

There are six Arikis, a large number of Mataiapos (heads of family), and many Rangatiras (relatives of the Ariki).

These titles are not necessarily hereditary, but are given by the people themselves to those whom they appoint. The land is attached to and goes with the title.

The Ariki families are the principal occupiers of the Ariki lands. The same applies to the lesser titles, the people of each occupying the land more or less as tenants at will, paying "atinga" (tribute) to their chief usually in produce for feasts on special occasions.

Family lands may, however, be under Land Court title, each partitioned block being vested in the name of the family, an ownership of sometimes up to twenty or more persons.

The Land Court work of the Island is much in arrears, which further complicates the present position.

It is important that the Land Court staff should be strengthened and the work brought up to date. The Survey staff should also be strengthened for this purpose.

Meantime it is recommended that the Government should—

- (1) Undertake the planting of, say, three 5-acre blocks as demonstration plantations for the purpose of instructing Natives in the establishment of modern commercial plantations :
- (2) Encourage the replanting by individual Natives of young trees only on areas defined by the Director of Agriculture and the Registrar of the Land Court, to ensure not only that the areas are suitable for orange culture but that security of tenure can be assured the owner, in order that he may have sufficient inducement to care for his trees and harvest the crop as the rightful owner :
- (3) Import early and late varieties of orange-trees and propagate selected varieties of native orange-trees, which should be advanced to growers on terms and conditions to be decided by the Director of Agriculture :
- (4) Provide a systematic supervision for the compulsory application of manures, with a proper system of rotation of crops where necessary.

NOTE.—The Cook Islands Administration imposes a levy of 3d. per case which provides manures to enable growers to improve their plantations. The system, however, which at present prevails, whereby fruit is bought in the plantations by agents of the traders, enables those agents, being the shippers, to receive the issues of manures, which are in this way diverted from the purpose intended—viz., their application to the plantations from which the fruit which bore the levy was taken.

CENTRAL PACKING-SHED AND COOL STORE.

A central packing-shed and cool store should be established at Avarua (Rarotonga) to replace the existing seven district Native packing-sheds situated at various points around the Island.

Packing-shed.—To be equipped with all modern appliances for handling fruit, including the most modern equipment for processing oranges. This would have many advantages :—

- (1) It would enable the present out-of-date grading-machines (ten in number) to be replaced by modern equipment :
- (2) The present numerous packing-shed inspectors, committees, and packers and staffs would be replaced with a small permanent staff of inspectors, under the control of the Director of Agriculture :
- (3) It would eliminate the present crowding in district packing-sheds, where at present those interested in the fruit are admitted, preventing that orderliness so necessary for the proper conducting of the business :
- (4) It would give greater control to enable inspectors to reject the large volume of unsuitable fruit which at present gains admittance to the sheds and causes much unnecessary expense in its elimination :
- (5) Proper processing would greatly increase the appearance and keeping-quality of the fruit :
- (6) Provision would be made for the automatic drying-out of the fruit before stowage, thus improving its keeping and carrying qualities.

Cool Store.—Under present conditions it is necessary to harvest, pick, transport, and ship many thousands of cases of fruit within a few days of the departure of the steamer. The rush methods necessary are distinctly adverse to the trade, viz. :—

- (1) A proportion of the earlier picked fruit must necessarily lie for a considerable period between picking and shipping, a serious cause of deterioration in the tropical climate :
- (2) The hurried methods militate against careful handling at every stage from plantation to steamer.

The provision of a cool store would permit—

- (1) The fruit being harvested continuously as it matured :
- (2) The saving of much of the crop that at present becomes over-ripe between the calls of steamers :
- (3) Organizing a systematic delivery and collection of field fruit-cases, and the delivery per motor-truck at the central packing-shed of fruit for grading, packing, and placing in cool storage to await shipment :
- (4) The pre-cooling of shipments, which practice is recognized as of prime importance in the safe carriage of orange shipments.