

The continued dry weather experienced last season seriously affected the crop of stone-fruit in most districts throughout the Dominion. In the Auckland District particularly peaches and plums were scarce, and as a consequence high prices were obtained for those lines which came on the market. The apple and pear crop generally was a fair average one. In the Canterbury District late frosts did a good deal of damage to the apple crop. In the Otago District, however, all classes of fruit bore heavy crops, apricots being exceptionally heavy.

The dry weather also seriously interfered in some districts with the planting of new orchards, it being impossible to prepare the land. In some cases newly planted trees did not make much headway, more particularly where thorough cultivation was not carried out.

Insect pests such as codlin-moth, red spider, &c., were more numerous than usual, necessitating extra spraying being carried out to keep them under control. With the exception of powdery mildew, the fungus diseases were a good deal less in evidence, the continued dry weather being against their development. In some localities in the North Island peaches and nectarines suffered to a great extent from attacks of ripe-rot, which caused considerable loss both to the grower and retailer.

The calls made on the Instructors for personal instruction in the many phases of the fruit-growing industry are rapidly increasing each year. This is very satisfactory, as it is a good indication that growers are evincing a keener desire to work on more up-to-date lines. At the same time, however, these requests are interfering considerably with the proper carrying-out of the orchard-inspection work. As mentioned in my last report, it is very necessary that Inspectors be appointed as soon as possible to assist the Instructors in the more thorough execution of their duties, as the districts are at present in most cases far too large.

Fruit-markets.

The Inspectors report that a great improvement is noticeable in the class of fruit now offered to the public, and greater care and attention is being given to the grading and packing. Topping or facing is becoming less conspicuous, although there are a few unscrupulous growers who still persist in this dishonest practice.

The prices realized last season were, generally speaking, satisfactory to the growers.

Export of Fruit.

Last year 62,164 cases of fruit, the bulk of which were apples, were exported to South America. This was a decrease as compared with the quantity shipped the previous year, due to the disorganization in shipping arrangements caused by the great war.

The following figures show the quantities of fruit exported from the Dominion during the last five years:—

Export Season.	Cases,
1910	5,647
1911	6,031
1912	14,869
1913	33,000
1914	67,964
1915	62,164

A great deal of the Orchard Instructors' time is taken up during the export season with the inspection of all fruit intended for export. They report that a steady improvement is taking place in the grading and packing and general get-up of the packages. One of the chief faults is loose packing. This was noticeable in several lines which were being transhipped at Wellington last season. Fruit which becomes loose in the cases is much more liable to bruising than that firmly packed. No doubt as time goes on this defect will entirely disappear.

Panama Pacific Exhibition.

Several consignments of apples and pears were forwarded during the year to the above Exhibition. The majority of the fruit arrived in good condition, considering that it was carried in the ship's vegetable-chamber, no cool-storage accommodation being available. Winter Nelis pears carried splendidly and realized very good prices, some lines making as high as 15s. 7d. per crate. The Department's exhibit of honey attracted a great deal of attention.

Fruit for Exhibition in England.

Sample cases of apples and pears were forwarded to the High Commissioner, London, at regular intervals during the year. These were for the purpose of affording a practical illustration of the class of fruit this Dominion is capable of producing and with a view of extending our trade. The apples arrived in good condition, but the pears in a number of instances opened up in bad order. As in the case of the Panama Exhibition fruit, these consignments were not carried under ideal conditions, the ship's vegetable-chamber being the best available. Very satisfactory prices were realized for the sound fruit, and a display of apples made at the Royal Horticultural Society's Show, Westminster, was awarded the Banksian Silver Medal, the judges commenting very favourably upon the quality of the fruit.

Pruning and Spraying Demonstrations.

The usual practice of giving practical demonstrations in pruning and spraying was carried out during the winter months by the Orchard Instructors. This work is done in conjunction