

Since the issue of the last timber-industry report several large and costly modern sawmills have been erected in various parts of the district; and it is generally anticipated that there will be a large increase in the overseas demand for New Zealand timbers in the near future, more especially as regards Australia, which depends largely upon this country for its supplies of soft woods.

Milling operations have lately been commenced by the Railway Department in the State-owned forest at Mamaku, where an abundant supply of superior mountain rimu is available with an easy access to the railway. The possession of this forest should prove a great advantage to that Department, as it will supply its requirements as regards that class of timber.

At present there are sixty-eight sawmills in operation in the Auckland District, with an output for the past year as follows: Twenty mills cutting kauri timber, output approximately 52,000,000 superficial feet; twenty mills cutting white-pine (kahikatea), output approximately 70,000,000 superficial feet; and twenty-eight cutting rimu and totara, output approximately 60,000,000 superficial feet. The number of hands employed at these mills is stated to be approximately 2,100 men.

As shown hereunder, the retail prices of sawn kauri timber have steadily been rising since 1910:—

Kauri Timber.—From 3 in. to 12 in. wide, undressed, up to 24 ft. long, $\frac{3}{4}$ in. to 1 in. or more thick, per 100 superficial feet:—

	First Class.		Medium.		Second Class	
	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.
December, 1910	24	0	18	6	12	0
November, 1912	28	0	22	6	14	0
March, 1917	32	0	25	0	16	6

As regards the increase in prices of other kinds of timber the following may be taken as a fair indication:—

Rimu Timber.—Heart timber, dressing quality: May, 1912, 18s. 6d. per 100 superficial feet; November, 1912, 22s. per 100 superficial feet; December, 1914, 25s. per 100 superficial feet; April, 1916, 28s. per 100 superficial feet. A further increase on the last price is now under consideration by the sawmillers.

Closer attention is being given by the sawmillers to the utilization of some of the native timbers which were formerly rejected, chief amongst these being taraire and tawa. More especially is the former timber now being sought after throughout the Dominion for mouldings and furniture-making, and it is largely supplanting the imported oak timber for these purposes. Two mills are principally engaged in cutting this timber, and a third mill is now in course of construction.

Some of the larger timber companies are now turning their attention to the tawa timber for box and fruit-case making, and a larger demand for this timber is anticipated in the near future on account of the higher prices obtained for other second-class timbers making them too expensive for fruit-cases.

During the past three years the Crown forests have been immune from fires, but last year one or two fires took place in some of the privately owned kauri forests, which will necessitate the early working of this timber to avoid the loss in sapwood.

It may be of interest to note that, with the view to economizing in the costly laying of tramways, two of the larger timber companies have installed in their bushes an improved imported log-hauler and gear capable of hauling over a radius of two miles, as compared with the older type, which averaged about 20 to 30 chains haulage.

The following table shows in superficial feet the various kinds of timber disposed of during the year ended 31st March, 1917:—

	Kauri.	Rimu.	Kahikatea.	Totara.	Matai.	Miscellaneous.	Total.	Amount realized.	
								£	s. d.
Crown lands and lands for settlement	474,424	10,523,269	1,238,788	340,646	325,663	1,530,941	14,433,731	10,389	3 7
Education reserves ..	91,661	111,536	593,881	22,903	2,246	56,363	878,590	410	14 9
Totals ..	566,085	10,634,805	1,832,669	363,549	327,909	1,587,304	15,312,521	10,799	18 4

The total amounts received as royalties during the year were for timber cut from—Crown lands, £4,599 6s. 9d.; State forests, £4,734 16s.; total, £9,334 2s. 9d.

There have been three parties of timber-measurers engaged in measuring and inspecting timber during the year, and the following are the total quantities of all kinds of timber measured by them: Total, 26,811,294 superficial feet, at an average cost of 1'081d. per 100 superficial feet.

HAWKE'S BAY.

(W. F. Marsh, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

As far as the southern portion of Hawke's Bay Land District is concerned the whole of the marketable milling-timber may be considered as practically cut out. During the last ten years most of the mills have been closed down. The mills now being worked are in places difficult of access owing to bad roads and distance from markets.

The number of mills working is sixteen, but they are mostly small plants, and are not working continuously. The timbers milled were mostly rimu and kahikatea (white-pine), of