

*Marketing of Fruit.*—An organized effort to improve marketing conditions and increase the ultimate return to producers has recently been made in the form of a petition by the primary producers to have a Board established, on similar lines to the New Zealand Fruit Export Control Board, to attend to the marketing of fruit directly on growers' account. This petition has been forwarded for presentation to Parliament.

*Outer Islands.*—During the month of November last I had the opportunity of visiting the Islands of Mangaia, Mauke, Atiu, Mitiaro, and Aitutaki.

General observations in the brief time at my disposal indicate that considerable improvement could be effected in fruit cultural methods in these islands also.

Discussion with the Native producers evidenced considerable dissatisfaction prevailing with respect to prices received for fruit during the past season which ranged from 1s. 3d. to 3s. per case net to the grower for oranges ex packing-shed.

The inspection staff has carried out the work of inspection in a generally satisfactory manner. Where occasion arises inspectors are changed from shed to shed, a system that tends towards widening their individual experience and facilitates a system of uniformity which is not so readily obtainable where individuals are confined to one shed for any lengthy period.

The fruit-grading regulations appear to require considerable revision, and it is hoped to make recommendations in that direction at an early opportunity. At the present time there is practically no provision made in the regulations for quality grading.

Some trouble has been experienced lately in connection with the condition of fruit on arrival in New Zealand. This trouble appears to be an old standing one, and in my opinion is due very largely to transport conditions and, until facilities for cold storage at some stage of the transportation between packing-shed and market is provided, will always be likely to recur in this trade.

*Experimental Farm and Nursery.*—

A portion of Section B has been made available for school-ground purposes upon which new school buildings are being erected.

Fortunately for the nursery area there have been few heavy rains during the hot weather, consequently the section has not been flooded seriously this season.

Most of the citrus and other trees on the section have recovered well from the hurricane effects, but a number of old avocado pear trees have died.

A considerable number of rough lemon, and smaller numbers of sour orange and sweet orange, citrus stocks have been planted out. A few of these are sufficiently advanced and budding has commenced. A very small number of budded lemon and orange trees are ready for distribution. Only very small distributions have been made.

Two Kawan orange trees from New Zealand are making good growth, especially that planted at Ngatipa.

The Ngatipa and Tutakimoa sections planted to citrus several years ago are making fair progress, although several replacements have been necessary at Ngatipa. Shelter on the boundaries at Ngatipa is growing, and the bananas between the tree rows for protection will shortly be unnecessary. Better cultivation will then be possible.

The Veimama banana plants recently introduced produce fine bunches, but produce few shoots and consequently the number has not increased appreciably.

The three Saanen goats are healthy. About twenty females have been brought in by various owners for service during the past six months. Some of those served previously have produced kids, a proportion of which very strongly resemble the imported parent in appearance, although it is yet too early to know what production of milk will be.

Tung oil trees have not grown well. This applies also to a few which were grown by people outside the nursery.

Mangosteen, pecan nut, and nutmeg trees have not made very satisfactory progress.

Some of the Excelsa coffee trees have made very good growth and are at present carrying a light crop of immature berries. From the comparative growth of individual trees it is obvious that these trees require good drainage and only light shading for part of the day. Trees in such conditions are the ones growing best and carrying crops.

Very few of the imported raffia palm seeds have germinated, and it is now found that most of the remaining seeds have rotted in the beds. Those which germinated are making satisfactory progress.

Teak seedlings which were planted out are growing well. A further supply of seed will be planted shortly when the land is ready.

A considerable number of mango seedlings are ready for inarching.

Seeds of the cascara tree, *Albizzia Lopantha* (for shelter purposes), and tobacco (six varieties) have germinated and will shortly be ready for transplanting to nursery or permanent rows.

A fair supply of ornamental seedlings is available in the half-shade houses. A number of these will be used for the Wireless Station grounds and for replacements on the foreshore, Government grounds, &c.

Distributions of various plants from the Farm to local people have not been large in the last six months. Requests for supplies of plants and seeds to go to the Islands of Lower and Northern Groups have been met and supplies forwarded.

Grapefruit are maturing on the Farm, but the supply is small and will not be likely to exceed local demand.

PLANTING STATISTICS, RAROTONGA, FOR YEAR ENDING 31ST MARCH, 1936.

Citrus, 1,118; bananas, 202,355; tomatoes, 1,715,820; taro, 487,362; kumeras, 391,427; yams, 6,772; arrowroot, 40,918; pineapples, 9,733; breadfruit, 48.