

Two research projects, one on housing in Vincent County and the other on water-supply for farmhouses in South Canterbury, are under way; field-work for the former is completed, and for the latter almost so.

The number of field officers doing extension work for country women has remained at six throughout the year. The growing volume of work necessitates an increased strength, but recruitment of suitable staff, who must be graduates in home science, is proving difficult.

SEED-PRODUCTION

Production of pasture seeds during 1948 has been affected by two major factors. The British import restrictions which have been operating since 1946 have had some effect in restricting the areas closed for seed-harvesting in 1948. In addition, the 1947-48 season in Canterbury was a much drier one than had been experienced for several seasons. This resulted in fewer areas being diverted for seed-production because of the feed-supply position, and also brought about lower seed yields. On the other hand, the drier weather prevented the development of the blind-seed-disease fungus attacking rye-grass-seed crops, so that seed germinations were much higher generally than was the case for a few years.

The harvest of Italian rye-grass seed in particular was affected by the British import restrictions and volume of production was only one-fifth that of the previous season. Cocksfoot-seed production also suffered a further check. The subsequent opening-up of the cocksfoot-seed export market has caught producers unawares, so that prices have increased markedly above the 1947 levels, without any appreciable increase as yet in the quantity of seed available for export.

The United Kingdom continues to provide the largest overseas market for New Zealand seeds, but importation is controlled under a policy of limiting the quantities being imported to the minimum necessary to meet requirements. European markets have again taken considerable quantities of seed which might otherwise have been a serious drag on the market.

Contract Growing of Seeds.—The Department of Agriculture has continued its programme of contract growing of various seeds. Under this programme nucleus lots of various selected strains and varieties supplied by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research are multiplied and distributed into commerce. The extent of these operations during 1948 is shown in the following table:—

Kind of Seed.			Quantity Produced.	Purchase Value.
				£
Perennial rye-grass	..	..	2,401 bushels	2,546
Italian rye-grass	..	..	2,248 bushels	1,137
Short-rotation rye-grass	..	..	2,587 bushels	2,303
Timothy	..	..	1,827 lb.	434
White clover	..	..	2,327 lb.	481
Red clover	..	..	6,595 lb.	1,248
Lucerne	..	..	12,553 lb.	2,769
Oats	..	..	1,786 bushels	551
Rape	..	..	28,142 lb.	678
Swede	..	..	565 lb.	50
Lupins	..	..	301 bushels	180
Wheat	..	..	484 bushels	245
Peas	..	..	48 bushels	53

Most of the seed produced has already been distributed to selected seed-growers, the balance of the stocks being held to meet further orders coming to hand.