being stored. Of this total only 189 cases were lost through wastage. This represents 0.18 per cent. and is the lowest percentage of cool-storage loss recorded so far by this Branch.

Imported Fruits.—The distribution of these fruits for the South Island was again carried out.

Eggs.—The egg-production for the Canterbury area shows an increase for the period under review, the intake on the three licensed floors being: 1946, 2,571,242 dozen; 1947, 2,581,909 dozen; increase, 10,667 dozen.

Through lack of suitable cool-storage space only 36,270 dozen eggs were *chilled*, these being supplied to the West Coast during the off-season.

HASTINGS

Apples and Pears.—Once again the main activity of this Branch has been the *assembly* and distribution of these pip-fruits. As a result of a late frost in October, 1946, and a severe storm in February, 1947, the quantity of apples handled by the Branch was the smallest handled in one season since 1940.

The quantities handled were 241,493 cases of apples and 105,172 cases of pears, a total of 346,665 cases.

Despite the fact that the keeping-quality of the apples was poor, *cool-storage* losses were light, only 161½ cases being lost. This represents 0.075 per cent. of the 215,690 cases which passed through the cool stores.

Eggs.—Receipts of eggs through the local egg floor, which is supervised by the Branch, showed an increase of nearly 4 per cent., 559,305 dozen being received during the period ended 30th September, 1947, as against 538,068 dozen for the same period ended 30th September, 1946.