

## HORTICULTURE DIVISION.

### REPORT OF J. A. CAMPBELL, DIRECTOR.

#### THE FRUITGROWING INDUSTRY.

From a cropping point of view the season under review was a very satisfactory one, the crop of pip-fruits in particular even exceeding that of the previous year, which was above the average. Conditions generally were very favourable for the carrying out of orchard operations—pruning, spraying, cultivation, &c. Although continued dry weather during the early part of the season was against the proper development of the fruit, the rains experienced in December benefited the crop considerably. Growers in a portion of the Central Otago district suffered severe losses as the result of a very heavy frost which occurred on 25th November, the whole of the apple and pear crop in a number of the large commercial orchards being completely destroyed. Stone fruits, being sufficiently advanced in growth, did not suffer to any appreciable extent. The apple crop in the Marlborough District was also seriously depleted by a late frost.

No serious damage was caused to orchards by fireblight, the disease being kept well under control in the previously infected areas. An outbreak occurred during the year in the Marlborough District, and steps were at once taken to deal with it effectively.

There was little or no extension in orchard-planting during the year, the total area in commercial orchards standing at approximately 27,000 acres.

The culture of citrus fruits (lemons and Poorman oranges) on a commercial basis has received considerable attention during recent years. It is considered, however, that the industry has now reached a stage when further planting should be undertaken with caution. The season's crop, generally speaking, was a satisfactory one. While it has been amply demonstrated that lemons can be produced in this country equal to the best-quality imported fruit, there is still room for improvement in the condition and keeping-qualities of the local article. More attention to the proper methods of curing would, without doubt, react in improving the value of the lemon-growing industry in New Zealand to a very considerable extent.

The large areas planted in passion-fruit at Kerikeri, North Auckland, have now reached a stage when heavy crops are being produced. The question of a suitable market at a remunerative price is giving some concern to growers at the present time. With a view of ascertaining the prospects on the British market for this fruit, an experimental shipment of twenty-two cases was forwarded to the High Commissioner for New Zealand, London, in March last. Each package contained approximately 12 lb. fruit, several different methods being adopted in the packing. Cabled advice has since been received to the effect that the consignment arrived at its destination in a satisfactory condition, but that it was considered the market was limited, as passion-fruit is treated more in the nature of a luxury line. Further detailed particulars are being awaited with interest.

The Imperial Fruit Show was held in London in June last. In the Overseas Section for apples, open to growers in Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand, the handsome silver challenge cup presented by His Excellency the Governor-General, Lord Bledisloe, was won by Mr. H. E. Stephens, of Stoke, Nelson. Mr. Stephens was also the winner of the Goodwin Challenge Cup in the same section.

#### EXPORT OF FRUIT.

Another busy export season was experienced in 1931, the increased quantities of fruit coming forward necessitating the inspecting and grading officers attached to the Division working long hours in carrying out the necessary examinations and the detail work connected therewith. The work proceeded smoothly, the majority of growers showing a keen desire to comply with the requirements of the export regulations. The total quantity of pip-fruit exported during the 1931 season was 1,349,895 cases, being some 20,000 cases in excess of the previous year's record figures. Of this total 853,569 cases apples and 50,986 cases pears were shipped to Great Britain; 376,199 cases apples and 6,155 cases pears to the Continent; 45,993 cases apples to South America; and 16,993 cases apples to Canada.

The bulk of this fruit was exported under the Government guarantee of a gross market price of 11s. per case for Extra Fancy and Fancy grades, and 7s. for Good grade. While the returns received on the British markets were considered satisfactory, the shipments made to the Continent suffered a serious drop in prices, owing to the financial collapse in Germany which occurred in the middle of the season. As a result the claims on the guarantee were fairly considerable, amounting to £19,171.

The 1932 fruit-export season, which has now commenced, has every appearance of being a heavy one, and it is anticipated the total shipments will exceed one and a half million cases.

#### LOCAL MARKETS FOR FRUIT AND VEGETABLES.

The local markets have been kept well supplied with fruit and vegetables during the year. While the bulk of the lines offered was clean and free from disease, there was an excess of mixed grades, especially in apples, which had a tendency to lower prices generally. Although considerable improvement is noticeable in the grading and packing of vegetables, it was found necessary to take legal proceedings against a few offenders who had not heeded previous warnings in regard to fraudulent packing.