

HORTICULTURE DIVISION.

REPORT OF T. W. KIRK, DIVISIONAL DIRECTOR.

Wellington, 5th June, 1917.

The Secretary of Agriculture, Industries, and Commerce.

I HAVE pleasure in submitting herewith the annual report of this Division for the year ended 31st March, 1917.

T. W. KIRK, Director, Horticulture Division.

INTRODUCTION.

The work coming within the scope of this Division has been energetically carried out during the past year. The following are the principal activities dealt with:—

- (1.) Instruction in fruit and vegetable production; inspection of orchards, vineyards, gardens, and nurseries, and affording information as to the most up-to-date methods of controlling diseases and insect pests; also giving advice as to suitable varieties of fruit, vegetables, &c., to plant.
- (2.) Demonstrations and instruction in the grading and packing of fruit, and in pruning and spraying.
- (3.) Testing new brands of spraying-compounds for the purpose of ascertaining their efficacy under local conditions.
- (4.) Affording advice on the preserving of fruit and vegetables both for commercial and domestic purposes.
- (5.) Advising on tree-planting; giving information as to the most suitable varieties of trees to plant, both for shelter and timber purposes, in different localities.
- (6.) Control of the horticultural stations at Te Kauwhata, Tauranga, and Arataki.
- (7.) Registration of all orchards and nurseries in the Dominion.
- (8.) Orchard-tax: Assessment, &c.
- (9.) Inspection of all imported fruit, plants, vegetables, bulbs, &c., at the ports of Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin, and Bluff; also inspection and grading of all locally grown fruit, plants, vegetables, &c., intended for export.
- (10.) Viticulture and winemaking: Giving advice on the growing of grapes, both outdoor and under glass, on the control of pests and diseases, and on the making of wines.
- (11.) Affording information on beekeeping generally and the production of honey for market.
- (12.) Inspection of apiaries and instruction in up-to-date methods of controlling bee diseases.
- (13.) Grading of honey for export; registration of honey export brands.

THE FRUITGROWING INDUSTRY.

The planting of new orchards is proceeding at a very satisfactory rate, and the total area now under fruit for the whole of the Dominion is approximately 48,120 acres. The area actually planted in commercial orchards in the various districts during the year under review is estimated at 2,390 acres. This is a decrease of about 1,000 acres as compared with the previous year's planting, but this is no doubt largely due to the disorganization of labour, &c., caused by the Great War. The following figures show the area planted during the 1916 planting season in each Instructor's district: Whangarei, 100 acres; North Auckland, 200; South Auckland, 50; Poverty Bay, 20; Waikato and Bay of Plenty, 25; Hawke's Bay, 75; Taranaki, 5; Manawatu and Wairarapa, 60; Nelson, 1,325; Marlborough, 100; North Canterbury, 100; South Canterbury, 30; Otago, 300: total, 2,390 acres.

The weather-conditions prevailing during the fruiting season were very trying to fruit-growers generally, more particularly in the Auckland and Hawke's Bay districts. Incessant rains interfered to a large extent with the setting of fruit, and fungoid diseases were rife and difficult to control. As a result the crop was a light one in all districts with the exception of Otago, where good average crops of both pip and stone fruits were harvested.

Brown-rot, a fungus disease which was prevalent last year, caused very serious damage to stone-fruit, particularly in the Auckland District, where the crop was practically a failure. Arrangements are being made to conduct a series of experiments during the coming season for the control of this disease, which is causing considerable loss both to the growers and retailers.

The continuous wet weather also played havoc with the tomato crop in the northern districts, the adverse conditions greatly interfering with spraying operations.

The requests for advice and information on the many phases of the fruitgrowing industry still continue to increase, and it is evident from the numerous calls received for private instruction and public demonstrations that the work of the Division is being fully appreciated.

During the year the following additional work was undertaken by this branch of the Department: Registration of nurseries; registration of orchards (from one tree upwards); assessment, &c., orchard-tax. This involved a large amount of detail work both for clerical and field staffs.