

FARMERS' FIELD COMPETITIONS.

Field-crop competitions have been carried on in various parts of the Dominion on much the same lines as in past years. The one point that stands out is that in districts where in the past root-crops competitions have held a great deal of interest for farmers, this interest shows a lessening. As against this, hay, silage, and pasture competitions continue generally in favour. The pasture competition is rapidly increasing, and the good work which one expects from these competitions is very apparent in those districts, particularly in Taranaki, where such competitions have been in vogue for some years. The competitive side of the movement, while it actually is necessary as an initial step, sooner or later becomes the least important aspect of the movement.

YOUNG FARMERS' CLUBS.

The Young Farmers' Club movement, which has been in operation since 1932 and has extended from year to year, has received considerable attention during the year to which this report refers.

Towards the end of the winter of 1936 the movement was reorganized and district organization of the movement was placed in the hands of the Fields Division. An officer of the Division was appointed Organizing Secretary for the Dominion, his headquarters being at Wellington. At the time the organization was taken over by the Department there were eighty-six clubs in operation—fifty-nine in the South Island and twenty-seven in the North. Since that time considerable progress has been made, and, while a few of the smaller clubs in isolated districts have gone out of existence, forty-five new clubs have been formed—eleven in the South Island and thirty-four in the North Island. At time of writing the number of clubs functioning throughout the Dominion is 122, being made up of sixty clubs in the South Island and sixty-two in the North Island. The total membership of all clubs is approximately three thousand. There is still room for considerable expansion, particularly in the North Island, but one of the difficulties to be faced is that the staff of the Division has its hands so full with a multitude of duties that it is unable to put into the Young Farmers' Club movement as much attention to organizing the movement as could be desired. As it is at present, all Instructors in whose districts the clubs are a feature have to devote a considerable amount of their own private time in the evenings to attending meetings and giving lectures.

Notwithstanding anything said above, the value of the Young Farmers' Club movement is fully recognized, and every effort will be made to increase not only the number of clubs, but the number of club members as staff becomes available, which will enable the present large districts to be subdivided.

A feature of the Young Farmers' Club movement is the holding of educational weeks and also tours through districts new to club members. These educational weeks and tours can undoubtedly be of great value, and the results so far obtained have warranted the enthusiasm and work put into the organizing of such functions.

PURCHASE OF SEEDS AND MANURES.

The system inaugurated some years ago under which this Department was made the purchasing Department for all seeds and manures required by Government Departments and institutions has operated very smoothly, and the value of the seeds and manures purchased has run into many thousands of pounds. The system in operation, particularly with respect to supplies of seed, assures that all seeds purchased are of high quality both from the point of view of purity and also germination. The sowing of this class of seed on Government properties is undoubtedly a step in the right direction, and the pastures of those properties that have been sown down since purchases were made through the channels of this Department show the wisdom of buying only seed the quality of which is known prior to purchase.

FLOCK HOUSE.

On 1st February, 1937, the Government completed the purchase of the Flock House Estate, comprising some 8,000-odd acres, near Bulls. On this station a training-school is conducted for lads between the ages of fourteen and a half and eighteen years. At the time Flock House Station was taken over and passed to the immediate control of this Division the accommodation as regards trainees was fully occupied. Quite a number of the trainees have since completed their period of training, and in accordance with the procedure adopted in the past have been apprenticed to approved farmers, and the vacancies at Flock House filled. At the moment there are fifty lads in residence, and there is a fairly lengthy waiting list. It is evident that Flock House is not capable of providing tuition in agriculture for all the New Zealand lads whose parents or guardians are desirous of their receiving such instruction. Under the Flock House Trust the period of training was of eight months' duration, but immediately the Government assumed control this was lengthened to twelve months. There is no charge made either for board or instruction, and this, combined with the fact that the instruction imparted is really good and of a general character, no doubt tends towards the popularity of Flock House.

Farming operations on Flock House have been conducted during the two months of the year it has been under Government control along the same lines as hitherto.