

responsible for the low prices realized, and as a result the demands on the guarantee were heavy. Satisfactory prices were received for the fruit shipped to South Africa. One direct shipment was made at Port Nelson, where the s.s. "Port Hobart" loaded 71,000 cases of apples.

A guarantee has been given to cover shipments of apples and pears made during the 1927 season. A slight variation has been made in the conditions applying under the guarantee, in that the grower is guaranteed a gross market price of 11s. 6d. per case. With respect to South American markets the gross price is considered to be the c.i.f. price, plus 1s. 6d. per case selling charges.

It is expected that a total of approximately 670,000 cases will be shipped during the 1927 season—600,000 cases to Great Britain and 70,000 cases to South America.

The Canadian fruit-export case has been adopted as the standard export case for the 1927 season, and is giving general satisfaction.

With the exception of that from Otago, all fruit has been exported under the jurisdiction of the N.Z. Fruit-export Control Board in co-operation with the N.Z. Fruitgrowers' Federation. Colonel Gray, who acted as the Board's representative in England last season, and who did valuable work in connection with the distribution of New Zealand fruit on the Home Markets, is again acting in a similar capacity this year. It is satisfactory to be able to report that the Board has the full confidence of the majority of commercial fruitgrowers in the Dominion, little criticism being raised in regard to its operations.

LOCAL MARKETS.

Close attention has been given to the inspection of New-Zealand-grown fruit at shops and auction markets. The great increase in the quantity of apples exported overseas reflected somewhat on the local markets, there being a tendency to flood the markets with low-grade fruit. The marketing of this class of fruit is not profitable to growers. It is hard to dispose of, deteriorates rapidly, and also has the effect of lowering the prices for high-quality fruit. Pears were in moderate supply during the year, and the quality, on the whole, was good. Owing to light crops generally, the supply of stone-fruits did not keep pace with the demand, and consequently the returns received were very satisfactory. Vegetables have been fairly plentiful and prices good. The new regulations as to fair packing of fruit and vegetables have been responsible for more uniformity in packing.

A considerable number of warning notices were issued to growers offering disease-infected fruit for sale, and also for other breaches of the regulations governing the sale of New-Zealand-grown fruit for local consumption.

INSTRUCTIONAL AND EXPERIMENTAL WORK.

The demand on the officers of the Division for advice and instruction on the many phases connected with horticulture continues to be considerable. Every effort is made to comply with these requests by correspondence, lectures, and practical demonstration, and the work of the Division in this respect is keenly appreciated by growers.

Following the usual custom, classes in fruit grading and packing have been conducted by the Orchard Instructors in the main commercial centres during the winter months in co-operation with the fruitgrowers' associations. These were well patronized, and a number of those attending subsequently sat for the departmental examination, several gaining certificates of competency in apple grading and packing. Practical demonstrations in pruning, spraying, &c., were given during the year in the different districts. Examinations in these subjects were also held and a fair percentage of passes recorded.

The testing of several new spraying-compounds has been carried out in co-operation with reliable fruitgrowers. These tests usually require to cover at least two seasons before any definite pronouncement can be made as to their efficacy or otherwise.

Experiments are being conducted for the control of brown-rot of stone-fruit in the Auckland district, Coniothecium and black-spot of apple-trees, Moutere Hills, and strawberry disease, Auckland. Apple and citrus variety tests are also receiving attention in several districts; and avocados are being tried out in the Thames and Gisborne districts, and persimmons in Otago and Hawke's Bay.

Officers of the Division have been co-operating with the Biological Laboratory staff with the view of determining some reliable means of controlling the earwig pest, which has become a serious menace to the stone-fruit grower, particularly in the Otago Central district. The use of hedgehogs and various baits is being tried, but so far no appreciable reduction of the pest is noticeable. Growers are in great hopes that the parasite which has recently been introduced by Dr. Tillyard, of the Cawthron Institute, will be a success. The matter is at present in the experimental stage, large supplies of earwigs having been forwarded to the Institute for the insects to work on.

The periodical heavy losses sustained in Central Otago from late spring frosts have made growers seriously consider some method of combating them, and it is anticipated a definite attempt at orchard-heating will be made during the coming season. Full information on frost-fighting methods is being supplied by the Division, and the Department is also assisting in the carrying-out of tests in this direction.

The only co-operative fruit-testing area at present in operation is that established at Tanekaha (North Auckland), which is planted in mixed fruit-trees. This is making satisfactory progress, but definite results will not be available for a season or two. The agreement in regard to the citrus-test area planted at Henderson in 1919 terminated during the year, and the plot was handed back to the owner.