

ORCHARD-REGISTRATION AND ORCHARD-TAX.

A total of 6,347 commercial orchards were registered during the year and tax-demand notices issued to the occupiers. The amount collected under this voluntary orchard-tax was £1,571 9s. 7d., which was handed over to the New Zealand Fruitgrowers' Federation, Ltd., Wellington, less cost of collection. Some difficulty is experienced in getting all taxable orchardists to register and pay the tax. While the majority recognize their obligations in this respect, there are some who neglect to comply with the regulations. Proceedings had to be taken in a number of instances for non-registration and payment of tax.

REGISTRATION AND INSPECTION OF NURSERIES.

This work is proceeding satisfactorily, the bulk of the nurseries being comparatively free from disease. There has been an increase in the number of nurseries registered, the total being 637, as against 593 for the previous year. £637 was collected in registration fees.

NEW ZEALAND INSTITUTE OF HORTICULTURE.

The New Zealand Institute of Horticulture is now becoming firmly established, and is receiving the support of scientists, nurserymen, fruitgrowers, and horticulturists generally, who recognize its value and importance to the well-being of the country. Matters connected with nomenclature, improvement of economic plants by selection and hybridization, and training of young men and women in all branches of horticulture are some of the main features of the work of the Institute.

Several inquiries have been received from persons desirous of obtaining instruction in horticulture, and the establishment of a central School of Horticulture, referred to in previous reports, is a matter that is strongly advocated by the Institute.

IMPORTED FRUIT, PLANTS, ETC.

The Fruit Inspectors report that the bulk of the consignments of imported fruit, plants, and bulbs arrived in good condition. With the exception of Auckland, the total quantities imported show a slight decrease as compared with the previous year's figures. A falling-off took place in the quantity of lemons imported from Sicily.

The quality of the fruit from Australia was not up to the usual standard, several consignments of mandarins arriving in very poor condition. There was an increase in fruit-imports from United States of America, due to the removal of the embargo in connection with foot-and-mouth disease. A considerable improvement is noticeable in the quality and packing of oranges and bananas from the Cook Islands.

Most consignments arrived clean and free from disease. One or two lines were condemned and destroyed on account of fruit-fly infection, and a quantity of almonds and walnuts had to be similarly dealt with for Indian meal-moth. Fumigation was found necessary in connection with a few consignments found on examination to be affected with live scale. Importations through the parcel-post show an increase. With very few exceptions bulbs were of first-class quality, and bulb-mite was considerably less conspicuous.

HOP-CULTURE.

Reports received from the Nelson and Motueka districts indicate that the hop crop is an exceptionally heavy one, nearly all the gardens returning a record crop. With the limited demand for New Zealand hops on the Home market, some little difficulty will be experienced by growers in disposing of their stocks at payable prices. The quantities and values of hops exported during the last five years ended 31st March are as follows: 1923, 2,243 cwt., £21,153; 1924, 3,883 cwt., £27,615; 1925, 4,469 cwt., £31,112; 1926, 3,608 cwt., £21,780; 1927, 2,937 cwt., £15,203. It will thus be seen there was a considerable falling off in the quantity exported during the year.

TOBACCO-CULTURE.

It has been fully demonstrated that tobacco-leaf of high-grade quality, both for pipe and cigarette smoking, can be produced in certain localities in the Dominion—notably Nelson, Hawke's Bay, and Auckland. In order to assist in ascertaining the possibility of establishing an export trade in New-Zealand-grown tobacco-leaf, the Government recently granted a guarantee to growers on all tobacco-leaf approved for export by the Department. The guarantee is offered in respect to tobacco-leaf exported during 1927, 1928, and 1929, and the grower is guaranteed an average gross market price of 2s. 3d. per pound on the open market in London on all leaf of Class 1 and 1s. 4d. per pound on leaf of Class 2, the gross liability of the Government not to exceed £3,500 in any one year.

This offer is being taken advantage of by a number of growers in the Motueka district, where some 30 acres have been specially planted under the supervision of an Instructor in Tobacco-culture appointed by the Department. All operations—planting, cultivation, curing, &c.—are being carried out under the direction of the Instructor, and it is expected that some 10 to 20 tons of leaf will be available for export at an early date. A branch of the Nelson District Tobacco-growers' Association has been formed at Motueka for the purpose of furthering the interests of the tobacco-growing industry in that district.

LATER.—Since the foregoing was written, developments have taken place which preclude the possibility of the Government being called upon to proceed with the guarantee on tobacco for this season.