

Wheat.—Although there was an increase in the acreage of wheat, the area was still much lower than was necessary for domestic requirements. Autumn sowing was carried out under favourable conditions and crops grew well through winter and early spring. Conditions also favoured spring-sown crops in Otago, Southland, and parts of the North Island. In Canterbury, yields were good on the heavy to medium land, but on the light land crops were below average. Early frosts had a detrimental effect on many crops in Otago and Southland. In Wellington Province, yields were exceptionally good and the grain was of good quality.

Oats.—The area sown in oats showed a slight increase, but in Canterbury the season was too dry, with yields and samples below average. In Southland crops were established under good conditions and made good progress until harvest, when adverse weather resulted in severe lodging in many districts. Had it not been for the use of the header harvester, many crops would have been a total loss.

Barley.—The acreage declined slightly, but there has been an extension of barley-growing in certain parts of Wellington Province, where the crop is replacing oats.

In Canterbury the yields were about average and the samples of malting barley fair to good. In Central and North Otago good yields of grain of satisfactory quality were secured.

Potatoes.—After the large surplus of potatoes during the 1947–48 season, when crops were often difficult to dispose of, the acreage planted last season declined. Early crops in the North Island were affected by late blight, but second earlies gave satisfactory yields and were harvested in good condition. In Canterbury, yields are expected to be considerably lower than in the previous year and crops ripened off much earlier than usual. Some crops in Otago suffered from early frosts, and flooding in the Balclutha district caused substantial losses.

There is likely to be a shortage of table potatoes toward the close of the current season.

Peas.—The acreage in peas was well maintained. Although there were some good crops, the season did not generally favour peas, and yields in the main pea-growing districts were below average.

Onions.—The area in onions was approximately the same as in the previous year and good yields were generally obtained, especially in southern districts.

Maize.—There has been a reduction in the area under maize, especially in Poverty Bay, where there was a disastrous flood during May. The flood not only caused the loss of many areas of maize during the 1947–48 season, but also resulted in the soil remaining wet through to the following planting season, which prevented the normal acreage being planted. The maize sown, however, has grown well and shows good promise.

EXTENSION SERVICES

During the year the Division has widened and improved its instructional services, but there are still vacancies on the instructional staff which must be filled before the Division can give a full service to the farming community. Difficulty has been experienced in securing a full complement of recruits thoroughly trained in the science and practice of farming. However, plans are now in operation to cater for the thorough training of future recruits through the Rural Field Cadet and Science Scholarship Schemes organized by the Public Service Commission, and the first group of officers trained as Rural Field Cadets will join the Division next year. The careful selection and training of recruits under these schemes should ensure a regular annual intake of well-trained officers and provide the basis for progressive improvement in the instructional service to meet the increasing demands of the farming community.