

a rise and fall of 1s. 3d., large areas which are now used for other purposes would be brought back into sugar-cane cultivation. If some such rise in price is not shortly given to planters it is almost certain that a great deal of land now in cane will be utilized for growing more lucrative crops.

If the output of sugar-cane is not maintained in Fiji it will be a most serious matter for consumers in New Zealand. Indeed, it is necessary that the production should not merely be maintained, but that it should be increased. As will be seen from the summary of the exports of raw sugar from Fiji, the exports last year were little more than the exports in 1910, when the population in New Zealand was much smaller than it is now. In 1916 120,000 tons of sugar were exported; since then the output has gradually fallen until last year it reached 64,347 tons. This drop in the export of raw sugar from Fiji is undoubtedly the cause of the dearth of sugar which has taken place in New Zealand during the last twelve months. New Zealand depends on Fiji for this most necessary article of diet. At present Fiji depends on sugar-cultivation for her very existence. Anything, therefore, which militates against the maintenance and expansion of the sugar industry must most seriously affect both Fiji and New Zealand.

3. *Unsatisfactory Working-conditions.*—Sugar-cane planters are most dissatisfied with the conditions under which they are at present working. The price per ton of sugar-cane is fixed by the Colonial Sugar Company for one year only, and planters are quite in the dark as to what price they will receive for cane which they intend to grow on land they are preparing. The only reason given for this seems to be that, as the company has only one year's contract for the supply of sugar to New Zealand, they can only state the price they will give for one year's crop. This unfortunate condition naturally tends to dishearten the planters, and it seems to us essential that arrangements should be made with planters for a period of at least three years.

A brief description of the process of sugar-cane growing would make clear the reason for our assertion. Sugar-cane planted in March this year will be cut between May and December next year (1921). After cutting the cane the land is cultivated between the rows, and from the stools or roots a second crop springs. This crop, called the "first ratoons," will be cut in 1922, and under good conditions and with the same treatment another crop, called "second ratoons," will be cut in 1923. Each succeeding crop is lighter than the last. If 40 tons are cut off a given area in the first crop, 20 tons may be got off the first ratoons and 12 tons off the second ratoons. The ground has then to be broken up and fallowed, used for other crops, or replanted in cane. Under present conditions, then, a planter knows what price he will get for the first crop, but has no idea what he may get for his first or second ratoons.

*Copra* to the value of £469,332 was exported in 1918, of which America purchased £446,893. If this commodity is to be preserved for British industry the Fijian Government should consider the advisability of placing a higher duty on all copra exported to countries outside the British Empire. At present the duty on all copra exported from Fiji is 10s. per ton.

Of the total export of green *bananas*, which amounted to £132,876 in 1918, Australian purchases totalled £85,379, New Zealand's £47,497. Australia charges a duty on all Fijian bananas entering the Commonwealth—no doubt to protect her own growers. New Zealand, on the other hand, permits them to come in free, and on the same conditions as the bananas from the Cook Islands.

*Molasses* to the value of £8,229 are exported, of which New Zealand purchases £1,163; the balance goes to Australia.

*Rubber* amounts to £8,159, the whole of which goes to Australia.

*Trocas-shell* amounts to £8,016, the whole of which goes to Japan.

*Cocoa-beans* to the value of £126 were exported in 1918; all went to New Zealand.

A very fine mandarin is grown in Fiji, but it is affected by scale and fly. It is claimed by certain witnesses that these diseases are similar to those which affect Cook Island oranges. If this is so there seems no reason why the importation of mandarins should be prohibited, provided similar precautions are taken in Fiji as are taken in Cook Islands.