

"The main station at Rarotonga continues to satisfactorily disposed of the ever-increasing traffic, although upon several occasions the out-of-date transmitting-apparatus has proved inefficient under abnormal atmospheric conditions, necessitating a great deal of extra work supplying repetitions, or even in gaining communication with the more distant stations.

"The installation of a 50-watt valve transmitter at Apia has amply demonstrated the superiority of valve over spark transmission, inasmuch as this station now maintains both daylight and night receiving schedules on the former with even a greater degree of accuracy than was possible on the comparatively mammoth-powered spark transmitter. In addition, Apia has established reliable communication with New Zealand on this same low-power apparatus. The main storage battery of 120 volts is showing unmistakable signs of age, and will have to be renewed within the next twelve months. A new distilling-plant erected at this station now provides adequate supplies of water for all stations in the Group.

"One application for an amateur receiving-station license has been received during the year."

FRUIT INDUSTRY.

The following is the report of the Director of Agriculture :—

"The effect of the severe storm experienced early in 1926 was noticeable throughout the year. Orange-trees in exposed positions were practically defoliated and the fruit shrivelled on the trees. Bananas suffered severely, as the storm occurred after the planting season. Then, owing to a dry spell followed by the cool weather, replanting was out of the question until the warmer weather came in October; consequently it will be some months yet before a noticeable increase in the output of bananas can be hoped for.

"No serious complaints were received regarding the quality or pack of the tomato crop. This industry is on a very fair footing, and, provided the quality and pack is maintained, there will always be a payable market in New Zealand if the shipments are not too large.

"The fruit causing the most concern is the orange crop, and until the output can be handled and packed in central sheds in each village, or the buyers erect large sheds, the quality and pack of our oranges will remain unsatisfactory. With a large number of small sheds, as at present, it is impossible to exercise proper supervision. An Inspector should be present at a shed during packing operations, and he would then be in a position to issue a fairly reliable certificate regarding the pack and quality without any further inspection at the wharf, except in doubtful cases. The inspection at the wharf is unsatisfactory, as, owing to the limited time available for receiving fruit, only a small percentage can be opened for inspection; and, moreover, inconvenience is caused to the growers by the delay in having their trucks and wagons held up in all weathers awaiting inspection and delivery at the wharf, whereas with sheds of not less than, say, one thousand cases capacity this delay could be obviated. This question was the subject of two conferences which were held, while I was on furlough in New Zealand, between the fruit-merchants and the Cook Islands Department. Every aspect of the fruit industry was discussed, from the growers' viewpoint to the marketing conditions in New Zealand. The merchants advocated central sheds and strict supervision, so as to ensure a good pack. They were satisfied that the returns would warrant the extra labour and expense involved.

"The Department is now issuing a monthly leaflet to growers, printed in both English and Native. This leaflet deals with subjects of interest to the growers, and more particularly relating to soils and their treatment, manures, crops, propagation, packing, and handling of fruit. In addition to this leaflet, arrangements will be made for packing demonstrations and advice on any subject in which the growers are interested.

"The new regulations covering the growing and cultivation of tomatoes are now in force, and should prove of great benefit to planters.

"Frequent visits of inspection have been made to plantations round the island, and a marked increase in banana-planting has been observed. Native food plants have been extensively planted. A few months after the gale a general drop in the quantity of copra was observed, and it will take at least a year before the normal quantity is again reached.

"The present citrus crop is rather a light one as compared with previous seasons. This will tend to make growers handle the crop better, thereby increasing the market value.

"Several persons have been convicted for fraudulent packing of bananas and tomatoes. The increased fines have helped to prevent fraudulent packing.

"During the month of March, the Assistant Fruit Inspector visited the islands of the Lower Group, and all were found to be carrying medium to good crops of oranges.

"*Noxious Weeds.*—The eradication of noxious weeds continues to progress."

EXPERIMENTAL NURSERY.

The following is a report from the Assistant Fruit Inspector, relative to the above :—

"Several varieties of citrus trees have recently been imported from Florida and are making good progress. All citrus trees and other trees requiring same have been pruned, trees hand-cultivated, and the sections ploughed and harrowed. A collection of durian (*Durio nibethinus*) and mangosteen (*Garcinia mangostana*) plants were received from Batavis, Dutch East Indies; most of these have been permanently planted out and are doing well. Two plants of the jam fruit (*Mantingia calabura*) were received from Tahiti: these are also doing well. Ornamental and edible plants have been raised and freely distributed. Collections of plants and trees have been sent to Manuae and all islands of the Northern Group. Cuttings of Hawaiian kumaras have been eagerly sought after by planters. Six thousand cuttings of the Hawaiian Red were distributed free, besides five hundred cuttings of the more recently imported varieties. A shipment of fourteen gunnies of kumaras was sent to New