

AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENT.

Planting Statistics.—Planting statistics for the year are not available owing to severe damage to crops caused by the hurricane of February last, but from observations during the year it may be stated that general planting operations were normal and sufficient for the needs of the people. Replacement of damaged bananas has already commenced, while plantings of tomatoes and domestic crops promise to be heavy, as a natural result of the anxiety of the growers to balance to some extent the losses of banana and orange crops and the destruction of the bread-fruit crop.

Citrus.—Exports for the year were somewhat lower than for the previous season. Reports on the condition of the fruit were generally unsatisfactory. This was due to some extent to the unusually heavy rainfall during the year. The renovation activities in the plantations were not sufficiently advanced to give any definite promise of improvement in quality, which may show as the work progresses.

A considerable amount of work in the direction of pruning, thinning out, and destroying useless trees had been carried out up to the time of the hurricane, which has given that work a severe setback. Growers are becoming more interested in the work and are expected to recommence their activities when they have had a reasonable chance to replant other crops.

A number of areas of citrus plantings in ordered plantations and of good-quality trees, which have been established within the past few years, are progressing favourably, and small crops are already being produced. Areas such as these, which have received reasonable attention, are beginning to show the possibility of securing good results.

Bananas.—Exports from January to December, 1934, showed an increase over the previous year of approximately 13,000 cases.

Plantings during the year have been normal, but severe damage caused by the hurricane will considerably reduce the year's total exports.

Tomatoes.—Total exports during the year were 34,378 boxes, approximately double the quantity exported during the previous season. It is estimated that well over 10,000 boxes of tomatoes were not shipped owing to lack of steamers at suitable times.

Domestic Crops.—Ample domestic crops for ordinary requirements have been planted during the year.

Pineapples.—There is a fair return from local sales, but export of pines to New Zealand is not profitable.

Monthly Notes.—The following subjects were dealt with during the period:—

April, 1934 : Tomato Culture.

May, 1934 : Citrus Rust-mite.

June, 1934 : Orange Picking. Fruit Fly.

July, 1934 : Bananas. Export of Bananas.

August, 1934 : Clipped *v.* Pulled Oranges. Sooty Mould.

September, 1934 : Pruning and Renovation of Citrus Plantations.

October, 1934 : Windbreaks for Citrus Trees.

November, 1934 : Stem-end Rot in Citrus. Citrus Notes.

December, 1934 : South African Orange Crop.—How Quality is Safeguarded.

January, 1935 : Tomato Areas—Cleaning Up. Fruit Fly—Destruction of Host Fruits.

February, 1935 : Short Bananas.

March, 1935 : Fertilizers.

Fruit-inspection and Packing-sheds.—Grading of oranges was tightened up considerably last season, but reports still indicate that there is room for much improvement in the quality of the fruit. The poor quality of the oranges is not due entirely to faulty grading and packing. Fruit from poor trees cannot be expected to carry well. It is hoped that cleaning up the plantations and applying fertilizers and sprays will prove helpful.

All packing-sheds are in a satisfactory state of repair. Fortunately none suffered other than slight damage as a result of the hurricane.

The lidding-presses and roller conveyers in Avatiu and Arorangi sheds are doing very satisfactory work and are particularly useful during the orange season.

Prosecutions.—During the year twenty-four persons were prosecuted and fined for packing fruit below the required standards or for fraudulent packing of fruit intended for export.

Outer Islands.—One Inspector visited Atiu during the call of one steamer to assist with inspection of the orange shipment. While in Atiu noxious weeds were inspected and the areas cleaned up, and pruning instruction given.

Shipping services were unsatisfactory in the Group Islands, and consequently shipments were much below estimates.

Resident Agents were instructed by letter regarding the renovation of citrus plantations as at present under way in Rarotonga. Limited supplies of tools have been forwarded to these islands and a start has been made on pruning.

Citrus Experimental Work.—The new areas planted last year at Tatakimoa and at the Ngatipa Residency are both progressing favourably. Most of the trees at the Titikaveka area planted last year are growing well.

The value of spraying experiments carried out during the past year has been discounted by the damage caused to the trees by the recent hurricane. Most of the trees were badly damaged and are carrying little or no fruit.

Fertilizers.—The levy for manures collected since July, 1934, has amounted to a considerable sum, and a first shipment of manures, 60 tons, has been received for distribution.