

Farm Economics.—The officer appointed in 1925 to deal with farm economics in New Zealand is making good headway in the work. To get sufficient data to enable a proper examination to be made in respect of any particular branch of farming is a work of some magnitude, and rapid progress cannot be expected. At first farmers were rather diffident about giving the desired information, particularly that relating to finance, but with a better understanding of the position no great difficulty is now experienced. Once the farmer is assured of the purpose of the inquiries, and guaranteed that any information given by him will be treated in the strictest confidence, he is, as a general rule, quite willing to do all in his power to further the investigations.

EXPERIMENTAL AREAS.

Puwerā.—Dairying operations were continued on this area, and the herd increased to twenty-one head. The carrying-capacity of Puwerā is a cow to 2 acres, and the results to date give increasing evidence in favour of the clay gum lands being capable of being converted into small dairy farms, provided finance is available for the initial breaking-in of the land.

Albany.—The small experimental area at this place having served the purpose for which it was originally established was closed during the year.

Marton.—The work at this farm has been much on the same lines as the previous year, and comprised mainly an elaborate series of top-dressing trials. Full details will be supplied later in a special report.

Ashburton.—Wheat variety trials have been continued, as have also the soil-fertility-increase trials. Work in the selection of pure lines of seed potatoes is also carried out.

Gore.—The main work at this area has been the testing of different varieties of field roots and potatoes—in the case of the former particularly from the aspects of dry-rot and club-root.

Winton.—This area was taken over during the year by a local committee and is now run as a subsidized farm. The work conducted at Winton in the management of pastures has had a great effect on grassland management in Southland.

Galloway.—Dairying operations have been continued at Galloway to demonstrate the butterfat capacity of irrigated soil in Central Otago. A detailed report will be submitted so soon as the season has closed.

Waimaunga.—Dairying has been carried on at Waimaunga during the year, and so soon as the season closes a detailed report will be furnished.

Subsidized Farms.—The subsidized farms at Stratford, Manajia, and Dargaville have continued to do useful work. As indicated above, a fourth subsidized farm is now in being at Winton.

CO-OPERATIVE EXPERIMENTS.

Co-operative experimental work has been conducted in various localities throughout the Dominion. A few of these experiments are of a demonstrational character, but the majority are conducted on modern lines of experimentation, where the results can be accurately interpreted on statistical lines. This latter method is the best one from an instructional standpoint.

WINTER FARM SCHOOLS.

The holding of farmers' classes was continued during the winter of 1926. As far as possible the classes were limited to about two days in each centre, instead of devoting a week to each place. This enabled the lecturers to visit an increased number of centres, and as a consequence a much larger number of farmers were enabled to attend the lectures. These classes are extremely popular, and the instruction given is much appreciated.

RUAKURA FARM TRAINING COLLEGE.

This institution continues to meet the popular demand, and an increased number of students is in residence. At present there are fifty-two students, and this number necessitated the appointment of an additional instructor during the year.

BOYS' AND GIRLS' AGRICULTURAL CLUBS.

These clubs are still conducted in various parts of the Dominion, and a considerable increase in the number of clubs has taken place, especially in Taranaki, Wellington-West Coast, and Wairarapa districts. They are doing good work.

FARMERS' FIELD COMPETITIONS.

These competitions continue to flourish. Interest in them is well maintained, and their value to the farming community is undoubted.

THE HEMP INDUSTRY.

The principal phormium areas are reported as healthy in regard to the condition of the plant. Phormium-cultivation has been much to the fore, and the formation of several new companies for the growing and milling of phormium has been quite a feature of the year.

The production of fibre during the year showed a decrease when compared with the previous year, but this decrease was the result of heavy floods in some phormium-milling areas in the early spring of 1926.