

HORTICULTURE DIVISION.

REPORT OF THE DIVISIONAL DIRECTOR.

The Director-General.

Wellington, 18th June, 1920.

I HAVE pleasure in submitting herewith the annual report of this Division for the year ended 31st March, 1920.

T. W. KIRK, Director.

INTRODUCTION.

The following are the principal activities dealt with by the Horticulture Division :—

- (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.) Administering fruit-export regulations, and the regulations relating to the sale, for consumption within the Dominion, of New-Zealand-grown fruit.
- (3.) Demonstrations and instruction in the grading and packing of fruit, and in pruning and spraying.
- (4.) Testing new brands of spraying-compounds for the purpose of ascertaining their efficacy under local conditions.
- (5.) Affording advice on the preserving of fruit and vegetables both for commercial and domestic purposes ; cool storage ; advances under the Fruit-preserving Industry Act.
- (6.) Advice regarding orchard shelter, hedges in general, &c.
- (7.) Control of the Horticultural Stations at Te Kauwhata, Tauranga, and Arataki.
- (8.) Registration of all orchards and nurseries in the Dominion.
- (9.) Orchard-tax : Issuing of tax-demand notices, &c.
- (10.) 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.
- (11.) Viticulture and winemaking : Giving advice on the growing of grapes, both outdoor and under glass, the control of pests and diseases, and on the making of wines.
- (12.) Affording information on beekeeping generally and the production of honey for market.
- (13.) Inspection of apiaries and instruction in up-to-date methods of controlling disease.
- (14.) Grading of honey for export ; registration of honey-export brands.
- (15.) Registration of apiaries.

THE FRUITGROWING INDUSTRY.

The season's fruit crop has been a very satisfactory one. Apples and pears have yielded heavy crops, whilst the return of stone-fruits was above the average in most localities. Satisfactory prices are being realized by growers, especially those who take care to forward nothing but clean, well-graded fruit.

Brown-rot disease in stone-fruit has been less prevalent, although in some localities apples and pears were attacked to a slight extent. Black-spot infection was again fairly conspicuous, especially in the Nelson and Motueka districts. Other diseases and pests have been more easily kept under control. The Orchard Instructors report that considerable improvement is noticeable in the management and care of orchards generally.

A pleasing feature is the large number of returned soldiers who have taken up fruitgrowing under the repatriation scheme. With one or two exceptions they are promising to become a valuable acquisition to the various districts in which they are settled. Assistance is given them as far as possible by the Instructors, both by practical demonstrations and written advice.

The demand for information on fruitgrowing matters has increased to a considerable extent, and involves a large amount of correspondence as well as special visits.

The Assistant Director, Mr. J. A. Campbell, who spent the major portion of the year investigating the horticultural industries of the United States of America and Canada, returned to the Dominion in December last. During his visit Mr. Campbell secured a large amount of valuable information, particularly in connection with the grading and packing of fruit, co-operation, and marketing. This information is being passed on to the New Zealand fruitgrower, and should in the near future have a beneficial effect on the fruitgrowing industry of this country.

The area planted during the year in new orchards was 494 acres, which is a slight decrease on that planted the previous year. The following figures show the area in acres planted during the 1919 planting season : Whangarei, 15 ; North Auckland, 55 ; South Auckland, 22 ; Poverty Bay, 14 ; Waikato and Bay of Plenty, 5 ; Hawke's Bay, 108 ; Taranaki, 21 ; Manawatu and Wairarapa, 11 ; Nelson and Motueka, 80 ; North Canterbury, 120 ; South Canterbury, 13 ; Otago, 30 : total, 494 acres.

Outbreak of Fire-blight.—Towards the end of the year an outbreak of fire-blight disease in fruit-trees occurred in the Auckland District. Steps were immediately taken to prevent any further spread of the trouble. A thorough inspection of all orchards and nurseries in the affected district was commenced, and all suspicious infections destroyed by burning. The work is proceeding satisfactorily, and it is anticipated the disease will be successfully checked. Quarantine regulations will be gazetted at an early date.