

FARMERS' FIELD COMPETITIONS.

These competitions were continued during the year in various parts of the Dominion, mainly in Taranaki and the Wellington - West Coast districts, on the same lines as in past years. They are inclined to become more varied as time goes on, and the benefits derived from them by way of instruction to the farming community in the centres in which they are conducted are of undoubted value.

FIELD EXPERIMENTS.

The comprehensive programme of work in field experimentation conducted in the 1930-31 year has been continued, although it was found necessary through only a reduced vote being available to curtail the experiments to a slight degree. Nevertheless, 586 experiments were carried on. This is approximately 100 less than in the previous year, and the reduction is chiefly due to certain classes of experiments having served their purpose and consequently being abandoned. The record of the behaviour of crops under different manures and different systems of manuring and so forth which the Department has been able to obtain as a result of its careful recording of experimental work is most valuable. The summarizing of results and the dissemination thereof to farmers through the Department's *Journal* and the instructional staff cannot but have a beneficial effect on the farming practices as carried on in the Dominion.

CROP CERTIFICATION.

The list of crops dealt with under the certification scheme of the Department was extended during the 1931-32 season to include cocksfoot, Montgomery red clover, and Kentish wild white clover, while the basis for certification of New Zealand white clover was altered from one of age to one of type. Other crops which were subject to certification prior to the past year were perennial rye-grass, brown-top, potatoes, wheat, and beans. Fees in connection with certification were enforced during the past year for the first time. By these fees, which are on a per-acre basis for the crops entered, with a per-bushel charge for the quantity of machine-dressed seed, it is hoped to make the certification work of the Division very largely self-supporting. As intimated above, charging for certification services only came into operation last spring, and for about the six months ended 31st March, 1932, a sum of approximately £1,098 has been collected. At the time charging was enforced it was anticipated that the result might be a reduction in the quantity of material handled, but such has not been the case. In respect of one or two crops reductions in quantity have occurred, but this has been caused by other factors than the enforcement of charges.

The major crop which comes into certification is perennial rye-grass, and with this crop a greatly increased area was dealt with in 1931-32, as compared with the previous season. Mother-seed areas show an increase for 1931-32 over 1930-31 of 110 per cent. Permanent pasture areas, which are eligible on reclassification for certification as mother seed, show an increase of 12 per cent., while areas eligible only for permanent pasture show an increase of 260 per cent. The other class of rye-grass under certification—namely, first harvest seed—shows an increase in area of 64 per cent. The total area of rye-grass passed for certification in 1931-32 was 8,800 acres, as against 5,642 acres during the previous season. It may be mentioned that up to the end of March 70,000 bushels of rye-grass seed have been machine-dressed, and finally sealed and tagged as certified seed. This amount will probably be exceeded when the work is finished, but even this 70,000 bushels is a big increase over last year's operations, when 46,000 bushels were machine-dressed during the whole season.

IRONSTONE-LAND IN NORTH AUCKLAND.

The pasture-establishment experiments on the ironstone soils of the Kapiro Block, Bay of Islands district, were continued, but no new work was undertaken. The area sown in grass has been satisfactorily grazed with sheep and cattle, but the establishment and growth on the areas fall far short of a good pasture, and results generally are not satisfactory.

ENSILAGE.

The ensilage drive to which reference is made in my report for the year ended March, 1931, has caused ensilage to gain a definite and lasting popularity with farmers generally. Undoubtedly the use of labour-saving appliances, of which there are many on the market, has assisted towards popularizing the conserving of surplus herbage as silage. Notwithstanding an increase in the number of farmers feeding silage to sheep, this increase has not been as great as one would like to see, and the efforts of the officers of this Division will at the proper time be concentrated in making known more widely the benefits to be derived from the use of this valuable fodder. The drought experienced during the year in certain districts will without doubt bring home to many farmers the advisability of making silage when feed is plentiful, and being thus in a position to meet adverse conditions when they arise as they did on this occasion.

PURCHASE OF SEEDS AND MANURES FOR GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS.

During the year an arrangement was made by the Stores Control Board that my office was to be the purchasing office for all seeds and manures required for Government Departments throughout the Dominion. A system of purchasing was evolved, and it is claimed that in all instances, notwithstanding some particularly large orders, mainly on behalf of the Lands and Survey Department, all purchases made were to the benefit of the Government. Further, the system of testing for purity and germination samples drawn from the bulk supplies, where specific lines of seeds were authorized for purchase, disclosed that in not one instance was a delivery made showing a lesser purity and germination than that on which the supply was bought.