

LAND REGISTRATION.

Return of Documents registered for the Year ended 31st March, 1927.—Conveyances, 77 ; mortgages, 15 ; releases, 10 ; leases, 27 ; Crown grants, 6 ; miscellaneous, 14 : total, 149.

AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT.

During the year under review considerable progress has been made, particularly with respect to advancement in agricultural knowledge among the Native population. A keener spirit has been displayed by the Samoans in their desire to increase their prosperity, as is evidenced by the manner in which they have responded to the Administration's efforts to establish the banana industry here. Greater attention has also been given to the manner in which new areas of coconuts have been planted up. In former years it has always been a difficult task to ensure that the palms were properly spaced apart, but to-day this important point is understood and planting is correctly carried out. There is also a desire on the part of the Samoans to produce a better class of copra, and inducement in the shape of higher prices will no doubt result in a fair percentage of our copra reaching a high standard.

COPRA.

The total output for the year was 12,592 tons, as compared with 15,200 tons for the previous year, being a reduction of 2,608 tons. This reduction can in no way be attributed to any laxity on the part of producers, but is mainly due to the gale experienced on the 1st January, 1926, as referred to in last year's report, and to the dry spell which immediately followed it. In this connection it is worth noting that for the first nine months of the year the decrease in Native output was 1,773 tons, whereas for the whole year the decrease was only 1,812 tons, indicating that towards the end of the year plantations were recovering from the effects of the unfavourable weather experienced in the early part of the year.

A feature of the work accomplished in the Native plantations this year is the good progress made in planting up fresh areas of coconuts. The work is most important in its bearing on increase in population. The total new plantings of coconuts for the year are 2,574 acres.

The standard of quality has been well maintained throughout the year. It is hoped that the arrangements made by the Administration to ensure to the Natives a better price for better-quality copra will act as a sufficient incentive to them to produce copra only of the best possible quality.

CACAO.

The production figures for cacao show a reduction of 183 tons as compared with the previous year, the figures being 678 tons for the year 1925 and 495 tons for 1926. The decrease in output was inevitable as a result of the unpropitious weather conditions experienced at the beginning of the year.

The quality of the product has been well maintained, as is shown by the fact that of the 495 tons produced only $2\frac{1}{2}$ tons were graded as inferior. It is encouraging to record that the improvement in quality has been noted by manufacturers abroad, and has resulted in several planters obtaining forward contracts for their output at satisfactory prices.

The price of cacao on the London market showed a rising tendency, being quoted in December last at £84 10s. per ton, as against £74 earlier in the year, and the price had further risen to £97 10s. by March. Given normal weather conditions the prospects for the cacao planters are bright, and it is to be hoped that the present satisfactory price will be maintained.

COTTON.

The quantity of cotton produced last year was 3 tons, as against 1 ton during the previous year. With the object of further improving the strain of our Durango cotton a consignment of 1 ton selected Queensland seed was imported. This seed has been freely distributed among the Samoans with the hope that every village will endeavour to put a small area under cultivation. The Administration, as previously, proposes to foster this industry during the coming year by undertaking to purchase seed cotton from producers.

RUBBER.

It is pleasing to record that this industry is developing along progressive lines. During the coming year the output promises to exceed 150 tons, more than double the export figures of any previous year in the history of Samoa. The Administration has demonstrated that rubber-tapping is a payable proposition here, with the result that in a few months' time all areas under this cultivation will be worked. Cost of production is in the neighbourhood of 10d. per pound, so whilst the present price obtains the industry should prove a good paying one. The production of rubber during the year was $41\frac{1}{4}$ tons, as compared with $3\frac{1}{2}$ tons for the previous year.

OTHER PRODUCTS.

Minor products that have been exported from the Territory during the past year include papain, bêche-de-mer, kola nuts, and hides. In particular papain and bêche-de-mer are engaging attention. There is a good demand for well-prepared papain, which fetches as much as 16s. per pound, leaving a handsome profit of about 11s. per pound for the producer.

A new departure is that of beekeeping, an experienced beekeeper having recently commenced operations here. The market for honey in Samoa is by no means a large one, but whether honey can be profitably produced for export in competition with New Zealand has yet to be proved. It is understood, however, that the Samoan beeswax is of a high quality. The Italian bees imported a few months ago appear to have become quickly acclimatized, and it is said that one colony has given 300 lb. of comb honey in three months.