

GRASS-SEEDS.

The high price of grass-seeds is, I am afraid, tending to induce farmers to use inferior supplies. This is altogether unfortunate, especially in the case of permanent pastures, and farmers would certainly be well advised to incur additional expense for seeds rather than to run the serious risks involved by the use of inferior samples.

DAIRY FARM INSTRUCTION.

The matter of the cleanliness of the milk-supply to many of our dairy factories is still causing grave concern, and it would certainly be to the benefit of all interested in the business if an adequate system of instruction and inspection of the premises of dairy-factory suppliers were in force. Finance is, however, the chief difficulty, and I believe that the time has come for the factories to face the position and intimate to the Government their willingness to provide the money for this work. The most convenient way in which this could be done would be by means of a charge for grading dairy-produce for export. Quite a small rate, say 3d. per package, would yield a sufficient sum to warrant the Government in establishing a comprehensive system of instruction and inspection of milk-suppliers' premises.

FINANCING RURAL ENTERPRISES.

If New Zealand's production of agricultural produce of all kinds is to be largely extended after the war, as will be so eminently desirable in view of the increasing national debt, I am convinced that it will be necessary for the Government to have power to lend money for the establishment of enterprises designed to promote production. Such provision already exists in the case of the fruit-preserving industry, and there seems no reason to doubt that similar assistance should be rendered in the case of all kinds of co-operative or other semi-public agricultural undertakings. I strongly recommend that legislation should be introduced to enable the Government to make advances to co-operative companies and to proprietary concerns in suitable circumstances for the establishment of such businesses as meat-works, dairy factories, cold stores for poultry produce, lime-works, works for the utilization of waste timber, wool-scouring plants, and so on.

FRUITGROWING INDUSTRY.

An important undertaking during the past year was the registration of all orchards, large or small, throughout the Dominion. This step was necessary to facilitate the collection of the amounts due under the Orchard-tax Act of last session, but will be found of great assistance to the Department in connection with the control of orchard pests, especially after the war, when it is hoped that the staff of instructors will be sufficiently strengthened to enable the lists compiled from the register to be fully utilized.

Notwithstanding the large increase in the area of productive orchards, the local market was able to absorb the whole of the fruit brought forward. This was to some extent due to the unfavourable season, but it is abundantly evident that the local market can be enormously developed, and that no serious anxiety need be felt should the export of fruit be impracticable for a considerable time to come. Apparently the best means of increasing the local consumption of fruit would be to arrange for the grocers to carry supplies of suitable fruits in cartons of, say, 5 lb. or 10 lb. If the grocers were supplied direct from central packing-sheds the cost of distribution would be greatly reduced, and I am convinced that if apples, for instance, were delivered by grocers in the cities in the ordinary course of their business at, say, 4d. per pound a very large demand would be experienced, and there is no doubt that this would enable both growers, packing companies, and grocers to obtain thoroughly payable prices.

BEEKEEPING INDUSTRY.

Arrangements have now been completed for the registration of all apiaries, thus compelling the box-hive man, who still lingers in out-of-the-way places, to disclose his whereabouts, and to either bring his operations into accord with the law or discontinue them altogether. A definite beginning has been made with experimental work for the benefit of beekeepers, and it is proposed to develop this as opportunity offers. The work of inspection and instruction, on which four Apiary Instructors have been engaged for several years, is now yielding good results, and a hopeful tendency towards co-ordinated effort to improve the position of the bee industry is developing amongst those engaged in it. The National Beekeepers' Association and the New Zealand Co-operative Honey-producers' Association are both doing good work, and their operations will materially assist the Department's efforts to place beekeeping on a thoroughly sound basis. According to present indications the local markets will ere long be fully supplied with honey at prices fair to both producer and consumer, and the export trade will soon attain considerable dimensions.

POULTRY INDUSTRY.

The poultry industry, too, shows every sign of coming into its own in the near future. Leading men in the business are now taking an active and wisely directed part in the affairs of the New Zealand Poultry Association, and that organization may be relied on to do its share in bringing poultry-keeping into the important position it ought to occupy amongst us. An increase in the Department's instructional staff, and legislation to give these officers some control over the sanitary conditions under which poultry is kept, are now greatly required and would do much to help matters forward. A further difficulty in advancing the poultry industry is the fact that only a few engage in it as their principal business, the great majority treating it