

Freezing-works.—The only works operating in this district are at Picton. The season has been a good one all round, and the output was 100,000 carcases.

Honey.—Marlborough has produced about 30–35 tons this year, and prices have been in the vicinity of 5½d. to 5¾d. bulk. The quality was good, and growers are optimistic regarding the possibilities of their industry.

Agriculture.—The crops this year are well up to standard, although some of the earlier crops of barley, wheat, peas, &c., were affected by the frost.

Barley was almost a record crop, slightly frosted. It was practically all grown under contract and exceeded requirements; consequently a great deal was rejected which in other seasons would have been passed. The oat crop was fairly good, although there is very little demand for chaff, and returns are consequently low. Wheat gave a poor return, and peas nearly all suffered with the frost. For some unexplained reason the clover in a certain part of the district did not pollinate; nevertheless, the crop was a record one for Marlborough, and it is estimated at about 4,000 sacks. Lucerne also had a setback in some parts, owing to the vagaries of the season. However, the crop is estimated to produce between 60 and 70 tons, although it is thought that a larger percentage than usual will be lost in dressing owing to the seeds being flat and small.

Orchards.—The prospects for this season's crop appear to be very promising, being a record one of about 20,000 cases, of which about 14,000 cases have been exported. It is anticipated that very good prices will be obtained on the Home markets.

Poultry-farming.—The Blenheim egg-producers exported something near 850,000 eggs last year, at an average price of 1s. 11d. per dozen, which is a slight advance on the price obtained last season, and poultry conditions in the district appear to be satisfactory. The price of fowl-food, however, and the fluctuations of the markets, are a continual source of concern to poultry-farmers.

Timber.—Quite a number of mills, both large and small, are operating in this district; and, although finance is difficult at times, quite a lot of new buildings are in evidence or in course of erection. Our source of supply, however, is becoming limited.

Flax.—There are four mills working in Marlborough, and the output for the last season is in the vicinity of 400 tons of hemp, for which an average price of £30 per ton has been obtained. I am informed that Marlborough hemp is graded highest average of any district in New Zealand, owing mainly to the good water and the splendid climatic conditions for bleaching.

Lime-works.—The lime-works conducted by Mr. A. Thomson, of Ward, are still operating, although the output for the past season has been rather disappointing, having reached only 500 tons. The high quality, however, is still maintained at approximately 90 per cent. lime, and I am given to understand that it compares more than favourably with lime from other places. It is noticeable that those farmers who have made early use of the lime-works are the most consistent purchasers. It is a great pity that more farmers cannot afford to avail themselves of the undoubted advantages of regular liming.

The present financial stringency has, no doubt, had its effect on this year's output. It is surprising to note, however, that the bulk of the output seems to go to the outlying districts, clearly indicating that, although the freight is greater, the farmers fully appreciate that lime is a necessity.

Land Board.—There were twelve ordinary meetings of the Board during the year, when a total number of 244 cases were dealt with, 92 being connected with soldier settlers, 47 ordinary transfers, and 105 miscellaneous cases.

Messrs. James Boyd and James Fulton (Crown tenants' representatives), whose terms expired, were reappointed and re-elected respectively for a further term.

During a great part of the year I have been absent from Marlborough on deteriorated-lands business in Nelson, and wish to show my appreciation and thanks to Mr. P. R. Wilkinson (Chief Draughtsman) who was appointed my deputy, and Mr. J. Torrance (Chief Clerk) for the way they have handled and conducted the business during my absence, and also a very keen and efficient staff for the attention they have given to their duties during the year.

WESTLAND.

(W. T. MORPETH, Commissioner of Crown Lands.)

Conditions and Progress of Settlement.—Sharply contrasted weather conditions have been experienced in Westland during the year under review. Autumn, on the whole, was mild and rather fine. Winter came late, but suddenly, and wet, stormy, and tempestuous weather conditions continued throughout the remaining winter months and well on into spring. From the latter end of December there were three months of practically fine weather, ending abruptly with the equinoctial gales, and the indications now point to an early winter. One unfortunate result of the long spell of wet weather referred to has been the constant flooding of the rivers and the destruction of valuable dairying and grazing land, followed up in many cases by applications from local bodies, Crown tenants, and freeholders for grants for river protection. It is often exceedingly difficult to deal with these applications, and I am inclined to think there should be a permanently constituted board of, say, four members—two representing the Public Works and Lands Department, one the local bodies in the district, and one the farming community—to whom all cases of river erosion in the district could be referred.

White and green crops for the year have been fairly successful, and most of the farmers have been enabled to save their hay. As a rule the weather conditions are so erratic that this cannot be done,