

REPORT.

INTRODUCTION.

THE following brief notes on a few of the major activities of the Service are quoted here for general information. For fuller and more detailed data the reader is referred to the pages which follow.

Afforestation.—As planting operations have practically ceased in all regions except Rotorua, and are being continued there only on a minor scale, the new planted area—12,090 acres—is the smallest for many years. In round figures the exotic State forests of the Dominion now aggregate 419,500 acres.

Sales of Timber.—The figures for the year show an increasing demand for milling-areas, and field officers have had their energies fully taxed to keep pace with the insistent requests of sawmillers in this respect. The volume of timber sold—102,219,800 ft. board measure—exceeded the previous year's figures by more than 36,000,000 ft., while the value was £60,204 greater; and at the time of going to press the demand continues unabated.

Production of Timber.—The quantity of timber cut from all sources—i.e., State, Native, and privately owned land was approximately 300,000,000 ft., an increase of 50,000,000 ft. compared with the 1934–35 period. The proportion cut from State forests remains the same as the previous year—viz., 28 per cent.

Exports of Timber.—Exports for the calendar year 1935 were the highest for nearly a decade, and totalled (in round figures) 39,642,000 ft. board measure, or 5,000,000 ft. more than for the year 1934. Matai showed the greatest proportional increase—i.e., from 800,000 ft. to 2,800,000 ft., but as this comprised very largely o.b. timber, which is almost unsaleable in the Dominion, the extra overseas demand was of distinct benefit to the milling industry.

Another interesting feature of the year's trading was an increase of 900,000 ft. in the export to the Pacific Islands of insignis pine for fruit-cases, boxing, &c.

Imports of Timber.—The timber imported for the same period exceeded the 1934 imports by approximately 14,000,000 ft. in volume and £165,300 in value, the figures being 31,356,000 ft., valued at £394,400.

Sawmills.—As was anticipated, the grand total of sawmills recorded at the 31st March, 1936, had risen from 568 to 596; those operating in indigenous forests alone numbered 507, and in exotic forests eighty-nine, but of the latter forty-three were at different periods cutting both indigenous and exotic timber.

Mills working full time numbered 315, a gratifying increase of sixty; mills cutting in State forests totalled 142 as against 135 in 1935.

Mining Privileges in State Forests.—The Service again handled well over a thousand applications for mining privileges, all of which required investigation, and many of which were located in State forests. A reduction in the number of applications was noticeable, however, when compared with the previous year, and this may have been due to the revival of other industries attracting workers from prospecting, &c., to more stable and lucrative employment.

Forest Finance.—The receipts from all sources amounted to £106,978, an increase of £34,000 over last year's figures, and the highest received for eight years.

Work done for other Departments.—The Service continues to co-operate closely with other Government Departments, and particularly with the Lands and Survey and Native Departments in regard to measurement and appraisal of blocks of standing timber, and in more than one instance has been instrumental in securing for Native owners prices more in keeping with current market values, and much higher than they themselves were willing to accept. It may not be generally known that in terms of the Forests Act, 1921–22, neither the Native Land Court nor a Maori Land Board shall grant any right to cut timber without the previous consent in writing of the Commissioner of State Forests.

General.—With difficulties to be faced and new problems to be solved the Service enters upon the new year with optimism and confidence. The year just closed was a busy and arduous one, and for the successful results reported in the pages which follow thanks are accorded to all members of the staff for loyal and ungrudging service on all occasions.