

Mangaia.

Arrived at Mangaia at 5 a.m. on the 13th September, 1909. Owing to the reef being unworkable at Oneroa—usual place of shipment—the steamer proceeded to a more northerly point, and the fruit was conveyed in canoes and on horseback to this point.

An inspection of the fruit was duly carried out, with the result that, owing to decaying fruit, several lines were repacked. Two lines were also found to be infected with fruit-fly larvæ.

To summarise: The Mangaian oranges generally were overripe, and, in my opinion, unfit for export to New Zealand. I must condemn the fruit-boxes used in fruit-export. Instead of sawn timber, they are made of roughly trimmed wood, and, no matter how carefully they may be handled, the roughly trimmed timber must bruise the fruit and set up decay. The bananas were badly packed: several cases on being examined were found to contain inferior fruit. In fact, I must report unfavourably on the Mangaia fruit as packed for export.

Atiu.

Was visited early next morning, and the oranges for export were duly inspected. The general appearance of the fruit was good, boxes being of sawn timber, and, with the exception of about three hundred cases, the fruit was wrapped in paper. Although in favour of wrapping, I think that unless the work of packing and wrapping is done under good supervision it is liable to abuse, especially amongst inexperienced Natives, as it affords an opportunity of packing inferior and perhaps decaying fruit without much fear of detection. Still, taking the Atiu fruit as a whole, it was in fair condition, and no diseased (fly or scale) fruit was noticeable.

Mauke.

This fruit was brought from Mauke in the s.s. "Vaite," and transhipped at Atiu to the s.s. "Talune." After completing an inspection of Atiu fruit I boarded the "Vaite." The Mauke oranges were wrapped in paper, and packed in boxes of sawn timber. Decaying oranges were noticeable, and for this reason I cannot report very favourably on the Mauke consignments.

Aitutaki.

Landed at Aitutaki early on the morning of the 15th. The fruit for shipment was distributed in the packing-sheds on the beach. The appearance of the fruit was fair, and care was evidently taken in the packing, as not one decaying orange was found in the cases opened.

I am pleased to report favourably on Aitutaki fruit as packed for export on occasion of my visit.

General Remarks.

The Mangaians are by far the worst offenders regarding the condition of the fruit which they pack for export. I very much regret this is so. They are evidently a hardworking and industrious people, and deserve to receive good returns for the fruit which they ship; but this they can never hope to get unless there is a very great improvement in the condition of the fruit packed. For instance, one line which was turned out for repacking contained close on 50 per cent. of decaying oranges. In a case like this there can be no excuse for the packer. How could he ever expect good returns for such fruit, or even expect the shipping company to allow it to be shipped for New Zealand! Again, a line of bananas when turned out for inspection was found to contain fruit which was not even half-matured. These were packed in the centre of the cases, thus giving the impression that the packer knew he was doing wrong. How could he expect to get good returns! Again, besides very inferior boxes, I noticed the consignments, with one or two exceptions, were very badly marked—any dab or appearance of a letter appeared to be sufficient. Now, the other islands can import good box-timber: they also mark their fruit-cases with stencilled letters: why is Mangaia behind in this respect? And this island is one of the most productive in the Group. I should suggest that the Fruit Ordinance at present in operation at Rarotonga be extended to the other islands of the Cook Group—viz., Mangaia, Mauke, Mitiaro, Atiu, and Aitutaki—which are all fruit-exporting islands (clauses 7 and 8 could perhaps be omitted). This would give the Inspector power to deal with the consignments of fruit which in his opinion were unfit for export.

I should also suggest that the Inspector makes periodical visits to these Islands, and inspects the fruit for export. A few visits during the season, at irregular intervals, would, I think, have a good effect, and answer until such time as the Islands are placed under proper control.

I feel sure satisfactory arrangements could be made to enable the fumigation of Rarotongan fruit to proceed during the Inspector's absence.

The Resident Commissioner, Cook Islands.

A. E. REID,
Fruit Inspector, Cook Islands.

REPORT OF FRUIT INSPECTOR.

SIR,—

Rarotonga, 20th September, 1909.

I have the honour to attach herewith my report on fruit industry—investigations and inspections—for seasons 1908–9.

I have, &c.,

The Resident Commissioner, Cook Islands.

A. E. REID,
Fruit Inspector, Cook Islands.